

# Payback Time

Luke 6:27—38 (v. 37—38)

## Introduction

Buddhism, Hinduism, and some other religions teach the doctrine of karma, that the things one does, good or bad, directly affect the reincarnation of that person. Intentional negative actions can also negatively affect this life. In the West, we say, “What goes around, comes around” or “Payback’s a ...” well, you know the rest. No matter what your religious background, we all have some version of karma at work. You get what you deserve. Life is all about payback. Is that what Jesus is talking about here when He says, “For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you?”

## Saved by Grace Through Faith in Christ Alone

First, we must remember these passages of Scripture (Read **Acts 16:29—31** and **Ephesians 2:8—9**). God tells us in His Word that we are saved by grace through faith in Christ alone. No good works on our part add anything to our salvation. We are not saved by faith plus good works. We are not saved by faith plus anything, but faith alone.

## Saved for Good Works

But we read on in **Ephesians** (read **Ephesians 2:10**). The life of a believer is to be a life of good works. When we confess our sins, we repent of them. “Repent” means to “turn around” or “turn away from.” We turn away from the sinful way of living and turn toward how we were created to live. We live by faith. The same faith that saved us produces the good works in our lives.

## Only Faith

In fact, *the Law cannot be obeyed unless we first have been reborn through Christ* (**Ap. V. 135**). We might be able to do some things in line with the Second Table of Commandments, but **Hebrews 11:6** says: *without faith it is impossible to please [God]*.

## Law and Gospel

We must also remember the distinction between Law and Gospel. As Phillip Melanchthon says in the **Apology** concerning this passage: *[this is] a preaching of the Law with a promise attached, convicting of wrong, commanding to do what is right* (**Ap. V. 134**).

## Third Use of the Law

This Law is intended for Christians, because this whole section begins with the command to love, specifically to “*love your enemies*” (**Luke 6:27**). Disciples of Jesus are not to follow the call of duty, but the Law of Love. Jesus is showing us, in this passage, what the Law of Love looks like, so the Christian has a guide or rule of how to live. With the Love of Jesus in our hearts, we want to love others. Jesus is telling us how to do that.

## An Outward Sign

So what does Jesus mean when He says to forgive and you will be forgiven? In the **Large Catechism**, Martin Luther says that here *God establishes forgiveness as our confirmation and assurance, as a sign alongside the promise (LC Pt. III, 96)*. Good works are the fruit of the faith that saves. When we forgive others, it shows we have been forgiven. For those who have not been forgiven do not know how to forgive. When we withhold judgment from others, it shows that the judgment meant for us was taken by Christ on the cross. The mercy that we give shows that we have received mercy from God. We do unto others as we would have others do to us, not so they will act that way toward us, but because we are following the Law to *love [our] neighbor as [ourselves]* (**Leviticus 19:18**). We do this not out of a sense of duty, but because that's how we were created to live as we have been re-created by Christ. Life in Christ is not about **PAYBACK**; it's all about love.

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*And the peace of God,  
Which surpasses all understanding,  
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*

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