

Pentecost And Hope

Pentecost's Types Provide Confidence

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You all have probably heard or read stories of men and women who devoted their lives to accomplishing one particular thing in life, or have only one great goal that they seek, or they hope to see one great thing, perhaps a momentous thing come to pass before they die.

The new millennium started six years ago. I read many older people were holding on to be able to say that they lived into the new millennium.

I have been witness to a number of people who have been very sick, and maybe have a terminal illness of some kind, and it seemed that they were holding on, and enduring longer than expected to be able to live to witness some significant date or event before they died. It could be something like a 50th wedding anniversary, or family reunion, or significant birthday like their 100th, some holiday that would bring the family together; a grandchild's or great-grandchild's birth, or most anything.

We understand that people—I do not know how they do it—sometimes muster enough energy, even though they are dying, to stick around until something happens that they are looking forward to.

Actually, there is a story like this in the Bible. It is not quite in the same vein, but it is similar. It is the story of the Simeon.

Luke 2:25-35 And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: "Lord, now You are letting

Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel." And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and [the] rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

Simeon was apparently an older man. We do not know that for sure, but it seems like it, because God specifically told him that he was going to live until Christ came. Perhaps he was even a prophet of God. He had the Holy Spirit upon him. Certainly, he was pious and devout. That word "devout" means careful. He was circumspect in what he knew God commanded him, and he was very careful to keep it. God had assured him somehow that he would live until he had seen Jesus Christ in the flesh.

It is interesting to wonder about this man. How long had he waited for the Consolation of Israel? Was he 100 years old? 110? I do not know. The very next section is about the prophetess Anna, and evidently was past her 100th year. She had been 84 years a widow! So, just start doing the math. She had been married for 7 years before that (91), and then the age of her virginity, the age at her marriage. Who knows? Easily 110 years old when added up like this.

Simeon, mentioned before her, may have been similarly aged. He was holding on, as God said he would, until he was able to hold Jesus Christ, and give a blessing. Not that he blessed Jesus at all; it says he blessed God, actually. He prayed to God and thanked God—is what is implied there.

What about this man, Simeon? How long had it been since the Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen Jesus Christ? Had he been waiting 60 years? It does not say. The suggestion from Scripture is that he had been waiting a long time. It would not make much

sense or be such a big thing if he had been waiting a few years. You get the idea that he had been waiting much longer for this—maybe all of his life—it is something he had decided he would devote his life to.

What sort of hardships did he go through in this life in waiting? Had he been married? Probably. Had he outlived his wife? Children? Grandchildren? All in waiting for the Son of Man? How exact was his knowledge of when the Messiah would come? Had he worked out the Seventy Weeks Prophecy to the exact day or year, and so he knew when Jesus Christ would come?

From what I understand (and I am just thinking off the top of my head here) the Seventy Weeks Prophecy actually ends with the start of His ministry, not His birth. If so, perhaps his mind was on the fact that he had another 30 years to wait. I do not know. It was a common expectation in Judea at the time that the Messiah would come soon. Perhaps that is what he was going on. It does not say. I am speculating a little bit about how he had to approach life.

What did he do while waiting for the Messiah? Did he just sit there in the Temple every day, and look over every baby, and maybe he might catch the right one? I do not think so.

Did he study all the time? Did he talk with the rabbis? Did they consult with him? Was he a friend with the priests? Was he a priest himself? It does not say. What did he do during all that time? Was he alone? Did he live his life without any family left to him? Was he wealthy? Did he have servants? He seems spry for an old man.

These are just interesting things to think about. To put a little flesh on the bones on the passage here, think about this man Simeon.

We do not know the answer to any of these questions. What I am trying to get you to realize is that Simeon was a lot like us. He was devout—careful. He was waiting for Christ to come. Verse 25 said that the Holy Spirit was upon him. It seems as though he had access to God's Spirit. That is why I wondered if he might be a prophet. The Spirit would come upon His prophets, and then they would prophesy. The things that he says here seem to suggest that he not only was devout, but that he also knew a great deal about the way things would work out with Jesus. He knew that the Gentiles would

have the gospel preached to them. He knew about the judgment that would come because of what Jesus did.

He believed God's Word, and he knew it well. Far more than most others of his time, probably all others of his time, he understood the purpose of the Son of Man, or the Son of God.

So, what kept him going? What allowed him to hold on for all those years? Well, the passage actually provides a few hints.

The first hint comes in verse 25, "he was waiting for the Consolation of Israel." This word "consolation" means "the comfort," or "the hope" of Israel. Paul uses a similar expression in Acts 28:20, when he preached the hope of Israel. And so, Simeon had this promise given to him by God through the Holy Spirit that kept him buoyed up because he was waiting for the big thing to happen—the greatest thing that had ever happened up to that point—the birth of the Son of God.

Knowing the Scriptures so well, he understood what that would bring. It gave him *hope*. It gave him something to hold on to to keep on going and waiting.

Another thing is in verse 29: the word "lord" means "despot." Now you might not think of that as a good thing. Despot has a negative meaning today. It was not quite so negative at the time of the translation of the Bible into English. It means "master." It means "the one who owns me, and controls my life."

What this shows is that he considered himself a wholly owned slave of God who lived only at God's mercy. But, oh what a God! That kept him buoyed up. That kept him going.

Finally, he knew God's Word was absolutely true and reliable. Therefore, he was able to go on however many years he would have to wait for the coming of Jesus Christ.

The eleven verses we have seen present a snapshot of a man's life—a man's life given in devotion to God, to witness the coming of His Son. It seems to

be a remarkable precursor of the lives of devout Christians at the time of the end who are also waiting, but this time waiting for the return of that same Son of God—the Second Coming.

Today is Pentecost, a day that commemorates the harvest of the firstfruits, which will happen at the time that same Son of God returns.

In Israel, this harvest in early summer was a smaller harvest. It was particularly a harvest of wheat, which in biblical symbolism (Jesus used this in Matthew 13) wheat stands for the righteous—the saints.

So we see that Pentecost reminds us of God's called-out ones, the wheat being harvested. All the elements then combine to bring us to spiritual maturity.

My focus today will be on those elements, which provide hope for us as we wait for the Consolation of Israel, and our entrance into the Kingdom of God. These elements not only provide hope, but they are keys to bring us to spiritual maturity. I want to go over these four elements.

(I have been going through a series of sermons on hope in the holy days. I have already done "Passover and Hope" and "Unleavened Bread and Hope.")

The First Element: Hope in God's law

Most of us know there is a Jewish tradition that says the events of Mount Sinai when God gave the Ten Commandments occurred on Pentecost. There is really no way for us to know. The Bible does not say it was Pentecost. It actually does not give many specifics. However, if you put all the details together, we are in the ballpark somewhere near the day of Pentecost. It may have been, and it may not. However, it is close.

Since we are people of faith, we think that it probably was, because God always does things on time. His way always fits together. We also know that God opened up the New Covenant on Pentecost. Why would He have not done the same with the Old Covenant and made that on Pentecost too? He gave Israel what they needed to bring them to Christ, which was His law. It seems to fit.

In Deuteronomy 5 we will read the second telling of what happened then. This seems to be a straightforward telling of what happened at Mt. Sinai. However, it actually contains a great deal of instruction for us as New Covenant Christians. I will read it through, and then we will go back and pick some points up from it. Moses is writing, and reminding the people. Most of the people who left Egypt 20 years old and over were dead by this time. He is re-telling the story so they know it:

Deuteronomy 5:23-33 "So it was, when you heard the voice from the midst of the darkness, while the mountain was burning with fire, that you came near to me, all the heads of your tribes and your elders. And you said: 'Surely the LORD our God has shown us His glory and His greatness, and we have heard His voice from the midst of the fire. We have seen this day that God speaks with man; yet he still lives. Now therefore, why should we die? For this great fire will consume us; if we hear the voice of the LORD our God anymore, then we shall die.'

For who is there of all flesh who has heard the voice of the living God speaking from the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived? You [Moses] go near and hear all that the LORD our God may say, and tell us all that the LORD our God says to you, and we will hear and do it.' Then the LORD heard the voice of your words when you spoke to me, and the LORD said to me: 'I have heard the voice of the words of this people which they have spoken to you. They are right in all that they have spoken. Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!'

Go and say to them, "Return to your tents." But as for you [Moses], stand here by Me, and I will speak to you all the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments which you shall teach them, that they may observe them in the land which I am giving them to possess.' Therefore, you shall be careful [there is that word again] to do as the LORD your God has commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. You shall walk in all the ways which the LORD your God has commanded you, that you may live

and that it may be well with you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which you shall possess."

This seems to be a clear narrative. However, in this scene Moses represents us! The people represent, in a way, the world. Moses is the only one in Israel—the only one, not even Aaron his brother—who is able to stand before God and hear His words. What, then, was he to do? He was to turn around and teach them to others.

Specifically it says, "in the land." Moses never made it to the land. The analogy for us is we are in training for teaching in the Kingdom of God. We are able, like Moses, to stand before God, hear His Word, digest it, and then turn around and teach it to others as a kind of mediator, or priest.

Notice the difference here: the people say that they cannot see God's power, and hear His voice, and still live. It is very interesting in that God agrees with them! These people are correct in this evaluation. They have judged things correctly. They cannot stand before God, hear His words, and live.

It seems a paradox that Moses (who was also a man), was able to stand there, hear God's voice, see His power, and live. He could survive it! What made the difference? Verse 29: "Oh that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments!" What was the difference? Moses had a heart that God could work with, a heart of "flesh," whereas the people of Israel, as we know from example after example, had a heart of stone. That heart enabled Moses to stand before God and hear His Word, understand it, do it, and then teach it.

This is an Old Testament way of talking about what became known in the New Testament as walking in the Spirit. Moses was not only able to understand the letter of the law, but he was also able to understand the spirit of the law, apply it correctly, and then reap the benefits. That is what he says later on in same verse, "that it might be well with them, and their children forever." Moses was converted, whereas the remainder of Israel was not.

Notice God's meticulous instruction to Moses, and therefore to us. This starts in verse 32. He says, first, "be careful." Being careful is an attitude that you begin with. It means that you watch. You make sure. You do things properly.

You do not allow yourself to slip. You keep an eye on what is around you. That is what circumspect means. "Circum" means *around*. "-spect" means *to see*. So, you are seeing all around you. You know what is going on. You are aware so you can act or react properly. This is what you are supposed to do in keeping God's commands. This is the same idea that comes out in Simeon—that he was a devout man; careful. In the Greek, it means the same thing.

Another thing Moses shows us here is that we are not to turn to the right hand or the left. This is a warning that we are to be focused on the goal, and not to be distracted to one side or the other. We are not to fall into the ditches. We are not to go off on another road. We are supposed to be going straightforward.

The third thing he says in verse 33 is that you shall walk in all God's ways. This implies progress, movement, application—this is an exhortation.

So, we have here three things: God gives us the attitude to have—to be careful; we are warned not to go left or right; and we are exhorted to move forward, and to apply godly principles in our lives. It is not enough just to know them; we have to apply them and move forward.

What is the result? Verse 33: "That you may live, and that it may be well with you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which you shall possess."

What is the result spiritually? The spiritual result is well-being and long life. What is that spiritually? That means eternal life, everlasting life. Then, we have God's favor and blessings. I think that those are well worth it!

God's law, contrary to what has been taught in professing Christianity for many years, is not a bad thing. It is a good thing. It should give us hope. It should give us motivation and guidance. We will see that in II Corinthians 3.

II Corinthians 3:3 . . . clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.

I have mentioned that before. The Israelites had hearts of stone—tablets of stone; and converted people have hearts of flesh—tablets of flesh.

II Corinthians 3:4-5 And we have such trust through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, . . .

We always need to remember that. We should never forget that. Everything we have from the ministry to lay members comes from God. We should feel sufficient only in Him.

II Corinthians 3:6 . . . who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

That is the same law! Nevertheless, it is approached differently. The Israelites had no real hope in keeping God's commandments. There was some, obviously, because if you keep God's commandments, whether converted or not, you are going to have blessings. However, there is nothing beyond that.

Without the change of heart possible under the New Covenant, the letter can only kill, says Paul. He means that the major aspect of the law without God's Spirit is condemnation—that the letter of the law shows how far short we fall.

When we are able to approach God's law in the Spirit, the law's positive side as a guide to godly living prevails since Christ has taken away the condemnation.

We have hope, then. Being Christians with the Spirit, we have hope through God's law. Not that it saves us, but that it prepares us for life in God's Kingdom. We understand the purpose of the law and can thus apply it properly. That should give us a great deal of hope because we understand how God lives, and we can thus mimic Him.

The Second Element: We have hope in God's Spirit. This tags along with the one we just finished.

Unlike the giving of the law, the giving of the Holy Spirit can be shown very plainly at a specific time, which was the Day of Pentecost in 31 AD. That was 1,975 years ago today.

The hope we have because of God's Spirit dwelling in us is evident. I hope it is evident to all of you. I hope you can see a difference in your life between what it was before God gave you His Spirit, and what it is now. We should be seeing signs of that difference, fruit of that difference. It would probably do us good to review this for a moment.

Go back to Acts 2 and see a few things that Peter said in his sermon, and a comment by Luke as well. I want to go through just a few scriptures to see the details of the hope we have in God's Spirit. Start in verse 33 near the end of the sermon.

Acts 2:33 Therefore [Christ] being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.

Go on back to verse 4:

Acts 2:4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

It is very clear here that the speaking in other tongues was a work of the Spirit.

Acts 2:16-18 "But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy.'

Acts 2:21 'And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.'

I pointed those out because I did not want to go into a real long exposition of what Peter said. I wanted to specifically show the elements of hope that we find here. There are 5 points of hope we can take in this passage in Acts.

The first point: The Father has given the job of dispensing the Holy Spirit to Jesus. It said, "having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear." The Father gave the responsibility to Jesus Christ to dispense the Holy Spirit.

Why is that hope-building?

It is very simple. He is the One who knows us best!

Hebrews 4:14-16 Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

That is why this granting of this responsibility to Jesus Christ is so hopeful to us, because the One who knows us best is sitting at God's right hand. He now has the power to give us what we need when we need it to the amount we need it.

I do not want to take anything from God the Father, but God the Father has never been a man! I am sure He understands what it is like to be a man better than we do because He is God the Father. However, He gave that responsibility to One who actually was a man, and knows our frame, as it says in other places. He knows what we need. He knows what we go through. He knows we need patience. He knows we need strength. He knows we need faith. He knows we need help to love one another. He knows this, that, and the other thing. He knows the pulls of the flesh.

Therefore, He can give us His Spirit at the right time, at the right place, in the right amount. He can nudge us one way or the other through that Spirit. He can spank us if He needs to. Whatever it is, we have the One in heaven who knows how to work it. This should fill us with hope that the Helper is there ready to give us what we need.

The second point that should fill us with hope: We now have God's Spirit. Notice the verb "pour." "He poured out this which you now see and hear."

It does not say "dribbled," or "eked," or "let out an itty-bitty stream." It says that He *poured* it out. This gives the same idea of gushing quantities as in John 7 where it says "rivers of living waters" being given. It is not given in drips and drops but in immense inexhaustible quantities as needed. Jesus Christ is not parsimonious with His Spirit. He gives it generously. He can pour it out as needed.

The third point is in Acts 2:4. The Spirit manifests itself in things we can see and hear. If we had read verses 1 through 4 we would find they *heard* rushing mighty wind; they *saw* tongues of fire; and then the apostles themselves began to *speak* in other languages; and then we would find out a bit further that each person present *heard* them in his own language. What a huge miracle!

All this was done through the power of God's Spirit—visible and audible. It manifested itself in ways we can see and which we can recognize. The Spirit itself is invisible. Jesus described it in John 3 to be like the wind. You cannot see the wind, but you can see the effects of the wind blowing. You can see the trees swaying in the wind. You can see things floating on the breeze. You can feel it on your skin on a hot day. Even though it is invisible, it can do things that one can see, or sense. The things it can do are highly visible, even to the point as to be *absolutely wondrous*. This should give us hope!

Even though we cannot see the Spirit, it is at work. It is going to produce things that we can *see*. It produces fruit. Galatians 5:22-23 gives the fruit of the Spirit. As Paul shows, these are parts of character God is producing by His Spirit. There is love, and joy, and peace, and patience, and all these other

things. Those are the things we can feel and see. They can grow. Because we can feel them, see them, hear them, and do them, they produce hope in us because we see progress.

The fourth point: This is found in Acts 2:16-18. Peter quotes from the book of Joel. We usually think of this in terms of what will happen in the Millennium when God opens up His Spirit more broadly. Peter applies it to what happened that day right before their very eyes. He said that the Spirit is given to us so that we can prophesy. I do not want to leave this in the very narrow sense of foretelling the future. I do not even want to leave it in the narrow sense of preaching or proclaiming. I am thinking of this in terms of witnessing.

Have you heard the old saying, "I would rather see a sermon than hear one"? Most people would. What the Holy Spirit allows us to do is good—to grow, to overcome, to produce fruit. In other words—to witness!

Probably more people have been converted through somebody's good works, good character, and witness than perhaps the preaching of sermons! An example is what can really stick in people's minds. Somebody may live for years next to true Christians and see their dedication, their family, and how they love one another; their children are kind and polite; and they are successful because this family is producing the fruit of God's Spirit. That is attractive. There is a beauty of holiness. Even though man's heart is of stone, the beauty of holiness can melt it, or at least begin the melting process.

Of course, all that beauty of holiness comes from God Himself. We can reflect it; we reflect it by using God's Spirit. What hope that should give us if someone should mark our growth and be changed because of it!

The fifth point: This comes from Acts 2:21. Ultimately, because the Holy Spirit is the means of communication and relationship with God, we are brought to salvation through it. Anyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. And that salvation occurs through God's Spirit.

What we see here, especially in these last couple of points, is that the Holy Spirit is sent by Jesus Christ to work with us throughout the entire journey to the Kingdom of God, from our first inklings of a calling to our very

glorification at Christ's return. The Spirit is with us all the way. *That Spirit is our Lord Jesus Christ* . He lives in us. And that should be hopeful all in itself.

Verse 13 of Romans 15 gives the end of Paul's message to the Romans in terms of spiritual help.

Romans 15:13 Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. [The Spirit of God in us gives us the power even to hope.]

We should be full of hope, brimful and running over because of the things that God has done through His Spirit to aid us throughout our conversion. By His Spirit, we have the power to continue to salvation with confidence, and growth, and earnest expectation of glory in God's Kingdom. The Holy Spirit supplies those things to us.

The Third Element that we can have hope in on this Day of Pentecost: Hope in God's judgment.

This one is interesting. We do not think of it in terms of hope, but it is hopeful. We usually think of judgment in terms of bad things. We do not want to get caught in God's judgment. I am sorry; you are caught in God's judgment right now. You had better be!

Let us look at the Pentecost offering. In Leviticus 23 notice the portions regarding the offering itself:

Leviticus 23:15-21 And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed [which comes to today]. Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD. [This is what we are going to focus on.] You shall bring from your

dwelling two wave loaves of two-tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven. They are the firstfruits to the LORD.

And you shall offer with the bread seven lambs of the first year, without blemish, one young bull, and two rams. They shall be as a burnt offering to the LORD, with their grain offering and their drink offerings, an offering made by fire for a sweet aroma to the LORD. Then you shall sacrifice one kid of the goats as a sin offering, and two male lambs of the first year as a sacrifice of a peace offering. The priest shall wave them [all these offerings] with the bread of the firstfruits as a wave offering before the LORD, with the two lambs. They shall be holy to the LORD for the priest. And you shall proclaim on the same day that it is a holy convocation to you. You shall do no customary work on it. It shall be a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations.

Let us look at this. There are a lot of offerings and sacrifices made on this Day of Pentecost. What did we see? Seven lambs of the first year; one young bull; two rams; and then there is a kid of the goats as a sin offering; and two male lambs as a peace offering; plus the two wave loaves; plus with their normal grain offerings and drink offerings that go with the seven lambs, bullock, and two rams. There is a lot happening on the Day of Pentecost.

We want to concentrate on the two wave loaves because this is where we come in. These two loaves are baked with leaven. These loaves were waved before God for acceptance. We are told that these two loaves representing the firstfruits of God contain leaven. It is clear that these loaves represent people corrupted by sin. Leaven is always a symbol of corruption by sin in the Bible.

Yet, they are accepted before God because they are accompanied by a kid of the goats for a sin offering, and the two lambs as peace, or thank, or fellowship offerings. Finally, we are also told that these wave loaves are holy, and that they are the priest's (singular) for his consumption. You will find that at the end of Leviticus 23:20, "they shall be holy to the LORD for the priest."

What can we learn from this? What hope can we take from this offering? We normally do not consider these sorts of things as bringing us hope, but they do. And I have 5 points here also.

First point: These are wave loaves. Remember there was a wave sheaf offering on the day after the Sabbath within the Days of Unleavened Bread. That sheaf was cut at the end of the Sabbath, and then the next morning it was waved before God.

What does the waving picture when something is lifted before God? There are two things. 1) It is offered to God for inspection—for Him to see. 2) It is offered to God for acceptance. He cannot accept it until He has evaluated it. If it is done properly, and if it is the right kind of offering, He accepts it.

When the offering is lifted before God, He looks it over. He inspects it, He evaluates it, and He judges it. Then He says, "I accept it as an offering to Me." The loaves being waved or lifted before God mimic holding something up for inspection, for judging, as well as for offering it or giving it to Him.

Thus, Pentecost, a type of harvest, is also a type of judgment—a period of judgment just like the Feast of Tabernacles, another harvest festival which is a period of judgment. It is just for a different group of people—the whole world still alive during the Millennium. Then, at the end of that harvest festival, is the Last Great Day, which is yet another period of judgment—the time for all who have ever lived who never had the opportunity for salvation.

Therefore, we have judgments occurring during these feasts, particularly the harvest ones, but especially Pentecost because it is a wave offering. God has particular interest in this harvest—so particular is He that He demands that the priest lifts it up to Him for inspection. The first point: the picture of the process of judgment.

The second point is that the loaves contain sin, yet they are made of fine flour. What does this tell us? This is a picture of high quality, yet tainted materials. Thus, they have been baked to kill the corruption. Corruption happens when you have yeast dough that you let rise. It keeps getting bigger

until you put it in the oven, and as the temperature of that dough rises past a certain point, the yeast is killed, the fermentation stops, and the corruption is gone—it is stopped.

What we have is an illustration (in these wave loaves) of repentance, and transformation. God starts with good quality flour. He says so right here in the Scriptures, "they shall be of fine flour, [but] baked with leaven." God starts with good materials, but He knows that they are going to be corrupted by leaven because we live in this world. He calls us out of the world; and then He bakes us. He puts us through a process in which leaven is killed. Then we become a finished product through the operation of being baked. We know in the New Testament fiery trials are often allied with this process of baking. We are transformed, then, from a lump of corrupted flour dough into a finished loaf.

The third point: Despite the baked condition, these loaves are only acceptable in concert with the sin offering, and the peace offering (with their attendant other offerings).

Leviticus 23:19 Then you shall sacrifice one kid of the goats as a sin offering, and two male lambs of the first year as a sacrifice of the peace offering; the priest shall wave them with the bread of the firstfruits as a wave offering before the LORD with the two lambs.

What we have here, then, is that these wave loaves are by themselves not acceptable to God.

All of the offerings made this day, and waved with the loaves, represent Jesus Christ. We are accepted, then, as the wave loaves only through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. He paid the price for us to be accepted.

Remember, we can only come to the throne of God's grace through the blood of Jesus Christ. He is the One who opened the veil to the Holy of Holies for us. If He had not done that, there would never have been open access to the Father. We can only go to God and be acceptable, covered with the blood of Jesus Christ.

Despite the baking, despite God's working with us, it only happens in concert together with the sin offerings and the peace offerings. The peace offerings allow a relationship with God. That is what they typify. Peace offerings are thank offerings, or fellowship offerings. This means that the priest, God, and the person making the offering all get together and share a common meal. They have fellowship with one another. The wave loaves are only acceptable with the other offerings that are there, and they represent Jesus Christ.

The fourth point: The loaves are, indeed, accepted by God. Beyond that, they are proclaimed holy! So, not only does God say, "That is good enough," He says, "I'm going to proclaim them special, set apart, different, and sanctified."

We have heard sermons on how we are a special people. We are a unique, peculiar people to God, and that is because He proclaims us so. Being justified by Christ's blood, God accepts us into His church, which is the first part of His Family, and then we are set apart and made special people.

The fifth point: We are set apart for the priest's (ultimately Jesus Christ's) personal use—for his consumption. That is what the priests did. They ate the loaves. The loaves did not go to waste. They were special bread. When they were offered, only a part was put on the fire. The remainder was holy to the LORD for the priest.

Jesus Christ is that Priest. He is the Head of the church of God. When we are accepted before God, and we are sanctified, He puts us to work. He "consumes" us!

Our lives can be consumed in many ways, but the best way is in the service of God. That is what Jesus Christ does. That is what He did. He gave His life wholly to God and the work that He had been given to do. The wave loaves are treated the exact same way. Yes, they have leaven in them. Yes, they have gone through baking, but they have been accepted before God. They have been made holy, and now God can use them for His own purposes.

In a way, we are coming back to Simeon again. Remember, he said that God was his "despot," and he was His wholly owned slave. I could have told you when we were back there that, "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace."

"Letting. . . depart" is a term that slaves and their masters would use for freeing. "Now You are freeing Your servant from his service." In dying, he knew that he was being freed from the job he had been given, which was to remain alive until the Christ came. Like Simeon, once we are accepted before God, and sanctified, then we are put to work.

Just listen to the hope that is in Psalm 146.

Psalm 146:1-10 Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD, O my soul! While I live I will praise the LORD; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being. Do not put your trust in princes, nor in a son of man, in whom there is no help. His spirit departs, he returns to his earth; in that very day his plans perish. Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; who keeps truth forever, who executes justice for the oppressed, who gives food to the hungry. The LORD gives freedom to the prisoners. The LORD opens the eyes of the blind; the LORD raises those who are bowed down; the LORD loves the righteous. The LORD watches over the strangers; He relieves the fatherless and widow; but the way of the wicked He turns upside down. The LORD shall reign forever—Your God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise the LORD!

We can have great hope in the God of Jacob who is our Judge. He is the One before whom we have been waded for acceptance. We can have enduring expectation that He will judge us as acceptable and make us holy before Him. There is hope in that judgment, because He is who He is.

The Fourth Element: This is our hope in being God's firstfruits.

We saw in Leviticus 23:17 that the wave loaves were called the firstfruits to the LORD. James makes it explicit who God's firstfruits are.

James 1:17-18 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

Now, verse 18 is wonderful enough, but verse 17 adds a great deal to our understanding, because it reminds us of God's stability, and constancy, and power; and of His giving of good and perfect gifts as well.

These things—good and perfect gifts—like salvation have their source in God the Father. As it says here, He is the source of light—the Father of light. He is constant and steady. That is what it means in "no variation or shadow of turning."

He is not like the sun or moon. Even the sun, as glorious as it is, goes down every night, and then it comes back up in the morning. There are shadows cast. The moon loses its brightness as it goes around the earth. It goes from a new moon all the way to a full moon, but then goes back to another new moon. In its turning, there are variations—shadows cross the moon from time to time—and cannot be seen during a new moon. It is gone.

God is constant. He is always on. He is always shining straight at us directly. He does not turn one way or the other, and thus His light does not diminish. God is always fully light and glorious. The light comes from God straight on.

Understand that as you go on to verse 18.

This same God who made everything, is greater than the sun and the moon, who does not turn to the right or the left, who is always on full blast, this powerful unchanging God set His will to call us, beget us, or sire us by the word of truth. (By the way, that word "word" is Logos! "By the 'logos' of truth. . ." —His eternal truth.)

And why? What was the end that He has in mind? That we would become His firstborn sons and daughters—His firstfruits! His!

If He is the source of this plan, this same God who shines gloriously, never dimming, never turning, if this is His stated goal that He is going to make us His firstfruits, what on this earth will keep Him from accomplishing that? He is absolutely confident that we are His firstfruits, and that He could make us this way, and that we are going to enjoy eternal life with Him in His Kingdom.

Why should we not, then, have confident enduring expectation of His finishing His perfect work in us? We can be! We have hope! Because He called us to be His firstfruits, *we will be His firstfruits*, because He is what He is! Paul says this very clearly in Philippians 1.

Philippians 1:6 . . . being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.

He is on the job. He never leaves the job. He finishes every project He starts.

The Old Testament says that He sends out His Word, and it accomplishes the thing for which He sent it out. It never returns empty—without the product being done, or completed.

What does this mean? We have a sure hope of that entrance into His glorious Kingdom. A sure hope! We have things to do, too. If it was all up to God, and there were no other variables, like our stupidity, we will be there.

In this Feast of Pentecost, His great hope for us—a hope that we can remember and recharge year by year as we go through these symbols—God provides us hope through His law, and the guidance that it gives us. He provides us hope through His Spirit in all the gifts and strengths that it can supply through Jesus Christ.

We can have hope in His just judgment. He is on our side. We can have hope in His calling of us as His firstfruits because He completes every work He starts.

Like Simeon, who waited for the coming of Jesus Christ the first time—to see Him in the flesh, to hold Him in his arms—let us use these gifts of hope to buoy us up as we wait patiently for Him to come the second time!