

Anyone who says that being a soldier is easy hasn't fought in a war. Anyone who says that being a farmer is easy hasn't worked through harvest season. Anyone who says that God's Law is easy to follow hasn't tried to keep it.

In our appointed Epistle reading, Romans 7:14–25a, Paul provides a window into how that struggle is, and Paul himself was a pious person. If anyone wanted a good example to follow, it would be Paul. **“For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.”** Luckily, CHRIST JESUS FULFILLS GOD'S PERFECT LAW FOR YOU.

First, I. The law of God is good and wise. As the hymn goes that we just sung and read, “The Law of God is good and wise and sets His will before our eyes, shows us the way of righteousness, and dooms to death when we transgress.” Just because we cannot keep God's law doesn't mean the law is bad. The time you're angriest about speed limit laws is right after you got a ticket. However, you cheer the police officer who pulls over the guy in the hot rod driving through a school zone at 40 miles an hour.

In fact, the law shines brightest and shows itself as good when we break God's rules. Paul said it himself. **“Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good.”** The law is there precisely to show us the right way, and to correct us when we sin. God's Law that we find in the Ten Commandments and in the Bible at large, diagnoses our actions and can explain why we might feel guilty over something we said or did. In this way we can say the law is good.

The Ten Commandments and other such rules and admonitions that make up God's law are not random hoops to jump through. It's not as though God was feeling bored on Mount Sinai and wanted to give Moses and the Israelites ten rules to make their life more difficult. God's law shows us what His will is for our lives. In that sense, God's law has always existed, just like the laws of physics. In Heaven, there will still be the Ten Commandments, the only difference will be that we'll actually be able to keep those rules!

Knowing that our Lord delights in the law, we can also say with Paul, **“For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being,”** If the law of God were able to be obeyed perfectly, the world would be a better place. Then and only then would we be able to abolish the police because there would be no law infractions to enforce!

Yet II. Our sinful flesh disobeys, disregards, and disdains God's Law. We see this struggle go on in our Epistle text. Paul wants to do the right thing. He wants to obey God's Law, but there is the enemy within.

**“So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.”** Each of us is born a sinner. This is the sinful flesh that Paul is talking about in our text here today. Even

after becoming a believer, that sinful flesh still struggles against us, wishing to disobey, disregard, and disdain God's Law.

God's Law has three uses, or aspects. It acts as a curb, a mirror, and a guide. For those of you playing along at home, the curb is the first use, the mirror is the second use, and the guide is the third use. And we'll take these in the opposite order.

In the Garden of Eden, the Law was only a guide. The Law told Adam and Eve how to live, and they could live that way. There was no fall, no sin, and no disobedience. Unlike Paul, the good they desired to do, they could actually accomplish!

And the opposite of using the law as a guide is disobedience. We all know it well. Whether it be as us as kids hiding after we stole the cookie from the cookie jar, or it is that confession we have to make to our spouse, or it is the difficult conversation apologizing to our friend. Our sinful flesh excels at disobeying the law.

This leads to the second use of the law, the law as a mirror. After the rules have been disobeyed, the mirror shows us our sin. Like the prophet Nathan telling King David a horrific story of a ruler stealing a poor man's beloved lamb, the law as a mirror enrages and disgusts us, then just as Nathan turned the tables and explains to David that he, King David, is that thief, the law then shows us that we are the ones doing those disgusting things.

But our sinful flesh won't be stopped with a mirror. If mirror mirror on the wall shows who's the most sinful of them all, and we find our reflection staring back at us, the sinner in us simply throws the mirror out the window. Our sinful flesh disobeys and disregards the law.

Lastly, this leads us to the first use of the law, the use of the law as a curb. If the guide doesn't help and the mirror doesn't horrify you, then the curb will knock some sense into you. This law is used in the civil realm, and it's the force behind the judge's gavel and the police officer's badge. If someone has no problem murdering, the law would stop them from murdering if for no other reason than to avoid prison.

But our sinful flesh doesn't stop at disobeying and disregarding God's law, it must disdain and overthrow the law. How often people will act differently if they know their actions will go unpunished. How many looters and arsonists get caught in a riot?

In a certain neighborhood in Seattle, protestors told the cops to go away, and they did. In a neighborhood without police officers in the course of three weeks two people have died in shootings. Any other year that same neighborhood only has 1 to 2 murders in an entire *year*. In the upcoming months and years, we as

Americans might see the results of a world where the law is disdained, and the law's curb tossed out.

The law is a curb, a mirror, and a guide, and our own sinful flesh would disdain, disregard, and disobey that perfect law of God. **“Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”**

III. Christ has fulfilled the law, and in Christ we fulfill the law. God's solution to our disobedience was to send His very Son to keep the law perfectly. Unlike Paul or you or me who struggles to keep the law because of our sinful flesh, Jesus was able to perfectly enact God's law. He followed the law as a guide perfectly. The law's mirror showed Him to be sinless, and the law's curb never needed to stop Jesus.

Each one of the Ten Commandments, every jot and tittle of God's demands Jesus was able to fulfill completely. He is perfectly obedient, and Jesus wasn't stuck up or rigid, but He was free and loving. Keeping God's law means loving perfectly, and throughout the course of His ministry Jesus loved perfectly.

And that's what God's perfect will is: to love. All the law is summed up in this, love God, and love your neighbor. And Jesus so loved us by not only showing us the perfect example but bearing our sins and forgiving them. He bore the curse of our disobedience on the cross, Himself being disregarded and disdained.

With Jesus' death our sinful flesh was crucified, died, and was buried, and all that was left is His perfect resurrected body. And that's what we as Christians have promised to us. Even though we struggle with this sinful flesh, and we ask for forgiveness daily as we fail to keep God's law, we have the promise that Jesus will resurrect us, leaving behind the body of death, and we'll be able to follow that good and perfect law of God, and love one another fully and completely.

The good news is that we're saved not by the law, clearly, we cannot keep it. We're saved by trusting that one who kept the law perfectly. And in Him and through His Holy Spirit working through us, we find that the Law of God, indeed, is good and wise.

On this Fourth of July weekend, we thank God for our Founding Fathers in fighting for our liberties and freedoms. As Christians we are free in Christ. This is a freedom more liberating than any government or ruler can grant us. This is the freedom from sins forgiven and the law fulfilled in Christ.

May we use our Christian freedom not to do whatever our sinful flesh desires, but to use our freedom to love one another, to sacrifice for one another, and do things that are in the best interest of our neighbor and that please God. Even as Jesus Christ willingly and fully gave Himself up for us. Amen!