

We are quickly approaching the 4th of July and in this time of the year we can celebrate the freedoms we have in this wonderful country. Likewise, many of us are traveling over the summer having returned from vacations or anticipating ones to come.

We can celebrate the freedoms we have as we traverse the highways of this nation: no need for a passport between states, a reasonable expectation of safety, and avoidance of extortion from corrupt officials—unless, of course, you’re traveling on Illinois tollway.

But despite these freedoms there are some realities we cannot escape: physics. We’re starting a three-week sermon series on the life by the law in Romans. Our focus today: concrete doesn’t compromise. When you’re traveling on 94 through Chicago, no matter how politely you ask, the concrete median is not moving. Better to crash into a car than that, because that’s not moving. Your Chevy isn’t winning against the underpass abutment.

Paul writes extensively in Romans about the law of God. And one might get the impression Paul didn’t like rules. Nonetheless, he writes in Romans: **“What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.”**” Like concrete, the law is uncompromising. GOD'S PERFECT LAW PERFECTLY SHOWS US OUR SINS TO SHOW OUR NEED FOR A PERFECT SAVIOR.

First, I. We think perfection is achieved by abolishing God's Law. Paul writes in Romans 7 **“I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died. The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me.”** It seems a bit hard for us to wrap our minds around what Paul is saying here.

If you live in the United States, we all know the rule is that you drive on the right side of the road. However, on many streets there’s nothing to stop you from driving on the left side of the road, especially if the road is unmarked without a concrete median or even yellow paint down the middle of the road.

Say on a particular street for some reason, people have a problem driving down the wrong side of the road. The city might not be able to afford a dedicated policeman to watching the street, so instead, the city puts a row of concrete medians down the center of the road.

What has changed? Nothing, really, you’re still supposed to drive on the right side of the road, there’s just consequences if you try to switch over to the left side, namely, your car will be totaled as you try to drive over the concrete wall separating northbound traffic from southbound traffic.

So it is with God’s law, God’s Law puts up a wall to mark the boundary of right and wrong. The Ten Commandments unpack what it means to **“Love the**

Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” And **“to love your neighbor as yourself.”** However, the result is death as the car after car crashes into the wall that is the law as we fail to keep God’s holy and righteous commands.

As a result, we as a fallen humanity want to get rid of the walls to help make things better. It’s the Law’s fault, we say. Thus, as we walked around St. Paul, Minnesota last month, we saw a few yard signs calling for the police to be defunded. If our society has a problem with drugs, just decriminalize their use. If too many people shoplift, let people shoplift up to \$950 before it becomes a felony. If couples cannot stay together, make it easier to get a divorce. As we reflect upon our country, isn’t that what freedom means?

Even on a personal level, we think if only the boss had less regulations at work, if only my parents had less house rules, if only the Church wasn’t so legalistic or the pastor wasn’t so mean, then we’d have peace and quiet and things would finally improve.

But we all know that doesn’t make problems go away. Paul writes, **“For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me.”** It is not the commandments that are the problem, it is our sinful nature that violates the commandments that are the problem. You can yell at the referee all you want, but the rules are the rules.

Rather, II. God's Law shows us a perfect world, even though we don't measure up. Paul concludes, **“So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure.”**

As you travel the highways and byways of America this summer remember: concrete doesn’t compromise. It’s not because of anything evil about concrete, it just is what it is. Civil engineers pour concrete into structures and walls that they need not to budge.

God’s law is as real as physics itself. When we violate God’s law or we are the victims of sin that is perpetrated against us, it is just as damaging to our minds, bodies, and souls as any other kind of injury. Failure to acknowledge and respect God’s law is the same as trying to crash into a concrete median again and again hoping this time you’ll pass right through it so you can drive on the left side of the road.

Yet God’s plan for the world is beautiful. Love God and love your neighbor. If we were able to do that perfectly, then and only then could we abolish the police because there would be no crime to stop. We wouldn’t need rules about drug use,

child custody in divorce cases, or shoplifting penalties. That's how we'd achieve life, liberty, and not just the pursuit of happiness, but happiness itself.

But the love we're talking about here is not demonstrated by our worldly standards of romance and lust. We see this love demonstrated in the person of Jesus Christ who obeyed God's Law perfectly. Throughout His life He didn't sin once. He shows us the beauty of loving God and loving your neighbor.

But III. God's Law shows us the need for the perfect Savior. **“Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God.”**

Concrete doesn't compromise, and the solution is not to keep on trying, but to die to self. Driving a vehicle is relatively simple, but God's law is impossible to keep perfectly. The only solution is death. Jesus took on your sins on the cross, and He died with them. Through baptism, you died alongside Christ, your sinful nature was buried with it, and your new self rose with Jesus on the Third Day. The Father does not count sin against you, and you no longer need to count the law as your enemy.

Many of us don't fear the concrete median while driving down the freeway. Unless you're from Britian, you don't need to think to yourself every morning you pull out the driveway if you're on the correct side of the road. You just drive and it's a beautiful thing to go on a road trip when all the rules are followed correctly.

When Paul says you died to the law, he doesn't mean that you are somehow above the law, free to do whatever you please, right or wrong. Concrete still doesn't compromise and God's law remains the same before and after the death of Christ.

However, what changes is you and your relationship to the Law. Because you are in Christ, you know that the way you earn eternal salvation is not about your works. Sin can no longer accuse you by the law because you are in Christ. You are not motivated by the threats of the law, but rather, motivated by the love of Christ to bear fruit for God. You can enjoy the road trip rather than fear the road.

On this 4th of July weekend, this is where we find true life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness, in following Christ wherever He may lead, not demonizing the Law, but confessing where we fall short because we know Christ has forgiven us of sins past, present, and future. We know that as many times as the Law reveals us crashing and burning, we can be glad even then as the Law points us to our need for Jesus. **GOD'S PERFECT LAW PERFECTLY SHOWS US OUR SINS TO SHOW OUR NEED FOR A PERFECT SAVIOR.** We learn to love the Law as the revealing of God's Will, and love Jesus who kept it perfectly for us.