

The Lightning and Thunder of God

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There are some within contemporary Christianity that believe that the world understands the true nature of sin. While many do readily acknowledge that lying, stealing, blasphemy, adultery (and even lust and hatred) are morally wrong; they cannot truly see sin without the Holy Spirit's helping hand, under the light of the Moral Law. The Apostle Paul (because of his conscience) like the rest of us knew that sin was morally wrong (see [Romans 2:15](#)), but he made the statement that he had not known sin but by the Law (see [Romans 7:7](#)). The Law was a sharp axe that cut off any hope of him being saved by self-righteousness. It showed his personal sin to be exceedingly sinful (see [Romans 7:13](#)). It removed Heaven from his grasp. It made him thirst for the righteousness that could only be found in Christ. It is with this instruction that the Law acts as a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ (see [Galatians 3:24](#)). It reveals the light of understanding to us.

The test of where someone's measure of light is to ask the question, "Do you think that you are a good person?" Most will say that they are morally good, despite the fact that they acknowledge what they consider minor sins of lying, stealing, etc. We call this test the "Good Test," and it's based on what Jesus did in [Mark 10:17](#). We simply show what "good" is, by taking sinners though the Ten Commandments, and personalizing each one by asking "How you ever lied, stolen anything, etc."

Notice that Paul does the "Good Test" on the hypocritical self-righteous Jews in Romans chapter two. They already possessed the mirror of the Law (see [Romans 2:17-18](#)), but they had never looked into the mirror themselves to see sin in its true light. So the apostle turned the mirror towards them so that they could see themselves in truth. He used the Eighth Commandment and personalized it by asking, "You that preach a man should not steal, do you steal?" Then he used the Seventh--"You that say a man should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery?" Then the First and Second--"You that abhor idols, do you commit sacrilege?" He then told them that their hypocrisy caused others to break the Third Commandment by blaspheming (verses 21-24).

How do we know that unrepentant man has no real knowledge of sin? The Scriptures tell us, "There is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God," ([Romans 3:11](#), italics added). Again, it is the Law that gives us understanding. The schoolmaster brings the knowledge of sin. It does what Nathan the prophet did for King David. It brings God and His standards into the picture and helps us to throw ourselves at His mercy. It causes us to personalize our sin and say, "I have gone out of the way. I am together become unprofitable; I am not good. My throat is an open sepulcher; with my tongue I have used deceit. The poison of asps is under my lips. My mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. My feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and misery are in my ways. And the way of peace have I not known. There is no fear of God before my eyes. My mouth is stopped by the Law, and I am therefore guilty before God. I have sinned and come short of the glory of God. But thanks be to God, I am freely justified by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (based on Romans chapter three).

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While there are those that may be quick to say that some of these verses are not personally applicable, the true convert knows that the potential wickedness of his heart has never been put to the test. It is wise to pray "Lead me not into temptation." Think where your heart would take you if knew that there was no Judgment Day. What gossip would come through your sinful lips, what lost wallet wouldn't be returned, what person would be free from your lustful eyes? What jealousy and hatred wouldn't lead to murder or lust to rape . . . if you knew that you would never, could never be caught?

Many believe that God will not require an account for sin, He doesn't see it (see [Psalm 10:11, 13](#)), and that's why we see the depravity of sin played out in the everyday life of this wicked world--of which we were once a part.

But after the Law had done its accusing work, we can then say (with King David), that God has had mercy on us because of His loving kindness. According to the multitude of His tender mercies, He blotted out our transgressions. He washed us thoroughly from our iniquity and cleansed us from our sin. For we acknowledged our transgressions and our sin was ever before us. Against Him and Him only had we sinned and done evil in His sight. We were shapened in iniquity, when He desired truth in the inwards parts. But He made us clean. He washed us and made us whiter than snow. He hid His face from our sins, blotted out our iniquities and created a clean heart within us. Now we can teach transgressors His ways, and sinners shall be converted to Him.

Recently, Sue and I were preparing dinner when the lights in our house suddenly went dim. A second later we understood why. There was a flash of lightning, then a massive three-fold roll of thunder that shook the house and everything within it, including us. It was wonderful. We need that sort of thing now and then, because it tends to put the fear of God into our hearts. This wasn't even a manifestation of God's anger. It was just a small part of His creation, doing its thing.

The experience made me think of when God gave His Law. The thunder and lightning were so great, Israel thought they would die. After hearing bone-shaking thunder, I could understand how they could feel like that.

It also reminded me of what the Law does to people who are self-righteous and religious. They think that they have the light of spiritual understanding, but the lightning of the Law takes it from them. It reveals their dim ignorance. In reality, their "understanding" is darkened (see [Ephesians 4:18](#)). It flashes the powerful and brilliant light of truth before their eyes, and then thunders God's wrath over their sinful heads (see [John 3:36](#)). It puts the fear of God into them . . . and we know from Scripture that that's the reason men depart from sin--"By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil" ([Proverbs 16:6](#)).