

Alma 34.<sup>15-18</sup>

<sup>15</sup>And thus he shall bring salvation to all those who shall believe on his name; this being the intent of this last sacrifice, to bring about the bowels of mercy, which overpowereth justice, and bringeth about means unto men that they may have faith unto repentance. <sup>16</sup>And thus mercy can satisfy the demands of justice, and encircles them in the arms of safety, while he that exercises no faith unto repentance is exposed to the whole law of the demands of justice; therefore only unto him that has faith unto repentance is brought about the great and eternal plan of redemption. <sup>17</sup>Therefore may God grant unto you, my brethren, that ye may begin to exercise your faith unto repentance, that ye begin to call upon his holy name, that he would have mercy upon you... <sup>18</sup>yea, cry unto him for mercy; for he is mighty to save.

We all know that forgiveness requires faith in God and trust in His willingness to forgive. We sense that forgiveness is a gift. But in this passage, Amulek takes one more step backwards toward origins—it's a similar step as that we took in our meditation on Acts 5.<sup>29-32</sup>. Jesus' sacrifice, the evangelist witnesses, "bringeth about *means* unto men that they may have faith unto repentance." Note: not faith unto *forgiveness*, but faith unto *repentance*. The repentance that proceeds forgiveness is as much a gift as forgiveness.

Without Jesus' atonement and its revelation of divine mercy our ability to conceive of and dare to hope we might repent would be impossible. And even if we could somehow conceive of it on our own, who would dare exposing their sinfulness through confession to a perfect and holy God who held high expectations of us? They simply couldn't. They wouldn't. They wouldn't take the chance. Not without some evidence that exposing their sins, their sorrow for sin, and their desire to improve would result in some positive rather than negative divine response. Jesus' revelation of a merciful God is just such evidence. So, before we "take credit" for having repented, let's remember to thank God for gifting us with an awareness of and hope in the very possibility.

We mention this again because it just seems like something we should keep in mind during our Lent repentance. We should express gratitude for God's mercy in making even the prospect of repentance known and feel possible and safe.

There are many other principles in this passage for which we can be grateful. Among them, I have always been impressed by Amulek's understanding that Jesus' sacrifice and the "bowels of mercy" that are revealed in it, "overpowereth justice." I suppose this impresses me so because I cannot count the number of times that I have been forcefully and certainly reminded that "mercy cannot *rob* justice."<sup>1</sup>

"What do they even think that means, anyway? I have often asked myself and others. I have often followed this question up with, "But you do know, don't you, that mercy can *satisfy* justice?" Sometimes I have been more aggressive in my follow up: "and that Jesus' mercy can *overpower* justice." To overpower is a very intense, aggressive word. Jesus moves aggressively against sin and injustice.

I cannot explain Jesus' ability to "overpower" justice any more than I can explain what it means to "rob" justice. But, I do know what it feels like, for I have felt it. In my own life, I have witnessed

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<sup>1</sup> See Alma 42.<sup>25</sup>

justice shrink and slink away when Jesus offered his merciful resistance to justice's intimidating demands and threats.

Maybe you have too. If so, what a great time Lent is. A time to remember the "safety" we have found when "encircled" in Jesus' most powerful arms. And with that remembrance, a time to "cry unto him for mercy" as we seek to deepen our commitment to repenting and improving through the grace of God.

If you have not witnessed such a miracle in your life, what a great time Lent is. A time to experiment and seek to be "encircled in the arms of safety" through faithful confession, repentance, and trust in God's merciful disposition. A time to experience firsthand that truly, truly "he is mighty to save." He has the power to save and he has an insatiable desire to save. We can have the utmost faith in both of these saving truths.

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

*(edition: March 26, 2025)*