

SURAH 110:1-3

FAITH: Islam | TEXT: Surah 110 (Al-Nasr) | VOLUME: The Meaning of the Holy Quran | AUTHOR: Rashad Khalifa

OVERVIEW

Surah 110, known as Al-Nasr (The Victory) or Al-Tawdi (The Farewell), is traditionally considered one of the last complete Surahs revealed to Muhammad. In Rashad Khalifa's translation, the text asserts that ultimate triumph and victory originate solely from God. It prophesies a specific historical turning point where people will enter 'God's religion' (Islam) in large crowds ('throng'). The theological climax of the text is the instruction given to the recipient (Muhammad): despite this massive political and religious success, the proper response is not pride, but the glorification of God and a plea for personal forgiveness. Khalifa translates the final attribute of God as 'The Redeemer,' suggesting a theological posture of restoration, though the traditional Arabic 'At-Tawwab' implies one who accepts repentance repeatedly. For the believer, this text emphasizes the transience of human effort and the necessity of humility and repentance even at the peak of success.

KEY FIGURES

God (Allah), The Recipient (Muhammad), The People (Converts/Masses)

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. DIVINE ATTRIBUTION OF VICTORY

Assertion: Military and religious triumph is not achieved by human effort but is a gift 'from God.'

"When triumph comes from GOD, and victory. [110:001]"

Evangelical Comparison: Evangelical theology affirms that God is the source of victory (Psalm 20:7, Proverbs 21:31). However, the New Testament reframes 'victory' primarily as the conquest of sin and death through the Cross (1 Corinthians 15:57), rather than the geopolitical expansion of a religious state. While the Quran here celebrates the expansion of the religious community as the sign of God's favor, the Gospel often presents the Kingdom of God as advancing through suffering, weakness, and the 'foolishness' of preaching (1 Corinthians 1:18-25), distinct from the 'throng' embracing the religion mentioned in verse 2.

2. UNIVERSAL NEED FOR FORGIVENESS

Assertion: Even the Prophet, at the height of his mission's success, is commanded to implore God for forgiveness.

"You shall... implore Him for forgiveness. [110:003]"

Evangelical Comparison: This doctrine presents a significant Christological contrast. In Evangelical theology, Jesus is the sinless High Priest who intercedes for others but needs no forgiveness for Himself (Hebrews 4:15, Hebrews 7:26-27). In this text, Muhammad is explicitly commanded to seek forgiveness (*istighfar*). This validates the biblical anthropology that 'all have sinned' (Romans 3:23), creating a clear distinction between the sinless Savior of the Bible and the fallible prophet of Islam.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: The fundamental gap lies in the mechanism of redemption. Khalifa translates the Arabic *Tawwab* as 'Redeemer.' In Biblical theology, redemption (*apolutrosis*) implies a ransom paid—the blood of Christ (Ephesians 1:7, 1 Peter 1:18-19). In this text, God is the 'Redeemer' (or Acceptor of Repentance) simply by His will to forgive upon petition, without the satisfaction of divine justice through substitutionary atonement. Furthermore, the text implies that the 'victory' of Islam supersedes previous revelations, challenging the finality of Christ's work.

Shared Values:

God is the source of victory; Humility is required in success; God is forgiving/redeeming

Friction Points:

1. [Major] Theology Proper (Nature of God's Kingdom) – Conflates the Kingdom of God with a geopolitical entity/religious community expansion.
2. [Critical] Christology (Sinlessness of the Savior) – Presents the highest human figure (Prophet) as sinful/needing forgiveness, contrasting with the sinless Christ.

Semantic Warnings:

"Redeemer"

In Text: One who accepts repentance and forgives (Arabic: Tawwab).

Evangelical: One who buys back a slave or captive by paying a ransom price (Christ's death).

Example: *In Surah 110:3, God is the Redeemer because He accepts the prophet's apology. In Galatians 3:13, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.*

"Victory"

In Text: Political conquest and mass religious conversion (Fatah).

Evangelical: Overcoming the world, sin, and death through faith in Christ (1 John 5:4).

Example: *The 'victory' in Surah 110 leads to political dominance; the 'victory' in 1 Corinthians 15:57 is over death itself.*

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: Implicitly, being part of 'God's religion' and receiving forgiveness.

How Attained: Through submission (Islam) and asking for forgiveness (Istighfar).

Basis of Assurance: God's nature as the 'Redeemer' (Acceptor of Repentance).

Comparison to Sola Fide: The text prescribes an action (imploring forgiveness) to access grace. Sola Fide posits that grace is accessed through faith in the finished work of Christ, not through the act of asking itself (Ephesians 2:8-9).

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. Glorify your Lord
2. Praise your Lord
3. Implore Him for forgiveness

Implicit Obligations:

1. Attribute success solely to God
2. Maintain humility during times of victory
3. Accept converts into the community

Ritual Requirements:

1. Tasbih (Glorification)
2. Tahmid (Praise)
3. Istighfar (Seeking Forgiveness)

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. In verse 3, the Prophet is commanded to ask for forgiveness. What specific things does he need forgiveness for?
2. Khalifa translates the last word as 'Redeemer.' In your understanding, what price was paid for this redemption?

3. If even the Prophet needed to ask for forgiveness after such a great victory, how confident do you feel about your own standing before God?
4. How does the 'victory' described here compare to the victory Jesus claimed when He said, 'It is finished' on the cross?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. The Command to Seek Forgiveness (Istighfar) – This acknowledges the universal human condition of sinfulness. No amount of 'victory' or religious success removes the need for grace. This points to the need for a Savior who does not need to ask forgiveness but can grant it. [Romans 3:23 ('For all have sinned...') -> Hebrews 7:25 ('He is able to save completely...')]
2. The Longing for Victory – Humans long for victory over evil. The Quran locates this in political conquest. The Gospel locates this in the defeat of death and sin. We can agree we need victory from God, but the enemy is sin, not opposing tribes. [1 Corinthians 15:57 ('But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.')]]

Spiritual Weight:

1. Performance/Uncertainty [Moderate] – The text implies that even at the pinnacle of service to God (delivering the message and achieving victory), one's standing is still precarious enough to require immediate pleading for forgiveness. There is no 'rest' in a finished work.
2. Lack of Mediator [Severe] – The believer is left with a model (the Prophet) who himself needs saving. There is no sinless intercessor to bridge the gap between the holy God and the sinful human.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Prophetic Revelation confirmed by historical observation.

Verification Method: The text invites the listener to observe ('You will see') the fulfillment of the prophecy (people entering the religion in throngs) as proof of its truth.

Evangelical Contrast: Biblical epistemology relies on the witness of the Spirit through the written Word (1 John 5:9-13) and the historical resurrection of Christ. While biblical prophecy exists, the ultimate verification is the person of Christ, not the political success of the religion.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: Late Medinan Period (approx. 630-632 AD).

Authorship: Attributed to Muhammad (Divine Revelation).

Textual Issues: Khalifa's translation of 'Tawwab' as 'Redeemer' is idiosyncratic. Standard translations (Yusuf Ali, Pickthall) use 'Oft-Returning' or 'Acceptor of Repentance.' Khalifa's choice imports Christian theological baggage into an Islamic concept.