

Home > Ethical Discourses: Volume 2 > Discourse 8: Being Spiritually Awake And Ready > Fifth Point:
What must we do in the face of corruption?

Discourse 8: Being Spiritually Awake And Ready

عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ يَقُولُ: يَا مَعْشَرَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ، شَمِّرُوا
فَإِنَّ الْأَمْرَ جَدٌّ، وَتَأَهَّبُوا فَإِنَّ الرَّحِيلَ قَرِيبٌ، وَتَزَوَّدُوا فَإِنَّ السَّفَرَ بَعِيدٌ، وَخَفُّوا
أَثْقَالَكُمْ فَإِنَّ وِرَاءَكُمْ عَقَبَةً كَوُودًا، وَ لَا يَقْطَعُهَا إِلَّا الْمُخَفُّونَ. أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ، إِنَّ بَيْنَ
يَدَيِ السَّاعَةِ أُمُورًا شَدِيدًا، وَأَهْوَالَ عَظِيمًا،

وَ زَمَانًا صَعْبًا يَتَمَلَّكَ فِيهِ الظُّلْمَةُ، وَ يَتَصَدَّرُ فِيهِ الْفَسَقَةُ، وَ يُضَامُ فِيهِ الْأَمْرُونَ
بِالْمَعْرُوفِ، وَ يُضْطَهَدُ فِيهِ النَّاهِينَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ. فَأَعِدُوا لِذَلِكَ الْإِيمَانَ، وَ عَضُّوا
عَلَيْهِ بِالنَّوْاجِدِ، وَ الْجَاؤُوا إِلَى الْعَمَلِ الصَّالِحِ، وَ أَكْرَهُوا عَلَيْهِ النَّفْسَ تُفْضُوا إِلَى
النَّعِيمِ الدَّائِمِ.

It has been narrated by Anas b. Malik that he said, “I heard the Messenger of Allah (S) say, “O’ assembly of Muslims! Prepare yourselves (and pull up your sleeves), since the issue of the Day of Resurrection is a serious one; prepare for death, since the time for it is near; prepare the provisions for the journey, since it is a long trip; make sure your provisions (for this trip) are light, since the journey ahead of you is a very difficult expedition and except for those who have a light load, no one else shall be able to withstand this trip!

O’ people! Surely the events which shall occur near to the Day of Judgment and the end of the world are significant; there are munificent situations (which must be traversed), and there are hard times ahead. During that time, the oppressors will be the rulers and the open sinners will be the ones at the forefront of the running of the world.

Those who command others to good deeds (perform Amr bil Ma'ruf) will be subjugated, and those who prevent others from evil deeds (perform Nahi 'Anil Munkar) will be under extreme pressure. It is through possessing true faith that one must prepare for that day. One must must clench his teeth and struggle to perform righteous deeds even if the soul dislikes this and (thus, one must) go towards the perpetual and blessed Paradise.”¹

In this tradition, the Noble Prophet (S) has advised humanity to become spiritually awake, aware and prepare themselves for what is to come.

The First Point: Be prepared!

According to the lexical definition, the word 'شمر' refers to 'getting ready', and it is possible that originally, it was used by the 'Arabs when they used to say:

شَمَّرَ عَنْ سَاقِيهِ.

“He rolled his garments upto his shin (in preparation of some work).”

Traditionally, 'Arab men wear long, flowing robes, however when working, this clothing would not be suitable. Thus, when they wished to do any form of physical labour, they would pull up their clothing and hold it up with their hands, or would pull the clothing up and tie a long piece of cloth around the waist as a belt. In this way, the long gown would reach halfway up their legs or up to the knees and thus:

شَمَّرَ عَنْ سَاقِيهِ.

is actually a figure of speech meaning that one should get ready to work and do some laborious task.

The Prophet (S) then said, “...prepare yourselves since this is a very serious issue which concerns the fire of hell and the accountability and reckoning (of your deeds)...”

The Second Point: Prepare the things which you shall need (for this journey)

The word 'أهبة' refers to the provisions (and is similar to the meaning of the word in the first commandment mentioned above).

What is the difference between the words 'شَمَّرُوا' and 'تَأَهَّبُوا' as both are closely related to 'getting ready'?

The difference between these two words is that where as 'شمروا' means that the person himself gets ready, the word 'تأهبوا' means that one prepares the necessary items which are needed.

We know that for any journey one takes – of which the journey of the Next Life is one of them – one must be prepared. In addition, one must also prepare the necessary items which are needed on the trip...

The Third Point: Provisions for the journey must be gathered

Other than the items needed (for this long journey of the Next Life) such as the steed and baggage, one also needs other things as without doubt, the departure time is close and the trip is a long.

These two statements of the tradition under discussion are not contradictory to one another since the meaning of the departure time refers to when the journey shall start, and the journey shall start very soon. However at same time the journey is also a long one! It is just as the example in which a person would say to those traveling with him, “Get ready as tomorrow we are starting our journey, however the trip we are taking is going to last one year and thus, you need to take everything you need with you.”

Thus in summary, there is no divergence between 'close' and 'far' as mentioned in this tradition since one word refers to the beginning of the journey while the other refers to the culmination of the trip. It is very likely that the trip shall start at any time as the time between the life and death of a person is very short.

In the person's throat, there is a very small piece of flesh which can be referred to as the 'tongue of life' that keeps a person between life and death. When one eats something, the tongue covers the wind pipe and seals it tightly shut, guiding the food down the food pipe and into the stomach. After the food has been swallowed, the tongue moves out of the way and the wind pipe is once again opened and the food pipe is then closed.

However if while a person was eating, the tongue was to move a bit late or not move at all and the wind pipe was not covered and even a small portion of food was to go down the wind pipe, this could prove to be fatal! This is how frail life is!

The journey of the next life is a very long trip and according to some verses of the Qur`an, it will last for 1,000 years, while according to other verses, it is a trip of 50,000 years! The way the commentators of the Qur`an have explained this difference (between 1,000 years and 50,000 years) is that on the Day of Judgment, there are fifty stations which one must cross – meaning that there are 50 customs offices which a person must go through.

Each station – if the meaning of these verses is that indeed there are 50 different stops – would take 1,000 years to pass through. However, if we take this number is simply being metaphorical in the meaning of numerous or many, then the review and accountability would take thousands of years to complete!

The Forth Point: Lighten your load!

We must lighten our load since the road in front of us is very difficult to traverse and none except those who are traveling light will be able to make the journey.

When a person wants to take a trip, naturally he would not take heavy things with him and would not place a heavy burden on himself. If a person were to have a very heavy load, then he would definitely not make it past the first station of his trip! However, as for those who have physically prepared and trained, are quick and agile, they shall be able to quickly pass through the stations.

How good it would be if one made sure that his load was light and if he were to develop his asceticism to such a level that he would be able to, just as a swift horse passes through fields, pass through all the stages of the next life!

In the past, people used to travel in caravans and if anyone was left behind then that person would face tremendous difficulties since it was not possible for the entire caravan to stop and wait for one person! Thus, people tried to ensure that they did not separate from the rest of the caravan. With this said, we see that there is a line in the tradition under discussion that states:

أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ! إِنَّ بَيْنَ يَدَيِ السَّاعَةِ أُمُوراً شِدَاداً وَ أَهْوَالاً عِظَماً...

“O' people! Surely the events which shall occur near to the time of the Day of Judgment and the end of the world are great...”

This part of the tradition calls for a lengthy and extensive discussion, however in these condensed discourses, we shall present a very short review of this line.

From the traditions, we can deduce that at the end of the world and just shortly before the advent of Waliul 'Asr (may Allah hasten his return), there are some very difficult events which await the physical world and those in it. Since both of these states will take place at the threshold of the life of this world, we can link them together and as seen here, connect them with one another.

The Messenger of Allah (S) has stated, “At the end of the world, there will be difficult situations and frightful events which shall take place which will turn the entire universe upside down. The mountains shall become as fine wool; the rivers shall come to a boil and the sun will be darkened!

In summary, such a state will come about that humanity will forget everything! Not only this, but also the societal life of the people will also be filled with great, fearful events.”

At this point, we specifically refer to some of the issues of the end of the world.

This will be a time when the oppressors and sinful people will rule over the entire world while those who enjoin others to perform righteous deeds and prevent people from wicked deeds will be placed under extreme pressures.

After this statement, the Prophet (S) has given us certain commandments. However it should be noted that it is not necessary that what is mentioned in this tradition should take over the entire world. Rather, it is possible these signs may only appear in a part of the world and that another part of the world may be governed by righteousness. However without doubt, sooner or later, the entire world will come face to face with these issue and we can see an example of this situation in the time that we are living today.

When the Prophet (S) elucidated upon the corruption which would engulf the world, he pointed to two specific issues:

1. The government.
2. Commanding others to perform righteous deeds and preventing others from enacting wicked deeds.

The Prophet (S) stated that the world would be destroyed since the government or leadership of the world would fall into the hands of oppressive and sinning people.

The topic of government within the Islamic teachings is something very important and we must strive to establish Islamic Government as if there was no oppressive or corrupt governments then not a single place on the Earth would have corruption in it! In summary, if the government becomes corrupt then everything else will also become corrupt and it is because of this fact that it is said:

النَّاسُ عَلَى دِينِ مُلُوكِهِمْ.

“People follow the religion of their leaders.”

Therefore we see that the Prophet (S) has not relied on anything else in this discussion – rather he put his finger on the issue of the government since this is the foundation of righteousness and corruption.

Another very sensitive issue is that of commanding people to perform righteous deeds and preventing them from performing wicked deeds. As we know, these are two obligatory acts, which if implemented, would see all other obligatory acts maintained and upheld.

It has been mentioned in the traditions that commanding people to perform righteous deeds and preventing people from wicked deeds compared to all other obligatory acts is as the water in the stormy seas to saliva in the mouth!

Fifth Point: What must we do in the face of corruption?

The Prophet (S) has recommended us to take up two weapons:

1. True faith – this is the most important weapon for protection.
2. Perseverance – this characteristic dictates that when a person becomes upset, he becomes firm and resolute on performing a specific task. When this occurs, naturally, he forces his teeth together.

When he applies a great amount of pressure on his jaws and teeth, his back teeth also force together and he gets prepared to carry out his responsibility. It is for this reason that in the tradition under review we are told that:

عَضُّوا عَلَيْهِ بِالنَّوْاجِدِ.

“...clench his teeth and struggle to perform righteous deeds...”

This part of the tradition points to the firm decision a person takes which ultimately leads to a gradual progress in what he wishes to perform.

Thus, the meaning of the second weapon (perseverance) means that through being slack, lazy and lethargic, a person will never reach to any rank or station in his life!

If we look at the lives of the great people who lived in the past, we would see how much effort they put forth. It was in the heat of the summer in the city of Najaf, Iraq (which reaches to over 50°C) that the late author of the book Jawahirul Kalam (one of the main books in the Science of Jurisprudence) wrote his masterpiece while sitting at the head of the grave of his son! It is not only limited to this great scholar, rather the lives of many other people is the same...!

1. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 74, pg. 186

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/ethical-discourses-vol2-makarim-shirazi/discourse-8-being-spiritually-awake-and-ready>