



“Tempered”
Luke 13:31-35

Idea: Like Jesus, believers must faithfully speak hard truth with soft hearts.

Intro: A Baptist church, a Methodist church, and a Presbyterian church worked together to sponsor a community-wide revival. After the revival had concluded, the pastors of the three churches got together to discuss the results of the revival with one another. The Methodist pastor said, “The revival worked great for us. We gained four families as new members of our congregation.” The Baptist pastor said, “We did even better than that. We gained six new families as members of our congregation.” The Presbyterian pastor, listening to the great things being shared by his friends, rejoiced. He then said, “Well, we did even better than that! We got rid of ten of our biggest troublemakers!”

Conflict, unfortunately, is a normal and natural part of living in a fallen world. Ever since that moment Adam and Eve ate the fruit from the forbidden tree there has been conflict. This discord takes place person to person and person to God. So, we should not be surprised to find conflict between people who claim to know God. We find such a situation in the final section of Luke 13.

Read Luke 13:31-35.

Inquiry: Reading through this Gospel, we see that the Pharisees had no love for Jesus. The six woes Luke recorded in chapter 11 against the Pharisees and the scribes showed that they were clearly enemies of our Lord. As a result, *“the scribes and Pharisees began to press him and to provoke him to speak about many things, lying in wait for him, to catch him in something he might say”* (11:53-54). Those religious leaders definitely wanted to put a stop to Jesus and His ministry.

Now, the Lord did not help Himself. He did not try to find common ground or build a bridge of partnership. Instead, He warned His disciples to be leery of the Pharisees, calling them hypocrites (12:1). He saw them as a danger to people because their teachings were poisonous and infectious.

In this new confrontation, Jesus was in Perea, east of the Jordan River. He was journeying toward Jerusalem (13:22). Herod Antipas ruled this region under the Romans. He was the son of Herod the Great. So, when the Pharisees came to Jesus with what appeared to be friendly advice, Jesus was not fooled. He knew they wanted to get Him back into Judea where they could watch and ultimately trap Him. This suggestion was nothing more than a way to frighten Jesus in the direction of their trap.

We must remember that our Lord was the gentle Lamb of God, but even a lamb is suspicious of wolves when they fake concern for its safety. Jesus knew of the political hit Herod had taken when he killed John the Baptist.

The public criticism had been great, so the ruler did not want another blemish on his record. Therefore, he used the Pharisees to pass on the threat to Jesus, hoping He would run south to Judea. The Pharisees were obliged to help Herod because it served their desires too. In Judea, Jesus would fall into the hands of the powerful Sanhedrin.

The words and interaction in this passage are somewhat surprising. Again, we typically think of Jesus as being gentle and meek. We expect the words He speaks to be truthful and laced with love and encouragement. Now, while His words here, as always, are truthful, they do not necessarily feel loving or encouraging. There is name calling and a judgment given. We strive to teach our children to not call people names or prejudge others, yet Jesus does both. It is here that we must remember the full deity of Jesus. As Sovereign God, He knows the hearts of the people who are seeking to kill Him. Also, as God, He is Judge over all. Therefore, we should not see a contradiction here. While finite humans should not call people names or prejudge actions, because they are not God. Jesus can and did precisely because of His infinite knowledge. In this section, we see His strong reaction toward the Pharisees, but we also see his heart toward them. Therefore, I want us to look at Jesus' tempered response and find applications for ourselves as we strive to be holy and gospel-centered in a world that is antagonistic toward everything that is of God. Like Jesus, believers must faithfully speak hard truth with soft hearts.

Jesus' response was tempered in at least three ways.

1. Bold in Confrontation

Jesus had been teaching on the narrowness of the door into the Kingdom of God (13:22-30). He had pointed out that familiarity with the Kingdom was not sufficient for access into it. He had depicted the harsh judgment that would come to those who rejected the narrow way. He had also said that the Jews' rejection of the Christ nullified their privileged position as God's people. In response to His teaching, the Pharisees were incensed, so they sought to move Him toward their trap. Jesus did not shrink back but boldly confronted them.

A. Bold when faced with threats. (vs. 32)

The Pharisees worked their plan by issuing a warning of danger from Herod (vs, 31). Their claim was probably true on some level. Herod, like most of the leaders in that era, was suspicious of anyone who might pose a threat to his power and control. Most likely, however, the political climate would not have allowed him to take such overt action against Jesus. Nevertheless, the Lord knew Herod's heart, so He said, *"Go and tell that fox..."*. This was not a compliment. "Fox" was common jargon in Hebrew for a person with base cunning, and it was used to designate someone as insignificant and worthless. It was an expression of utter contempt. No other person was treated with such contempt by Jesus. Later, when He stood before Herod after being arrested, He was questioned at length. Jesus, however, said nothing to him (23:9). Leon Morris, commenting on this scene, said, "When Jesus has nothing to say to a man that man's position is hopeless."

The Lord's disdain was further revealed in the message the Pharisees were to deliver to Herod. *"Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course."* Jesus' message was that He would continue to do what He had set out to do. He was going to do it at His pace and on his schedule until it was finished. He was not going to be manipulated by anyone, especially Herod. Now, we understand the grander theological component to this message. Namely that Jesus was referencing His death, burial, and resurrection to come. He was pointing out that it was under divine control. Therefore, this was sovereign premeditation.

Jesus never backed down or expressed fear in the face of a threat. Like Him, we too should never back down or express fear when threats come. Instead, we must be bold in confrontation.

B. Bold when faced with gospel opportunities. (vs. 35)

Jesus' response to the Pharisees was equally as bold. Look at verse 35. Because they had rejected His offer of the Kingdom, He declared their house to be forsaken. They would have no more opportunities to hear the gospel and respond in faith to it. In fact, they would not see His face again until He entered Jerusalem (19:38).

Jesus did not back away from the gospel. He never sought to soften or make it easier to hear. Therefore, neither should we. Instead, we ought to boldly hold fast to the gospel and call people to repentance and faith.

Jesus' response when confronted was one of boldness, but that is not all. It was tempered in a second way.

2. Resolute in Confrontation

Read Luke 13:33.

This statement parallels what Jesus had said to the scribes and Pharisees in 11:47-51. The nation not only rejected God's loving invitation to His feast, but they even killed the servants who brought them the invitation (Acts 13:27). Jesus knew full well what each day brought and what He faced in Jerusalem. In essence, Jesus was saying that Jerusalem held the monopoly on killing the prophets and the city would not be deprived of this grand opportunity. Therefore, if Herod or anyone else wanted to kill Jesus, then they had better get to Jerusalem because only there would He die.

Let's put ourselves in Jesus' sandals for a moment. Each day Jesus moved closer to the city where a cross awaited Him. Think about this. Is there anything crueler than forcing a criminal to move a foot closer each day to the gallows? Yet that is basically what our Lord did. We have laws in America that prohibit such cruelty. The 8th Amendment to the Constitution states: "Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted." The thoughts about a cruel and unusual death were Jesus' daily experience as He resolutely chose to go to Jerusalem. He was fully aware that He was the Lamb who was to be sacrificed there.

With the cross on the horizon, no confrontation would hinder His resolve. Can we say that of ourselves? How resolute are you in confrontation when questioned or threatened because of your stance on the gospel? If Jesus can be resolute in His commitment to go to the cross, then we should also through the Holy Spirit's power be resolute in our commitment. Let's lean in with resolve to confrontation as Jesus did. We dare not look for a fight, but we should always be ready to give an account for the hope we have (1 Pet 3:15). There is a third way Jesus' response was tempered.

3. Sorrowful in Confrontation

Read Luke 13:34.

Jesus expressed His desire for His people with a magnificent image of a mother bird brooding over her young in the nest. This image is a favorite one in Scripture (Deut 32:10-11; Psalm 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 63:7; 91:4). The image of being tucked under the wings of Jesus expresses the sustenance, warmth, and security that believers are to find in Him.

Herod and the Pharisees have confronted and threatened the Lord. They had done their best to frighten Him into their trap, stressing the terrible danger He was under there in Perea. Jesus, however, expressed to them that it was they who were actually in danger.

Jesus expressed great sorrow over the sinful and lost condition of the people who had rejected Him. When confronted by people who wanted to see Him dead, Jesus' response was tempered with sorrow for their souls. Today, as we seek to live out our faith in a world that is increasingly becoming hostile toward it, we too must be tempered in our response. May we never lose sight of the spiritual ramifications of a person's rejection of Jesus. May we never get comfortable or okay with seeing people enter a Christless eternity in hell. May our hearts always be broken for people as we see them dead in their sin.

I understand that the battle can and is hard. The conflict is draining. The character shots taken against us hurt deeply. Rather than losing our cool and losing our testimony, let's remember how Jesus hurt for people. As we watch our society move further and further away from a Judeo/Christian ethic and become antagonistic toward believers, like Jesus let's refuse to allow our hearts to become hardened toward those who throw stones at us. May God's divine love for people temper our response.

“Hot heads and cold hearts never solved anything.”
– Billy Graham

Conclusion: Conflict, unfortunately, is a normal and natural part of living in a fallen world. As we watch the culture of America erode before our eyes, we feel a range of emotions, but we hold firmly to our trust in God and offer a tempered response.

If Jesus was persecuted and maligned, then we should expect nothing less in our lives. We should expect confrontations on various levels. In every case, like Jesus, let's be bold, resolute, and sorrowful as we keep our eyes on the Lord and carry out our mission.