
Salvation: The Conversion of Muslims

Luke 6:27-36

Introduction

A Difficult Message

If obedience to tonight's message seems unbearable it will be precisely because it possesses a promise which seems unbelievable. *We will not obey if we do not believe.*

The Bible alone is the inerrant, infallible authority for what we are to believe about God and how he wants us to live. By nature we don't like the thought of absolute authority existing in anyone outside of ourselves. What if tonight God commands me to do something I don't want to do? What if he portrays himself in a way that differs from the way I think he should be? The temptation to repel uncomfortable texts from our hearts may be great tonight. And so, I desire us to read in unison a prayer and a perspective which we are projecting now on the screen. Please stand with me as we read together

L.23:34 – And Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do”

L.10:3 – Behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.

(read and pray together)

Tonight I will preach a passage that is a difficult passage to preach. It is not difficult in the sense of complexity of thought structure. It is not going to be difficult to see the internal outline and its basic message. The problem rests in what it is telling us as a church to believe and do. Tonight's message will be, I think, one of the most difficult commands to obey precisely because it possesses one of the most difficult promises to believe. Both the general command and its empowering promise will be necessary to embrace if God will get the glory and Muslims will get the grace.

A Directed Message

This is what I set out to do tonight.

To Demonstrate

First, I will try to point out that the Muslim is an enemy. I will establish this fact by demonstrating that both the Qur'an (the Muslim's Bible) and the Bible point in this direction.

To Describe

Secondly, I will establish the basic manner by which we as a church are to respond to an enemy. There are three ways to respond to a Muslim. Hate, tolerate or love. We will see the Muslim as the terrorist and desire vengeance, we will see the Muslim as essentially a monotheistic, productive follower of his God and desire to live in peace with him or we will love him with the gospel.

The accent this evening is on how to evangelize a Muslim. We will soon recognize, however, that this message applies to how we are to respond to Catholics, Protestant liberals, devout Buddhists, well-adjusted, unbelieving church goers, moralistic atheists, and the happy-go-lucky pagan who "eats and drinks for tomorrow we die". This message given by Jesus to his disciples applies to all of the church's enemies. And so, I set out to demonstrate from the text tonight a lifestyle consistent with a disciple of Jesus Christ. How is a follower of Jesus suppose to respond to someone who is an enemy of his? What is the essential conduct of a true disciple toward one who is antagonistic to the gospel? What, in other words, does "love your enemy" look like?

These types of questions will be answered from the text this evening. The hope in doing this is to map out a strategy for evangelizing Muslims. This section will be the heart of the message. This section is to shape our prayers and perspectives and practices so that we will be dangerous to the agenda of Islam.

To Define

Lastly, not only do I want to demonstrate that Muslims are enemies of the gospel and enemies of Christians and not only do I desire to map out for us a way of interacting with our enemies but I want to conclude with two observations from the text which will particularly address the vacuum in the Muslim's heart. What is he or she missing by being a devout Muslim? What good news must the Muslim hear in order to escape the wrath of God and enjoy His endless supply of love? We will make these principles clear at the end so that we will be better equipped to love our enemies; both in word and in deed.

So let's get started.

The Muslim

In his book *Unveiling Islam*, Emir Caner quotes from the Qur'an some staggering doctrines Islam embraces. For example:

- ⊕ “They do blaspheme who say God is one of three...for there is no Allah except one Allah” (surah 5:73)
- ⊕ The similitude of Isa before God is as that of Adam; He created him from dust. (surah 3:59)
- ⊕ “That they said in boast “we killed Chris Isa, the son of Mary”...but they killed him not nor crucified him. (surah 4:157)
- ⊕ “He (the baby) said: “I am the worshiper of Allah...” (surah 19:30)
- ⊕ “Then those whose balance (of good deeds) is heavy, they will be successful. But those whose balance is light, will be those who have lost their souls; in Hell will they abide”. (surah 23:102-3)
- ⊕ “There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah” (the basic creed of Islam).
- ⊕ “Fight those who believe not in Allah nor in the last day...If anyone desires a religion other than Islam, it shall never be accepted of him” (surah 9:29; 3:85)

So we can say that Islamic doctrine says the following.

- ⊕ The Trinity is blasphemous.
- ⊕ Jesus is a created being.
- ⊕ Jesus was not crucified.
- ⊕ Jesus worshipped Allah of the Qur’an.
- ⊕ Salvation is based on good works.
- ⊕ Strong opposition against those who preach the Christian faith

A Muslim, in accordance with his book (the Qur’an) is antagonistic toward the God of the Holy Scriptures and His followers.

Not only do we witness the fact that a Muslim is an enemy of the Christian faith by noticing what the Qur’an says, we also can see this fact quickly and clearly by noticing what the bible says. The Bible unequivocally states that there is no such thing as neutrality. In Luke 11:23 Jesus said, “Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters”. Elsewhere in Luke Jesus is recorded saying, “No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money (cf. L.16:13).

The point is clear.

1. The Qur’an and the actions of Muslims communicate that Islam is not for the Christ of the Bible.
2. The Bible says that the one who is not for Jesus is against Jesus.

3. Therefore Muslims are against Christ and enemies of His disciples.

POINT #1: MUSLIMS ARE ENEMIES OF CHRIST AND HIS DISCIPLES.

The Mission

As one reads the two volume work of Luke (that is, the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts), one gets a clear impression that Jesus was divinely appointed to carry out a specific mission. To understand how our passage is functioning in Luke's overall narrative, it will be helpful for us to see Jesus' mission as it was prophesied, prepared and presented at the beginning of Luke's go spel.

Prophesied

Right from the start of Luke's narrative, we come to a prophecy over Jesus. This prophecy of Simeon is troubling; for it tells the reader that "[Jesus] is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through [Mary's] own soul" (cf. 2:34f). Luke is indicating that Jesus' appointed mission will be productive and it will be persecuted. He will cause some to rise and some to fall. And those who follow him will suffer too.

Prepared

Luke sets out to demonstrate that Jesus has a mission given and sustained by his father in heaven; God Almighty (L.1:46-55; 3:21-4:30). To make this mission clear, it was not only prophesied but it needed a forerunner to prepare the people. John the Baptist set out to be obedient to God by calling for repentance in Israel. John was productive (i.e. people were saying, "What shall we do?" [3:10-14] and John was persecuted (3:20).

Luke makes plain that the mission will be met with resistance and even hostility. The mission will advance only through suffering.

Presented

To cast Jesus' appointed assignment in its proper light, Luke shows that the mission was prophesied, prepared and now presented.

Notice how the people responded to Jesus as he presented his mission (cf. 4:14-30). In 4:22, after he announced his mission by locating himself in the book of Isaiah, the people "marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth". But then he exposed their hardened hearts and intimated God's judgment. And they became enraged. Now, instead of speaking well of him, they desired to kill him (as seen in v.28ff).

Notice also what happens to those who follow him after he presents the mission. In Chapter 5 we see Jesus calling Levi, a tax collector, to follow him. Levi then has a party to which he invited all his sinful friends and Jesus. The religious leaders of the day (i.e. Pharisees) were repulsed by Jesus' compassion and freedom. Note how Luke talks about their disgust in vv.30,33. There is a growing animosity over Jesus and his followers. The Savior is on a mission. And this mission will be opposed vehemently.

The idea Luke makes clear is that those who follow the Christ will suffer from the Christ's enemies.

POINT #2: Association with Jesus is involvement with persecution. (cf. Lk.9:23-26; 10:3; Acts 14:22)

The Manner

According to 6:12, it's in these days; days of growing hostility toward Jesus and His followers, that Jesus calls his 12 Apostles to begin the advancement of the mission. What follows is what we will be focusing on this evening. He desires to instruct his disciples on how they are to respond to this growing resistance to the mission. That is, he will clarify for his followers what to do with a group that hates truth and loves lies (see vv.23c,26b). The manner of the mission is now the subject of concern.

Follow with me as I read from the English Standard Version Luke 6:27-36.

Love your enemies

There is a specific reason why Jesus' disciples need these instructions. V.22 tells us that disciples of Christ will be hated. Therefore, they need to know with certainty how they are to act in response to enemies. Concisely put, Jesus says simply "Love your enemies". That is the overarching message for this evening. Islam is vehemently opposed to the gospel. The manner in which we are to carry the message to our enemies is "love". But how is love characterized? When our message is opposed and our lives are harassed or even threatened what does love look like?

In actions

First we can see that love is in actions; v.27. "Do good to those who hate you". Notice that the Bible does not merely tell us to withhold bad from those who hate us. It tells us to take the initiative and "do good" to those who do bad to us.

For a fuller look at this aspect of love see Romans 12:19-21. As Jay Adams said in his book "How to overcome evil", "The Christian is the most violent man on earth. He has orders to subdue the enemy, win the victory for his Lord, and he will stop at nothing to do so; his Lord's name is at stake". Then he qualified these words by saying, "But in [subduing the enemy] he may not use just any sort of weapons or any

strategy that he wishes...God's strategy calls for the use of weapons of righteousness...we are to overcome evil with good".

Recently (that is, post 9/11) we've seen how to overcome evil with evil. For example January 22 of 2002 a report came out from Columbus.

Non-Muslims have offered space, money and other support for worshipers who cannot use the Islamic Center of Columbus after vandals caused more than \$100,000 in damage to the mosque.

Vandals drilled holes in floors of Columbus' oldest mosque, ripped up copies of the Quran and pulled water pipes from walls, saturating floors and ceilings of the three-story building. Mohammed Shareef, president of the Islamic Foundation of Central Ohio, said the building will not be usable for some time.

Just last September seven bullet holes were found in the Cuyahoga Falls Mosque and recently the door of the Kent Mosque was damaged. How are we to respond to our enemies? "Let your light so shine among men that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matt.5:16).

When we are faced with opposition, we are to overcome evil with good.

In words

The second way Jesus expresses the command "love your enemies" is in words. We see this in v.28. These are words both to and for our enemies. We are to bless and we are to pray. We are to say words of grace and wisdom and concern to a Muslim. We also are to pray for a Muslim.

Much help can be found in Operation World; a book designed to assist the church in praying for the lost. In it, Patrick Johnstone gives us specific ways we can pray for Muslims. (see www.gmi.org/ow)

In attitude

We next come across another way Jesus exhibits love for enemies; vv.29-30. We are not to take Jesus' words in a crassly literal way. We see Jesus getting slapped in John 18:22ff. He did differently in that case than what he is saying here (if we were to take him in a rigidly literal way). No, Jesus is getting at the attitude of his followers. When we suffer injury, we must not desire retaliation. We must seek the well-being of our abuser. And we must be ready to undergo another injury for the sake of love if need be (cf. 1Pet.2:21ff).

Oh, beloved, we will not be obedient to the manner of the mission if we are so ready to express our grievances through exercising our government-given rights. Why not instead take Paul's words to heart in 1Corinthians when he encouraged those who were taken advantage of, "Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be

defrauded?”. This is the strategy that is mighty. This is the manner of the mission of Jesus Christ. And this is the attitude to which we are called!

Jesus summarizes this section by a general command with a comparison. How are we to measure obedience to the command “love your enemies”? What standard are we to gauge our actions, words and attitude when loving Muslims who are intolerant to the gospel? Jesus said in v.31, “And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them”. When we are mistreated when loving someone for the gospel’s sake, we are to examine our own desire over how we would like to be treated. The standard of our own desire must be brought to bare upon our outreach to the Muslims. If we will stick our necks out and love hostile people (at least hostile in their ideology) we will be persecuted. As Dr. Piper frequently says, “make your self-seeking the measure of your self-giving.

The next section in this paragraph, vv.32-36, describe loving enemies by comparing it not with our own desires but with God’s character and actions. You can see this in v.36. What Jesus is getting at is a strategy for evangelism that cannot be matched.

We’ve noted that Jesus is exhibiting enemy love in actions, in words and in attitude. Now he says that enemy love is like what God does.

By unselective kindness

The nature of loving our enemies is brought out with three illustrations of the way Christians must surpass people of the world. We are to love our enemies not merely our friends. The point with these illustrations is to underscore the importance of unselective kindness. We are not to pre-qualify potential recipients of kindness. We are not merely to be kind to those who are kind to us. This selectivity mirrors what the world does. We must be different; radically different. We are to be like God who “is kind to the ungrateful and the evil”.

To win the heart of a Muslim be kind even when ingratitude and evil are present.

By unbelievable mercy

Finally Jesus draws this thought to a close by illustrating enemy love by paralleling it to God’s unbelievable mercy. Observe this in v.36. He is using God’s character and actions as a standard by which we are to live with our enemies. This angle on his actions is said to be mercy. Recall what Paul said concerning reconciliation in Romans 5:10. “For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more now that we are reconciled shall we be saved by his life”.

We must take our cue from God at this point. When we get daring and move into enemy territory in order to release POW’s by the gospel, we will need to have a

standard that far exceeds natural ways. We are to be merciful as our Father is merciful. Like Father; like son...

Recap

What we've noticed so far is that the Muslim's book; the Qur'an, and the Christian's book; the Bible, both point to the fact that a Muslim is an enemy of Christ and his followers.

We saw that the gospel of Luke starts by making the point that Jesus will be opposed and suffer. And that association with Jesus is involvement with persecution (cf. Lk.9:23-26; 10:3; Acts 14:22). Jesus goes with the gospel to his enemies. His followers must also.

Because his followers will be hated by His enemies, Jesus clarifies the manner of the mission. Simply put, we are to love our enemies. He does not leave it to the imagination of the reader to define this type of love. He talked about how we are to love our enemies

- ⊕ In actions
- ⊕ In words
- ⊕ In attitude
- ⊕ By unselective kindness
- ⊕ By unbelievable mercy

Let us love our enemies...even unto death (cf. Rev.2:10)

In closing let me come back to the opening sentence of this message.

Conclusion

If obedience to tonight's message seems unbearable it will be precisely because it possesses a promise which seems unbelievable.

An unbelievable promise

There is one thing I've left off in expounding this paragraph. This component to obedience must not merely be spoken of. We must have it as our magnetic north, a carrot before the nose, an impulse driving us into difficult ministry. The promise in this passage is overwhelming. And without believing the richness of it, we will not move out in risk-taking, life-changing, God-honoring, enemy-converting deeds.

The unbelievable promise is found in v.35. Listen to it again as I read it aloud. "But love your enemies, and do good and lend expecting nothing in return and your reward will be great and you will be sons of the Most High..."

Look not for earthly reward. Look for heavenly reward!

We will enjoy an unshakable assurance welling up in our hearts that we are sons and daughters of the Most High when we are ridiculed for Christ's sake. The sense of knowing that when all tears stop, when death dies and all evil expires, when toil rests and all unbelief takes flight, we who obey by faith this very command (i.e. love your enemies) will thrill with joy never ending and ever increasing. Oh happy days! Oh happy days!

Jesus says, "rejoice in that day [i.e. of suffering] and leap for joy for behold your reward is great in heaven".

Let us set our sights on more of Christ. Let us attempt to imagine what great reward in heaven is like? Let us picture in the mind's eye a vast vision of the splendor of Christ richly given to the one who walks by faith even into enemy territory?

The marching orders are clear.

1. Believe the unbelievable.
2. Love the unlovable.
3. And let us get ready to suffer with joy!