

Circumventing the Law of Reciprocity

The Law of Reciprocity, otherwise known as the Law of Sowing and Reaping (some call it Karma), does not create a clear path to progress. One of the benefits of this law is that we learn from painful experiences when we suffer the natural consequences of our sinful attitudes and actions. We also learn from the rewarding experiences resulting from the good that we do. However, if this were the only way God dealt with our sin, there would always be a need for “bad” people to provide us with these negative learning experiences. The world would be stuck in a rut of never-ending positive and negative experiences.

There is a way to circumvent the Law of Reciprocity, through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The “*Good News*” of Jesus to humanity was that God not only provides rewards for doing good and punishments for doing evil, He also shows love and mercy to those who don’t deserve it, when they turn to Him for forgiveness. In 1 Corinthians 11:31, Paul taught us that, “*if we were more discerning with regard to ourselves, we would not come under such judgment.*” Some translations use the words “*judge ourselves.*” Jesus and John the Baptist used the word “*repent.*” Through the Gospel of Christ, all mankind will eventually break the cycle of rewards and punishments.

In another place we are told that “*love covers a multitude of sins*” (see 1 Peter 4:8). In addition to the benefits of repenting of our own sins, there is a multiplied benefit that results from returning good for evil. When we exercise love and grace towards those who would harm us, we make double progress in our spiritual growth. In addition, this has the potential of providing a profound positive learning experience for the undeserving recipients of our love.

The Law of Reciprocity, which correlates in many ways to the Old Testament Law, serves a very useful purpose. In the words of Paul, it serves as a “*schoolmaster*” that leads us to Christ (see Galatians 3:24). In many cases, it takes us to the “end of our rope,” at which point we come to our senses and recognize our need to repent and seek God’s help and forgiveness.

Does the love and grace of God completely eliminate the need for reciprocity in our lives as Christians? I don’t think so. Unfortunately, receiving God’s forgiveness for past sins, does not teach us all that we need to learn. Many unconfessed sins remain, some of which are completely unknown to us. We still need to develop greater empathy towards those who need our love, help and kindness. We still struggle with many temptations to sin. We still have a long ways to go in our ages-long journey to become like Christ. A single act of repentance does not make us perfect. We need to be doing it on a daily basis (see 1 John 1:9). Repentance from sin, and acts of love and kindness, definitely accelerate the process, but our journey will not be complete until the end of the ages.