



US HWY 395 N
Suite 102 #200
Gardnerville, NV 89410
E-mail: bill@liferesource.org
Website: liferesource.org

Presentation Transcript
Checkpoint Charlie - Passover
By Bill Jacobs
March 22, 2024

Our title today is *Checkpoint Charlie*.

After World War II, the Russians and the West divided Germany between them – East and West. Berlin, while it was in East Germany, was also divided. So, it was hard to get from East Germany to the free part of Germany, because there was just a corridor for travel. Life was hard in East Berlin. Many people tried to escape to the West. By 1947, the East Germans had built a wall, completely separating East Berlin from West Berlin, in an effort to prevent people from escaping. There were a number of gates a person could take to get from one side to the other, but each gate was guarded by both East and West. So, these gates, essentially, functioned as checkpoints.

There was one of those checkpoints that has become famous over time. It was called Checkpoint Charlie. Guards, armed with automatic weapons, usually surrounded these checkpoints. Identification papers and permits were required on both sides. It was often an ominous scene – a scene of anxiety. At one point, early in the Cold War, Russian and American tanks actually squared off on either side of Checkpoint Charlie and other places as tensions rose. Over the years, it was not unheard of to hear that people had been shot by East German guards while trying to escape to the West. East Germany and East Berlin, to most Germans, were essentially prison camps.

I mention this historical situation because God has some checkpoints for all of us as well. If we want to be in His Kingdom, we have to the right permission. We won't get in without them. This is not to keep us out, but insure that we have what we need to successfully enter in.

An example would be Jesus Himself. He said that He is the *door* into eternal life. He is the checkpoint. He said His name is the only name by which we can be saved. You have to have the right identification.

Here's another metaphorical experience, carefully worded in the King James Bible. It's in Matthew 7:13.

Matthew 7:13-14 - *Enter you in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and many there be which go not there at. Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads into life, and few there be that find it. Few there be that find it – relative to all humanity.*

There's another checkpoint as well that God specifically identifies for us in His effort to help us enter into His Kingdom. So, let's study that one today.

Checkpoint Charlie for Christians is Passover. Let's read about that in 1 Corinthians 11:27.

1 Corinthians 11:27-29 – *Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.*

To partake of these life-giving symbols that keep us under the blood of Christ, living in a state of grace, we have to take it in a worthy manner. Specifically, we have to discern the body and blood of Christ. Do you know how to do that? Well, we have to examine ourselves before we come to the service. And that discernment is like our papers to pass through the checkpoint. Now, we can fake it at the gate, but the guard, who is Christ Himself, knows if we have discerned His body and blood or not.

Now, there are ways to do that – different ways. No one has ever been perfect at it because there is so much involved, but we have to make an attempt at it. We have to do that, because we can't come to the service and drink the wine and eat the bread without having even given thought to it. You can do that, but it won't be successful. You won't pass the checkpoint if you do that.

So, let's consider some self-examination issues to think about in discerning the body. This is to help us be able to that more accurately.

The first one is discerning the body and blood of Christ, which we've already talked about. In 1 Corinthians 11:26, Paul said:

1 Corinthians 11:26 – *For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.* So, what does it mean to *proclaim the Lord's death*? Does it mean we're to tell others about it? Well, yes, in the context of our lives and interactions with others as appropriate. But there's so much more.

When we come to Passover service, we're acknowledging that we are responsible for the death of Jesus Christ. In the century after Christ, people in the church, in their antisemitic ways, starting calling Jews "Christ killers." They didn't want to admit that *every* human had sinned, and thereby, to be saved, needed Christ to die for them. So, as we pass through this checkpoint – as we take the symbols of Christ's blood and body – do we understand that each of us individually necessitated His death? If we were the only ones, He would have still died, just for us.

So, what else do we need to understand before we can take the Passover symbols in a manner that passes muster? Well, verse 27:

V-27 – *Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord.*

What does that mean? Well, when we're under the grace of God, we're not guilty any longer. But, if we treat Christ's body and blood in an unworthy manner, we're no longer under that grace – not covered. This is a serious issue. *Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord.* It's not cheap grace. There are things you have to do. We're forgiven of our past sins – those are violations of the law. That doesn't mean that we're free to continue to do so. If we treat Christ's body and blood in an unworthy manner, we are *no longer covered*. God is serious and committed regarding the need for us to understand what we're doing. This is serious business to Him. And it needs to be serious business to us too. Our level of commitment needs to, at least, approach His.

It says in verse 28:

V-28-32 - *Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.*

So, what is all this about being weak and ill because we don't discern Christ's body? Well, the best way I know to explain it is this way: By His stripes, you are healed. So, there's something that has to have happened for us to be healed. And that was the beating that He took. Jesus walked the Holy Land healing people. He could do that then *and* today, because His body was going to be crushed for us. Before He could die in our place, He had to suffer the penalties of sin in our place as well. I think a lot of us don't understand that.

His life on this earth for three and half years was a life of suffering. He was marginalized, scoffed at, persecuted, punished like a criminal in our place. That's how he was worthy to die in our place. He had to take our place in the suffering that comes from sinning, even though He had

not sinned. He had to suffer the consequences of our sin. And He did that by allowing His own blood to be spilled, killing him, and His own body to be beaten, and tortured in our place. If we don't understand how we can be healed, we won't be. We will remain as we are. That doesn't mean, by the way, that when someone is not healed, it because they're not discerning. There are many other ways and reasons why we're not healed immediately. But that's one reason why healing does not occur upon our request.

Why is it critical to realize what happened to Him – and that we caused it? Well, let's go to Romans 12:1.

Romans 12:1-2 – *I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice....* So, who presented His body as a living sacrifice? Well, Christ did – for us – and now it's our turn to present our bodies as a living sacrifice. And he continues: ... *holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.* And there's a lot to that phrase there. It, essentially, means our logical – what we would do logically, as a result of what God has done for us. That logic follows that, if He was willing to die for us, then we have to step up and be willing to die for Him every day. Some of us may have to shed our lives physically – martyred – but every day we're supposed to sacrifice our lives and do what He wants. He says in verse 2: *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.* Be transformed by the renewal of your mind. What do you mean renewal? Were we ever good? Well, if you understand what the Holy Spirit is – it's the power by which God and Christ come and take up residence in us. Their mind is going to be renewed into us *if* we make an effort to not be conformed to this world, which is under the sway of the devil. And, if we conform to that, then we're like him, not like Christ. So, *transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing – trials – you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect* – the perfect will of God.

You know, when we ask God to heal us, and we don't get healed, then we're being tested. And that's going to help us understand what God's will is. God is willing that we suffer – not all the time, and not like Christ did so much – at least, in our day and age so far – but that's how we grow spiritually.

Great sin needs great forgiveness. And great forgiveness creates great gratitude. Are you greatly grateful? Can God say that? If not, then you're not. You're not understanding about the great forgiveness that's been granted you, or the great sins that you committed that necessitated the great forgiveness. And then, great gratitude creates great commitment. So, you see, it all starts with us realizing our own sin, and realizing that we've been forgiven because of what Christ did. That's where the commitment comes from. And great commitment leads to great reward.

So, can we know that, if we understand enough about the sacrifice Christ made for us, that it's a process –not an event? We start out grasping it at a low level and understand more as we go. We can study about what happened from the Gospels and the Prophets.

So, the second thing that we need to know to do is to honor God as our Creator. You might say, “Well, I know God is the Creator of all things.” Yes, but do you honor Him as that? What would that include? Well, since God created all things, He’s way more intelligent than we are – and more powerful, wouldn’t you say? And that would mean that He knows better we do about everything. Now, He says He loves us, and He says He doesn’t lie – so, that’s true – and His creation is proof of it – that is, when He tells us to do something, it’s always in our best interest to do it, because He knows more and He loves us. He has our best interest at heart – not His own – well, His too, because we’re all going to line up with His will.

Let’s take a case in point. We’re supposed to keep the Sabbath – a part of his creation during creation week, right? Way before Moses, way before the law written in Ten Commandments. Look at what God said to the ancient Israelites in Exodus 31:12.

Exodus 31:12-17 – *And the LORD said to Moses, “You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, ‘Above all – above all, above all – you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you. So, what’s the most important of all the commandments? Above all? Well, it’s to keep the Sabbath. You shall keep the Sabbath, because it is holy for you. Everyone who profanes it shall be put to death. That’s true today, by the way. Of course, there is forgiveness when repentance is performed. Right? Continuing on: Whoever does any work on it, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Well, he is, because he’s no longer identified as one of them. Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy – sanctified, set apart – to the LORD – by the LORD and to the LORD. We set it apart to Him. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day shall be put to death. Everybody was going to keep it. Therefore the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a covenant forever. It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.’”*

So, it helps us to remember who God is and who we are. It’s an identifier of God to us and us to God. So, we want to be identified to God, don’t we? That’s why it’s important to remember that God created the Sabbath. It reminds us that He created us and everything else.

Look at Isaiah 56, starting in verse 6. It says:

Isaiah 56:6-7 – *Also the sons of the stranger – the children of the Gentiles that are with you – who join themselves to LORD to serve Him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be His servants, everyone who keeps the Sabbath, from polluting it, and takes hold of My covenant; even them will I bring to My holy mountain....*

So, the Sabbath is *not* just for Jews. It’s for *everybody*. It’s a key to entering into the Kingdom. ... *even them will I bring to My holy mountain*. I mean, why would that not mean what it means in

every other place in the Bible where it's translated? It's always about the Kingdom of God.

So, how are we doing on that? Have we found ways to make the Sabbath a special day? Or, are we caving in and working on it? Are we doing things to celebrate it? One of the things Elaine and I do is to pray together every Sabbath right after sundown. We pray about God's creation of the world. We pray about our connection to God caused by Sabbath observance. We thank God for all our blessings. It's a great way to start off this special day. And it's easy to get our kids involved in that. You could do it before eating your Friday night dinner, as a part of the blessing on the food. You know, candles...and people having a planned time to participate – to say things. The preparation day – Friday – is when we prepare that. Then on Friday night, at sundown, we do it.

A third thing that we can do in examining ourselves – an area to look at – is to think about the beatitudes. The beatitudes are seven attitudes Jesus listed for spiritual success. This would indicate that living within God's Law leads to these attitudes. So, how are we doing with them? Are we more reliant on God than a year ago? Or, does that idea never come up on our radar? Are we more merciful now than we were last year? Or, are we just as argumentative as we were a year ago? Or, are we more of a peacemaker now?

Another thing to think about is living up to our calling. Jesus told His disciples to make disciples. In their case, that was to be their primary focus. Most of us have other jobs, but do we still make an effort to set a good example of loving neighbor as ourselves – those around us who are not of the faith? If we do, it is not necessary to wear a white robe, stand up on a crate, and wave a placard that says, "Repent! The world ends tomorrow!"

We can also make an effort to influence our congregation or group towards spiritual health, so that it will grow. I saw a short on YouTube from Rick Warren – the guy that wrote *The Purpose Driven Life*? Have you ever read that book? The title of the short was *Forget Church Growth and Go for Church Health*. He's picking up on what I learned back twenty years ago. The point is, if your congregation is caring and unified, that will draw the people God is calling. God's people – the people God is calling – are drawn to healthy congregations. Paul said, "God has called us to peace. And the people God is calling usually need a haven from the storms of life."

I heard a song once by Ray Stevens. You probably know who he is. He writes funny songs. The song had a phrase in it: "the First Self-Righteous Baptist Church." He's a southerner, so there's lots of Baptist churches where he lives, probably. I don't know if Baptists are any more self-righteous than any other church, but I do know that they don't have a corner on it. All of us are self-righteous in some way or another. Do you know where yours is? People God is calling are looking for a safe place – a non-judgmental place, where they won't be looked down on – a kind place. And the people in his congregation need to be that way.

It's interesting in the TV series, *The Chosen*, Jesus explains to Matthew that He was going to start the Sermon on the Mount with a map. And it was the beatitudes. And He explained to

Matthew that, if people are looking for Him, they need to find a group where people are like that – who are poor in spirit, and meek, and humble, and who are peacemakers – not competitive, but inclusive. Instead of coveting control, the leadership covets caregiving. And that becomes the operative attitude of the whole group, if it's done right. So, everybody knows all the kids in the congregation, including their names.

We know some folks back east who built a playground out behind their church building. And a new lady, with her children, started attending, and when asked why she liked attending the church, she said she saw the playground and she knew that the people there were interested in their kids, and that was the kind of people she wanted to be around. So, how we live our lives determines how well God can use us to draw people. Years ago, we were all looking for the church that had prophecy right and was the most doctrinally correct. Doctrine is important – and I'm pretty sure this lady knew that to be true – but one of the other things she was looking for, in her wisdom, was people who cared about their kids – who put their money where their mouth was.

Fifth thing to think about: Seeking God's will instead of our own. This will be the last point in our examination. Let me tell you self-examination includes a lot more than five things. Since we have to be done with this before Passover begins in a month or so, we have to stop somewhere.

So, let's ask ourselves if we're willing to follow God's will in our lives rather than our own. That's just covers everything. It's God's will today for us to obey His law, for example. It's also His will that we experience trials. Are we willing to go with that? "Yes, Lord." Or, do we complain and resist?

At the Feast one year, I heard a man ask a closing prayer for the service. In his prayer, he asked God to help all of us pray for the strength to do God's will, rather than asking God to change His will to what we want. A spiritually minded man – a humble man.

So, Paul used the term *living sacrifice* to explain that our goal was to sacrifice our lives – our will – to follow God's will. While facing imminent death, Jesus prayed, "Not my will, but yours be done." So, how are we doing with that one? Do we have a perpetual case of the gimmes? Or, are we content to follow God's will?

There's an account in history, but not in the Bible, that the crucifixion of the apostle Peter...he asked that he be crucified upside down, because he was not worthy to die the same way that his Savior. Now, there was a man who was willing to follow God's will in his life. While God is giver of good gifts and loves us deeply, sometimes learning His will entails suffering vital hurts. So, where are we with that one?

Now, I admit that the five things we looked at today are not the standard "Am I still in the church?" "Am I keeping the Law?" kind of Passover preparation. They are, perhaps, the back

Page 8

door approach to it. But any kind of self-examination can benefit from doing it through new eyes. So, I hope this has helped with safely passing through God's Checkpoint Charlie this year for you.

This is Bill Jacobs for LifeResource Ministries, serving children, families and the Church of God.