

The first one to tell me who said these words and when [July 20, 1969] will get a special package of home-made short bread from Kay's Kitchen.

**One small step for man.**

**One giant leap for mankind.**

Now we are wondering when humans will land on Mars in the future!

But what is even more significant is this:

**Jesus-in-a-Manger:**

**one humble step for God-in-the-flesh appearing,**

**one victorious leap for mankind.**

Last Sunday Pastor Jeremy had begun our Christmas series – The Life Appeared - and talked about Jesus as the Word of

Life, as One who is the ultimate expression of God the Father and who has shown life as it was meant to be lived.

We continue today to look at “The Life Appeared: Jesus the Purifier.”



I remember where the 19 of Cornerstone STM team stayed 20 yrs. ago in our first to San Juan, Nicaragua – the mayor's home.

But I didn't take a shower for 5 days and I felt dirty; the only thing that kept me “clean” were the packages of wet wipes.



After taking the “shower,” the feeling was out-of-this world, refreshing and rejuvenating!

What happened to me physically and hygienically in Nicaragua then is analogous to what happens to us spiritually, when we experience the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus the Purifier.

Jesus says in Matt. 15:19, “**For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.**”

In light of what our heart – the idol factory - is capable of producing, John’s teaching about Jesus being our Purifier is hopeful and life-giving:

**<sup>1 Jn. 1:7</sup> But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus,**

**his Son, purifies us from all sin ... <sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness ... <sup>2:2</sup> He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.**

John is writing to the believers who are influenced by some heretical (Gnostic) teaching about Jesus and spirituality and teaches that genuine Jesus-followers obey God’s commandments as valid proof of their vibrant faith.

John is addressing the issues of believers who want to lead a life of faith on self-serving terms.

John strikes at the heart of the matter:

**<sup>1 Jn. 1:6</sup> If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth ...<sup>8</sup> If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us ...<sup>10</sup> If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.**

***Jesus the Purifier exposes our self-deception.***

Here are certain critical attitudes and behaviours underlying the false teaching of Gnosticism that John are combating:

Sin is ignorance; the solution is obtaining (esoteric) knowledge (gnosis). Sin is not a spiritual, moral, or behavioural predicament of mankind.

Sin is not human failure to reflect the glory of the Creator – a failure of vocation; strict ascetic practices curb bodily/physical contamination of true spirituality.

The bible teaches that there is nothing new under the sun; ancient heresies raise their ugly heads in contemporary forms.

Of course, many in today's churches equate spirituality with accumulating information/facts, thus falling into the ancient trap of the Gnostic distortion of the gospel:

*Knowledge without Transformation*

*Head without Heart*

*Faith without Works*

We may know important doctrines, recite bible verses with familiarity, and speak eloquently with Christian lingo and clichés.

We put on the mask of godliness but our faith is without power; we do not practice what we profess.

Many of us are just hearers instead of doers of truth.

Cf. Libby's response to my question wrt my question about my role as a husband: "If you only practice what you preach."

**Religious darkness is all the more insidious because it clothes itself in a piety that cannot always be recognized by its victims.<sup>1</sup>**

**Gary Burge**

The kind of pseudo-spirituality that John is contending also lands a fatal blow to the Christian community – social alienation and self-righteous spirit caused by spiritual elitism.

The problem is having a moral superiority complex that compartmentalizes faith, instead of a healthy embrace of doing life together in community: some consider themselves to be more "spiritual" and conduct themselves with pride and condescension as well as judgmental attitude:

*Exclusive Posture*

*Judgmental Spirit*

*Privatized Faith*

John confronts these folks with the following words:

<sup>1</sup>Jn. 1:6 **If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. <sup>7</sup> But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another ....**

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<sup>1</sup> Gary Burge, *Letters of John*, p. 76.

“Fellowship” is not just about having fun and food together with others; it’s about sharing life together.

John is addressing are those who claim to be believers but living a double life to respond to “the Word of Life”:

<sup>1</sup>Jn. 1:9 **If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins...**

**Confession being the first step of repentance leads to forgiveness of sins and realigns our lives with truth.**

Often, we conveniently “forget” or ignore our sins by rationalizing or minimizing our wrong attitudes, actions, and words/speech; sometimes we even change our image of God to suit our likings.

Our confession of sins must be concrete, specific about individual acts or attitudes of disobedience; it's continuous as the Spirit points out areas of disobedience and weakness.

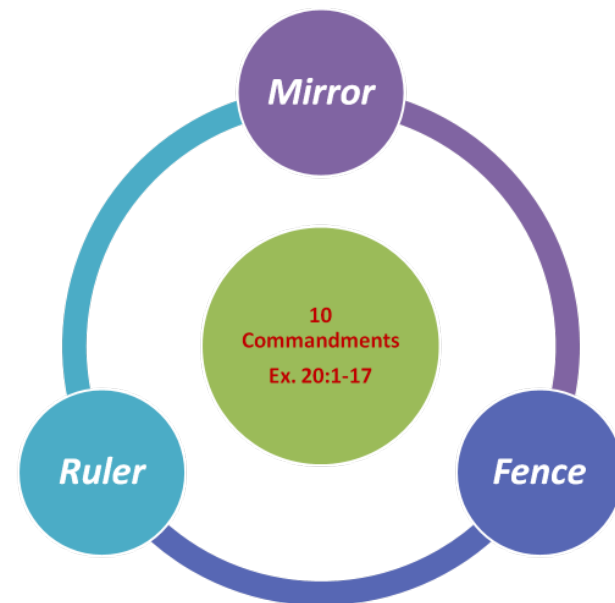
This involves admitting our vocational failure as God-image bearers and sharing with trusted individuals our sins of commission and omission so we can receive God's grace and mercy, His ready forgiveness and rescue.<sup>2</sup>

**Confessing our sins means:**

- ***Don't ignore, rationalize, or minimize our wrongdoings.***
- ***It's saying “Sorry” and admitting personal responsibility.***
- ***Be specific; “saying-the-same-thing” as God would identify each offense.***

Confession is agreeing with God that, as His image bearers, we’ve not lived out His intended purposes in our lives.

If we don’t know where to start, consider the 10 Commandments which serve as a mirror, a fence, and a ruler/guide to assess the condition of our faith, as it relates to our love of God and others.



<sup>2</sup>The *Renouare* Spiritual Formation Bible, p. 515. Cf. James 5:16.

Now, Jesus purifies our hearts by first exposing our self-deceptions; but this also means ...

***Jesus the Purifier removes our personal guilt and shame.***

<sup>1</sup>Jn. 1:9 **If we confess our sins, *he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.***

<sup>2:1</sup> **My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. <sup>2</sup>He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.**

Jesus relinquishes his life for the full restoration of the whole humanity and cosmos.

God the Father has provided in Jesus the Son the means for the continual rescue of His people; His patience and kindness provides the perpetual wayward people the means for fellowship. It is in the very nature of God to offer Himself sacrificially.<sup>3</sup>

The act of cleansing/purifying isn't just about forgiveness but more significantly the removal of defilement, the elimination of stain so that the consequences of that condition no longer have ongoing effects.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Fleming Rutledge, *The Crucifixion*, pp. 239, 244, 246-247..

<sup>4</sup>Gary Burge, *Letters of John*, p.71. Paul says: <sup>2</sup>Cor. 5:19 For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them --<sup>21</sup>For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.

Jesus is our "Parakletos" – Advocate:

Jesus the Son acts as a defence attorney vindicating us against attack instead of a prosecutor who condemns us before God the Father.

He is pleading on the basis that His death atones for our sins – He is the substitution settlement for our sins.<sup>5</sup>

Jesus the defence attorney becomes one with the offender as God's way of righting wrong - the supreme act of God's suffering love.

### **The Judge Judged in Our Place**

**Karl Bath**

The purifying power of Jesus' atoning sacrifice:

- ✓ *Erases the stain of sins.*
- ✓ *Cleanses the conscience from guilt and shame.*
- ✓ *Neutralizes the power of sin in our hearts.*

<sup>Mic. 7:18-19</sup> **Where is the god who can compare with you —wiping the slate clean of guilt, turning a blind eye, a deaf ear, to the past sins of your purged and precious people? You don't nurse your anger and don't stay angry long, for mercy is your specialty. That's what you love**

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<sup>5</sup>Roy Matheson, *1 John*, pp. 52-3.

**most. And compassion is on its way to us. You'll stamp out our wrongdoing. You'll sink our sins to the bottom of the ocean. [The Message]**

Corrie Ten Boom echoes the bible truth about forgiveness:



**God puts up a sign that says, “No fishing allowed.”**

However, sometimes it is not that we don't acknowledge or accept God's forgiveness but that we couldn't or we don't forgive ourselves! Our repeating self-inflicting guilt gives Satan ample opportunities to be the Accuser.<sup>6</sup>

But remember the simple truth:

**Whatever drives us away from God is not His will,  
for He wants to draw us closer to Himself.**

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Rev. 12:10.

Again, listen to the assuring words of Life:

**<sup>1</sup>Jn. 1:3 We proclaim to you ... so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ ... <sup>4</sup>so that you may fully share our joy ... <sup>9</sup>But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.**

When God searches our hearts and reveals all that ugly truth about us doesn't push God away. It brings him closer in love.<sup>7</sup>

So our appropriate response is this:

**Draw close to God with a hope-filled praise  
and thanksgiving.**

- God's faithfulness in keeping His promises.
- God's life-enriching fellowship in community.
- God's amazing love: a love that casts out all fear (1 Jn. 4:18).

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<sup>7</sup> Ps. 139:23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. <sup>24</sup>Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.