

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! In this edition I'll be looking at Mercy and its various applications.

I'm extending an invitation for submissions to be published in The Gospel Notes Newsletter. The primary criteria for inclusion are these:

1. It should be oriented towards the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
2. It should use the scriptures as a source of information.
3. It should include the references for any quoted 3rd party sources.
4. It should not be political.

Also, if you have particular subjects that you would like me to cover in the Newsletter, please let me know.

You can also view previous editions of The Gospel Notes Newsletter (TGNN) in PDF (Portable Document Format) by going to <https://thechurchofjesuschrist.info/TheGospelNotesNewsletter>.

If at any time you do not wish to receive this newsletter, please let me know. Your responses to me are confidential unless you request otherwise.

Genesis 7:37 (Inspired Version) And thy curtains are stretched out still, and thou art there, and thy bosom is there; and also, thou art just; thou art merciful and kind forever;

Genesis 19:16 (King James Version) And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city.

Jude 1:21 (KJV & IV) Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

1 Nephi 1:13 And it came to pass that when my father had read and seen many great and marvelous things, he did exclaim many things unto the Lord, such as, Great and marvelous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty! Thy throne is high in the heavens, and thy power, and goodness, and mercy are over all the inhabitants of the earth; and because thou art merciful, thou wilt not suffer those who come unto thee that they shall perish!

Moroni 10:3 Behold, I would exhort you that when ye shall read these things, if it be wisdom in God that ye should read them, that ye would remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men--from the creation of Adam even down until the time that ye shall receive these things--and ponder it in your hearts.

These passages record the first and last occurrences of the terms **Mercy** or **Merciful** in the Bible and Book of Mormon and they represent the relationship between God and man. That is, God is merciful or full of mercy towards man. It is not the reverse – man is not merciful or full of mercy towards God.

This one-directional use of mercy shows us that it can only be applicable in circumstances where a kindness is being demonstrated to someone that is in trouble or in a bind of some description. Mercy is the willingness to show this kindness, and being merciful is the action of doing this kindness.

In the context of this relationship between God and man this term “mercy” and its variations would seem to show that it is a choice based on a sense or feeling of good-will towards someone else. God is merciful because he has chosen to do something good for us. God is full of mercy towards us because he wants good things for us.

Mercy is not limited to the relationship between God and man, though. Many times we find mercy being applied to relationships between men (or men and women).

Judges 1

24 And the spies saw a man come forth out of the city, and they said unto him, Shew us, we pray thee, the entrance into the city, and we will shew thee mercy.

25 And when he shewed them the entrance into the city, they smote the city with the edge of the sword; but they let go the man and all his family.

Zechariah 7

8 And the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah, saying,

9 Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother:

10 And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.

11 But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear.

12 Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the LORD of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the LORD of hosts.

Matthew 5:7 Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

Luke 6:36 Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

Alma 19

78 Therefore, my son, see that ye are merciful unto your brethren; deal justly, judge righteously, and do good continually; and if ye do all these things, then shall ye receive your reward;

79 Yea, ye shall have mercy restored unto you again; ye shall have justice restored unto you again; ye shall have a righteous judgment restored unto you again;

Alma 25:49 Therefore, their chief captains demanded their weapons of war, and they brought them forth and cast them at the feet of the Nephites, pleading for mercy. Now behold, this was the desire of Moroni.

Moroni 9:17 Oh, the depravity of my people! They are without order and without mercy.

We see from these passages that mercy is something that can be part of this relationship between people and not just between God and people.

The nature of how that mercy is used is something to consider. The Lord is merciful towards us, but **how** is the Lord merciful towards us? We can have mercy on other people, but **how** can we have mercy on others?

In some instances of scripture we see that mercy is a matter of forgiving a transgression, but in other instances it seems to show a general kindness not specific to forgiveness. For example, we find this passage:

Mark 10

46 And they came to Jericho; and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimeus, the son of Timeus, sat by the highway side begging.

47 And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.

48 And many charged him that he should hold his peace; but he cried the more exceedingly, saying, Son of David, have mercy on me.

In this case we understand that a blind man was asking Jesus for mercy, but it was not because he had committed a particular sin. They wanted mercy from him that would grant them their sight. This was not something Jesus owed this man. But the man wanted **mercy** anyway. We learn that mercy is more than just a forgiveness of sins, but instead has a wider meaning that includes granting according to a desire which is fair and just.

Mark 10

49 And Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called. And they called the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort; arise; he calleth thee.

50 And he, casting away his garment, arose and came to Jesus.

51 And Jesus said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?

52 And the blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight.

53 And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole.

54 And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus in the way.

This **act** of mercy is no mere gesture. It is the expression of kindness to someone that is suffering; a kindness that comes out of love and a willingness to give to someone in need. There is no reason this same definition could not be applied to the relationship between people. Remember the beatitude which says, “Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.” This shows that as we are to others, so will God be to us – a restoration of mercy for mercy.

The mercy God will show to us is not equal to the mercy we show to others. His mercy towards us is always greater in magnitude:

Mosiah 12:8 And the Lord saw fit in his infinite mercy to spare them; nevertheless, they suffered much anguish of soul because of their iniquities--and suffering much, fearing that they should be cast off forever.

He is more merciful than we can be because he has more mercy that he can give, while what we can offer to our fellow man is limited. In some respects we can see that mercy seems to be used almost interchangeably with the term “loving-kindness” in the scriptures:

Psalms 25:6 Remember, O Lord, thy tender mercies and thy loving-kindnesses; for they have been ever of old.

Psalms 40:11 Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O Lord; let thy loving-kindness and thy truth continually preserve me.

Psalms 51:1 Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions.

Isaiah 63:7 I will mention the loving-kindnesses of the Lord and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies and according to the multitude of his loving-kindnesses.

Hosea 2:19 And I will betroth thee unto me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies.

I do believe, though, that there is a difference between mercy and loving-kindness. Mercy seems to have a hint of a different meaning in that it looks beyond errors to accomplish what it is set to do through loving-kindness. Thus, mercy could be considered a composite of forgiveness and loving-kindness even though they may both be used in the same passage.

What Jesus did on the cross for our sakes was the ultimate act designed to bring about mercy. Through the crucifixion we receive mercy,

Alma 5:22 And **he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy**, according to the flesh, **that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities**.

Alma 16:216 **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.

These passages show that his mercy is the way he established to bring about means for salvation. Remember, though, that mercy is restored for mercy, but in disproportionate amounts (i.e., God can do this better than we can).

Colossians 3

12 Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering,

13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

14 And above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

What these passages from Alma and Colossians also introduce is the phrase “bowels of mercy,” which is a curious phrase. What are the “bowels of mercy,” as opposed to any other?

It is suggestive that one can have mercy, but not “bowels of mercy.” Jesus had mercy on the blind man and Moroni had mercy on enemy soldiers, but is that **from** the bowels of mercy? The crucifixion of Jesus was his way to “fill his bowels with mercy” as Alma 5:22 reports. To use a common phrase today, the “bowels” are your “guts” – meaning the deepest part of your body. This phrase about “filling” his “bowels **with** mercy” or in Alma 16:216 “the bowels **of** mercy” means that his entire being to the deepest core of himself was consumed with mercy because it was needed for all mankind.

Without the crucifixion Jesus would not have been able to make that intercession which takes our place, which is the action of atonement. Atonement is the “bringing together” of two who were once at odds with each other. It is this desire for atonement – this love for us – for man to be brought back into the presence of God, which necessitated mercy that could only be acted upon by a being capable of absorbing the demands of justice into his own body through this sacrifice.

In some respects this is the classical example of an immovable object being struck by an indestructible object. The justice of God is the immovable object, but the mercy and love of God is the indestructible object. The outcome of this collision is that the indestructible object will over-power the immovable object. But it is not entirely without condition.

The act of God’s mercy through Jesus Christ is not an act of infinite forgiveness. The crucifixion brought about the **means** for forgiveness of sins, but it did not bring about the **absolute universal** forgiveness of sins for all. God’s **mercy** may be infinite, but his forgiveness of sins is not granted to all. We know this because there is an unforgiveable sin – which is to blaspheme (or deny) the Holy Ghost when it has once had place in you. Jesus’

act of mercy cannot breach that boundary because Justice will not be denied in that case. Neither will it be applied to those that openly rebel against God until they die.

Jesus can't save you if you don't want to be saved, and you can't be saved if you refuse Jesus as the savior. Mercy is only applied if you seek it, and if you truly seek it you won't abuse it. Those who are ignorant of Jesus cannot deny or refuse something which they know nothing about, so mercy has claim on them.

These are the bowels of mercy – there are conditions, but when those conditions are met there is nothing that can prevent it from working its work.

Romans 8

38 For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The only thing that can possibly prevent us from receiving mercy is ourselves. If we are willing to receive mercy, we must be willing to give mercy, and through continued faithfulness we can enjoy the limitless love of God in his merciful kingdom.