

Holiness, Hypocrisy, and Chicago Traffic

“They just go round and round! And round and round!”

I’ve lived in Chicago 15 years now. I had a car from 2002 to 2008 and then again after I got married in 2015. I don’t know what happened in the intervening years, but after I started driving regularly again two years ago, I sensed that I was far more impatient than I was the first few years I lived here. “Impatient” is really too nice a word. I am angry. Often.

People are everywhere. Things move slowly. One way streets mean backtracking. There is endless road construction. Driving here is sometimes like playing a video game: “You avoided that guy backing out without looking! +100!” “You didn’t see that cyclist and almost flattened him ! -200.” “You let 13 people and their four pets pass at a non-crosswalk! +150.” And there are days I feel like I’m in my own *Truman Show* where all these things keep moving around to block me from getting to where I want to go.

But don’t let these lighthearted comments fool you. I seriously deal with some deep-seated issues over this. I do not say this flippantly, but there are times when I am in traffic where I can sense the capacity to harm or even kill another human being within my soul. I do not think I ever will, I am just saying I feel a vindictive spirit rise up within me at times when someone cuts me off or when I am late for something and Chicago is tearing up yet another major street and causing back ups for miles.

There is something about traffic that causes me to imagine what I would do if I were completely sovereign. If had all power, I would immediately give a flat tire to everyone who ran a stop sign. Every time I saw someone on their cell phone

while driving, I would disintegrate the phone with my mind. Every time someone passed me with their music extremely loud and the windows rolled down, I would destroy their music system. And give them a flat tire.

The Heart of Worship

In other words, I would have zero patience. And just as with Phill's article last week on [Learning To Love in Chuck E. Cheese's](#), I am amazed at how God can take the daily, trivial, and menial events in our lives and teach us about him. Because recently God has been using my thoughts to remind me that, unlike me, He is sovereign. He has complete authority and power to do whatever is good, even the immediate judgment of terrible drivers. Yet He is described over and over again in the Bible is patient and "slow to anger".

This, far more clearly and shamefully than anything else in my life right now, causes me to comprehend how unlike God I am. I am not sovereign or patient. Since God is both, it reminds me emphatically of why I am supposed to exalt him over myself. I believe this is the core meaning of the word "holy" in the Bible. God is different in a superior way. He is above us. Separate. Unique. When God says repeatedly in Isaiah "I am God, there is no other," this is what he means. And God will use just about anything to remind me of this. My time in Chicago traffic the last few months has been as edifying as any Bible study I've attended.

And of course the Bible teaches us that we are to be holy in that we should be like God in some key ways, which is different and separate from the world. I already know I am a hypocrite when I drive because I get mad at people daily for doing the very things that I do. But I am equally as hypocritical because I bear and preach the name of my God, Jesus Christ, and yet I am so opposite him when I am behind the wheel.

In recent years there have been those that have asked the question: Has authenticity replaced holiness? I wonder if that question isn't about being so concerned with honesty about our sin that we do not talk about fighting it. I have always had an easy time being transparent but I confess I may to often stop there. On this I do not want to. I want to fight. I want to memorize and meditate on James 1:19-21. I want to be different than the world. Because God is.

My church small group often talks about how easily we get irate in traffic. I am amazed that even the most humble, gentle, passive people at my church will confess to how traffic gets to them like nothing else. So I write this in hopes that others feel my pain but also share my desire to change. Christians cannot be sovereign. But we can be patient. We can choose holiness over hypocrisy. Even in Chicago traffic.