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**PP Ghost Sightings: Seeing the Holy Spirit in Action Today**  
**Ephesians 4:1-7      The God Who Unites      8/29-30, 2015**

I recently received a phone call from someone in our church who told me *Why she could no longer sit under my preaching and ministry*. This was startling, since this was a friend who usually excitedly introduced me to her family and friends as her pastor. I asked her if we could meet to discuss what had upset her, even arranging a woman in our church that she selected to be with us, to make sure she was comfortable and at ease. She initially agreed and then declined and opted to send a letter. She is offended that I do not preach from the King James Bible and made the comment that I wasn't in agreement to the Schofield bible's theology. Her other charge against me was an accusation that I believe saints are in need of being saved. Now, of course I believe a saint is saved, and God holds that believer in His persevering grace, and it is something that I think her and I could have easily discussed, but she refused to meet to discuss it.

Unity is among the most important ingredients of a church, and perhaps it's most fragile. With nearly 600 people together in a church called Cornerstone, and conflict is a guarantee, and helping people resolve it is among the most prevalent and difficult things we pastors do. **PP** Comedienne Merrill Markoe once quipped, *"It's just like magic. When you live by yourself, all of your annoying habits are gone"*. For the rest of us, life is full of relational challenges, and we must learn how to overcome them. Our Ghost Sighting today reveals the Holy Spirit bringing His people together and helping them maintain unity, but believers must learn to guard it as well.

**PP 1-The Call to the Redeemed Life**

***"I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called"*      4:1**

'Therefore' points us back to what has been written as the grounds to what we are about to read. Paul had been writing from prison to a church of believing Jews and believing Gentiles who were struggling to love each other and stay unified.

So he spent the first three chapters teaching them what God had done for them, and based on that foundation, he is about to teach them how to live with each other in the church.

***"I...urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called"* 4:1**

**PP** 'walk' is a word repeatedly used in the New Testament to refer to the way we live.

The word 'worthy' has the idea of a weight balanced on a set of scales.

The way we live as the redeemed ought to balance ***'the calling to which you have been called'***.

Let me put it another way...what Paul wrote in chapters 1-3 detailed the calling of the Christian, and what he wrote in chapters 4-6 describes the walk that matches it.

And the walk of the redeemed is possible because of the work of our Redeemer.

We've been given a great calling, His grace has made it possible, now we must live it out in our daily lives with each other in a way that matches it...but what does that look like?

**PP 2-The Characteristics of the Redeemed Life**

**PP a. 'with all humility'**

Friends, humility is the foundational virtue of the redeemed which is why it is listed first.

I confess, humility comes and goes in me, yet my life is never better than when it fills my heart  
 We might be tempted to feel we have a handle on this, until we see that Paul intentionally put an adjective in front of humility... ***'all humility'*** 4:2

Not humble in a certain area of our lives, but humility that permeates all areas of our lives

**PP** The definition of humility is literally, *lowliness of mind*

The term *humility* was uncommon in first-century Greek literature; and when it did appear, it was used with a negative connotation, considered a weakness, often used toward Christians

Pride was more highly valued in that world, yet pride is the greatest enemy of the redeemed life

Every sin we will ever commit is an outworking of pride, and every Christian virtue has its roots in humility

Humility moves us to place ourselves below others, pride moves us to exalt ourselves over others

Humility is an internal drive to help others succeed, pride focuses us on our own success

Humility rejoices at another's blessings while pride jealously burns at it

But humility is never self-loathing or what psychology calls a low self-esteem

In fact low self-esteem is pride masked as humility, but which is secretly obsessed on self

**PP** Tim Keller put it this way: *"The essence of gospel-humility is not thinking more of myself or thinking less of myself, it is thinking of myself less"* Freedom

The redeemed life, which leads to unity, begins with humility, and produces Paul's next virtue

### **PP b. 'gentleness'**

***'gentleness'*** is *strength under restraint*

The word was used by secular writers of a tamed horse, whose power was under the direction of the master, responsive to the tugs from the reins of the master

Galatians 5 pairs self-control with gentleness, for they necessarily go together

It is a controlled temper, seen when Moses was angry, yet went to God with it

When the mob came to arrest Jesus, Peter pulled out a sword and attacked to defend, yet Jesus

**PP** stopped him, saying, ***"Do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?"*** **Matthew 26:53**

Gentleness is power that stays under control, trusting in the power and plan of God

People who are not gentle trust in their power to fix the situation, usually with a sharp tongue

But gentleness is what stayed the hand of David twice from killing Saul when he had opportunity

A redeemed life is humble, and gentle, two powerful virtues that promote unity in the church

### **PP c. 'patience'**

**PP** When you think of the word patience, think of a stick of dynamite with a long fuse for it  
 literally means long-tempered

It's the ability to suffer for a long time without a wrong response

When we are hurt or bothered by another, a long fuse gives us time to respond rightly

Aristotle, the Greek philosopher, once said the greatest Greek virtue was *refusal to tolerate any insult and possessing the readiness to strike back*

The patient Christian is one whose humility has produced a gentleness that accepts life as

orchestrated by God's good hand, and it creates the power to suffer long without reaction

**PP d. ‘bearing with one another in love’**

Friends, we are unfortunately going to disappoint and sometimes hurt one another  
It was a few months ago that I violated my own rule of never expressing frustration in an email,  
and tremendously hurt one of our deacons which I’ve since had to ask for forgiveness for  
Hurting each other is a guarantee not just a possibility!!

But a worthy life, which balances our great calling, bears with one another through those times

**PP** The word *‘bearing’* means to hold up, to last, to endure, and not give up or quit

We are to never give up loving each other, no matter the offense

**PP** *“Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.”*

**1 Peter 4:8**

Earnest love was drawn from a horse stretching out and running at full speed

Love works as a shock absorber smoothing rough times when people in the church hurt us

But the multitude of sins that love absorbs, is more than just little grievances:

**PP** *“Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses.”* **Proverbs 10:12**

A worthy life is one that holds up during hard times with each other, enduring in love!

If you come into membership at this church, you will be required to sign a covenant and reaffirm  
annually at our congregational meeting, and it reads like this

By God’s grace, I will protect the unity of my church, by acting in love toward other members;  
by refusing to gossip; and by following the leaders

**PP e. ‘eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace’**

All of these virtues have been aiming to this central point... *‘the unity of the Spirit’*

The Holy Spirit has made this unity a reality, bringing each Christian into one body, the church

Not a unity that we create, for the Holy Spirit has already created it

It’s why leaving your church where you were so invested is different than leaving a company  
where you worked...it truly feels like a divorce

It is a unity that we are responsible to maintain, one that we must be *‘eager to maintain’*

*“There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to  
your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all  
and through all and in all.”* **4:4-6**

Christian, the Holy Spirit has made us one, and we are to be ‘eager’ to maintain that unity

**PP** *‘eager’* means *urgent and enthusiastic zeal*

Maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the church must be one of the highest priorities we have  
and so we should give everything we have to keep it!

How easily offended we can be with each other harboring grievances for years until it divides  
Friends, the Elders will not allow anyone into membership here if there remains any discord with  
a prior church

When we are asked to lay hands on a sick person, we stop and examine to see if there is any  
bitterness or unresolved conflict in the person that may be producing that illness

Bitterness spreads like cancer, affecting personal health as well as the health of a church

Friends, consider unity with each other to be urgent so we can be held together in the *'bond of peace'*

We've seen the calling of the redeemed life and the characteristics of it, but how do we live it?

### **PP 3-The Capability for the Redeemed Life**

A worthy life on one side of the scale has God's glorious redemption, and on the other a life marked by Christ's own virtues

But still, churches the world over are marked by factions, and conflict, and disunity

We have some in our church right now who are embroiled in disunity and strife

And what I've learned is this: it is almost always those who are serving that get caught into the snare of conflict and disunity

The devil hates those who are building the church, and he will sow into them seeds of strife!

Whatever God has brought together, be it marriage or the church, the devil aims to separate

We need help and God has given it to us and Paul explains it in verse 7: *"But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift."* **4:7**

The word *'but'* continues the focus on the unity of the church, contrasting the *'one body'* of verses 3-6 with the *'each one'* of verse 7

In other words, there is unity in diversity, as we each serve uniquely with the *'grace'* given us

This is not meaning *saving grace*, but *enabling grace* in the form of a spiritual gift

Paul used it in this way in chapter 3, *"To me, though I am the very least of all the saints,*

*this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ"* **3:8**  
*'grace'* here is the power of God to build up His church: *"to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith"* **4:12-13**

Christian, have you ever considered that the spiritual gift the Holy Spirit has given you in its exact measure, is to help our church *'attain the unity of the faith'* (13)?

Yet, so often it is the use of these very gifts, done with humility, gentleness, patience and love that leads to such disunity

God knows how difficult it is for us to maintain the Spirit's unity, so Jesus prayed for us

**PP** *"I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me."* **John 17:20-21**

It's difficult for the world to believe that Jesus is the Savior sent by God when the people who belong to Him are not maintaining unity with each other

**PP** *"May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."* **Romans 15:5-6**

Disunity tarnishes the reputation, the glory of God and He will defend His glory

God has given us divine help to maintain the unity of the Spirit through spiritual gifts

**PP** Let's end with practical ways to maintain the unity of the Spirit

**\*Learn to overlook when someone offends you**

***“Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.”***

**Proverbs 19:11**

***“Whoever covers an offense seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates close friends.”*** Proverbs 17:9

I’ve seen people angrily leave a church service because someone sat in their pew  
 One couple left and said the final straw was one of the worship team had an energy drink on stage during the worship songs  
 Another couple left the church because an elder didn’t say hello to them in the foyer  
 Another because I wouldn’t move our church to build a multi-million dollar facility  
 Christian, overlook offenses, as far as it depends on you, Jesus said, be at peace with all men  
 And if the offense has become a pattern, then practice peace-making and win a brother or sister, for they are likely blind to it and need to be delivered

**\*Learn to deal with offenses immediately**, for it gets more difficult with time and grievances harbored will become toxic and lead to bitterness

***“Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.”*** Ephesians 4:26-27

**\*Learn to fight the right fight**

***“We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness”*** Ephesians 6:12

Pulling the strings of conflict and disunity is the devil, so get angry at the right enemy, who is trying to destroy you

***“Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity! It is like the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes! It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion! For there the LORD has commanded the blessing, life forevermore.”*** Psalm 133:1-3

Amen!