

# THE NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE

## Studies in the Sermon on the Mount

### Part 18

#### “Checkpoint Charlie”

##### I. Introduction



Checkpoint “C”, or “Checkpoint Charlie” was the most famous crossing point between East and West Berlin during the Cold War, 1947-1991.

Many people wanted get out of Communist East Germany and escape to the freedom of the West; but you couldn’t just walk in. You had to present papers that showed you had a right to get in.

It’s like Heaven. Everybody wants to go there. But you can’t just walk in. You have to go through a spiritual “Checkpoint Charlie” where God doesn’t ask you for any papers. He requires something called “righteousness”.

**Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of heaven.**

**Matthew 5:20**

This verse is the spiritual version of “Checkpoint Charlie”; who gets in and who doesn’t. What could be more important?

**“Indeed, there is a sense in which the whole remainder of this Sermon, beginning here, is nothing but an elaboration of this one thing; that our righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees if we are indeed to be citizens of the kingdom of heaven.”**

**David Martyn Lloyd-Jones**

## **II. This is Heaven’s Version of “Checkpoint Charlie”**

### **A. We Can’t Get In Without *Righteousness***

1. It is interesting that the one thing that God requires for entrance into heaven is something called “righteousness”; a term we hardly ever use, or even think about.

a. If we can’ go to heaven without it, we need to know what it is!

2. What is “righteousness”?

**“Dikaiousune”**

**Conforming to the revealed will of God; right character, right action**

**W.E. Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words**

### **B. Righteousness Has Two Meanings**

1. The term “righteousness” in the New Testament is used 2 ways; it can refer to our character or our conduct.

a. Righteousness begins with our *character*, being right *with* God; followed by our *conduct*, living right *for* God.

2. Pastor Rick Warren of the great Saddleback Church, gives a 2 part definition: first...

**“Righteousness is about a relationship; being right with God.”**

**Pastor Rick Warren**

a. This is what it means to be saved; to be born again; it has nothing to do with keeping the commandments or good works!

**More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, 9 and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith.**

**Philippians 3:8-10 NASB**

b. Notice: In verse 9 Paul tells us that the Law cannot save us! We have no righteousness of our own based on our works; that God pronounces us righteous (or justified) based on our faith in the works of Christ on our behalf!

c. In Romans 5:17, Paul calls this the “gift of righteousness”; it’s a gift; we cannot earn it.

**...the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us...**

**Titus 3:4-5**

d. In Romans 10, the Apostle Paul tells us why the Pharisees would not get into heaven...

**For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. 4 For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.**

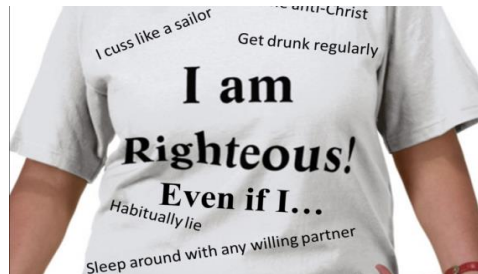
**Romans 10:3-4 NKJV**

3. No one will get into heaven through God's "Checkpoint Charlie" by their good works! We can only be made right with God through faith in what Jesus did on the Cross.

**"Righteousness is about a relationship; being right with God."**

**Pastor Rick Warren**

4. But wait. Almost everybody who goes to church says they are a Christian! Many people claim to be righteous; *they have the T-shirt*; but they live just like the world!



a. They dishonor their parents; they lie; they curse; they commit adultery; they're hooked on porn; they divorce their wives. What's wrong with this picture?

5. Nobody ever told them that there is a 2<sup>nd</sup> definition of righteousness!

**"Righteousness is a lifestyle; living right as God intends."**

**Pastor Rick Warren**

a. Pastor Rick gets it right; he begins with foundational righteousness; salvation; being right with God by faith; but then he says there is a practical righteousness; a lifestyle of living right.

b. Put these 2 definitions together:

**Righteousness is a relationship; Righteousness is a lifestyle.**

**Righteousness is being right with God; Righteousness is living right for God.**

6. *Being* right with God (top left) is verified by *living* right for God (bottom right)!

7. We do not *get* right with God by living right; but if we *are* right with God we will live right. Look at this from the Apostle John...

**Little children, let no one deceive you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. He who (practices) sins is of the Devil, who has sinned from the beginning.**

**1 John 3:7-8 NASB**

a. Bible scholars tell us John wrote this to the Christian church near the end of his life, and that he was warning about those who were teaching that you can be righteous with God but still practice sin!

b. Note: we all sin; we all fall short; the operative word is “practice”, which refers to a consistent pattern of life!

**No one who is born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God’s seed abides in him because he has been born of God..**

**1 John 3:9-10 ESV**

c. Anyone who tells you that you are right with God even if you continually break His commandments is deceiving you!

### **III. Conclusion**

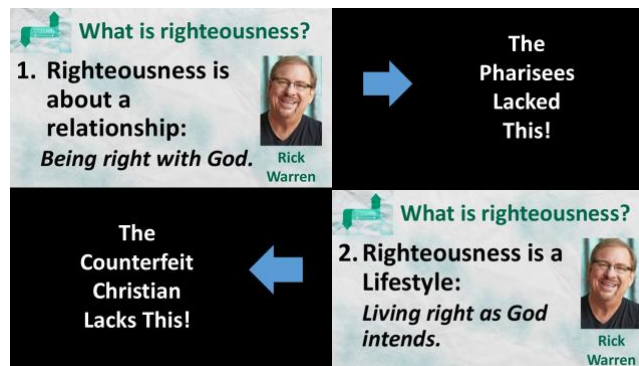
#### **A. Review:**

1. Imagine a heavenly “Checkpoint Charlie”; what will it take to get in?

**Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of heaven.**

## Matthew 5:20

- a. God requires righteousness; being right with God
- b. Righteousness is 2-fold; it is a relationship (being born again); verified by a lifestyle
- c. This puts 2 groups of people in peril: the Pharisees and the counterfeit Christian.



### B. The Pharisees

1. The Pharisees can't pass through Checkpoint Charlie because they lack Righteousness definition #1: they are not in right relationship with God; they are rich in spirit; depending on their good works.

2. They were "self-righteous".

*If Jesus stops them at Checkpoint Charlie to ask them why He should let them through, they would begin to list the good things they had done, or how they did the best they could.*

3. Pharisees see no need for the righteousness of Christ because they're counting on their own righteousness. They saw no need for Christ because they thought they could *earn* their passport to heaven through good works.

They will never enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

### B. The Counterfeit Christian

1. The counterfeit Christian can't get through Checkpoint Charlie because they can't pass righteousness test #2; their lifestyle proves that they don't truly have the kind of righteousness required by test #1.

They will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven

### **C. The Sure Way In**

1. To have a righteousness of relationship with God received by simple faith in Christ.

**I do not frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness came by the Law, then Christ died in vain.  
Galatians 2:21**

2. To live a righteous lifestyle that delights in obedience to the Lordship of Christ and the commandments of God.

**“We are not under the law as the method of salvation; but we delight to see the law in the hand of Christ, and desire to obey the Lord in all things.”  
Charles Spurgeon**

3. God has sent us into the world to help people be right with God; to get them through “Checkpoint Charlie”. May the Lord be with us!

ALTAR CALL AND PRAYER

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