

Discourse 18: The Levels Of Certainty

عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ: إِنَّ مِنْ ضَعْفِ الْيَقِينِ أَنْ تُرْضِيَ النَّاسَ بِسَخَطِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى، وَأَنْ تَحْمَدَهُمْ عَلَى رِزْقِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى وَأَنْ تَذُمَّهُمْ عَلَى مَا لَمْ يُؤْتِكَ اللَّهُ... إِنَّكَ إِنْ تَدَعُ شَيْئًا لِلَّهِ إِلَّا أَتَاكَ اللَّهُ خَيْرًا مِنْهُ، وَإِنْ تَأْتِيَ شَيْئًا تَقْرُبًا إِلَى اللَّهِ تَعَالَى إِلَّا أَجْزَلَ اللَّهُ لَكَ الثَّوَابَ عَنْهُ. فَاجْعَلُوا هِمَّتَكُمْ الْآخِرَةَ لَا يَنْفَدُ فِيهَا ثَوَابُ الْمَرْضِيِّ عَنْهُ، وَلَا يَنْقَطِعُ فِيهَا عِقَابُ الْمَسْخُوطِ عَلَيْهِ.

Anas b. Malik has narrated that the Messenger of Allah (S) said, “Surely the weakness in certainty is due to people trading the (seeking of the) pleasure of the people for the anger of Allah, the Most High; praising the people for the sustenance which Allah, the Most High has conferred upon you (instead of praising Him); and for blaming others for that which Allah has not given you ...

You do not refrain from anything only for Allah (and His pleasure) except that Allah will give you even better than that (which you have refrained from); you do not perform anything which would bring you closer to Allah, the Most High, except that Allah gives you a reward greater than what is expected!

So then expend your energies for the next life since the reward is reserved for the servant who has done good deeds and whom Allah is pleased with, while the punishment is for the one that performs bad deeds and earns the anger of Allah, and it shall never end.”¹

In this tradition, the Messenger of Allah (S) has expressed six points, which we shall review one by one.

1. One of the signs of weakness in certainty (Yaqin) is that a person exchanges the pleasure of the people for the anger of Allah (SwT). This means that he considers the people around him to be more effective than Allah (SwT) in regards to that which shall happen to him.

A person must have strong faith in the Lordship of Allah (SwT) and that He alone is the Lord and Maintainer of the Entire Universe and that all which exists comes from Him. In relation to this, the Qur`an

has told us:

تُؤْتِي الْمُلْكَ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُعِزُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُذِلُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ

“He gives of (His) Kingdom to whom He pleases and He prevents (His) Kingdom to reach whom He pleases; and He grants honour and respect to whomever He pleases and He abases whomever He pleases.”²

It is for this reason that we must always have the following thought in mind, “Since I know that the One who provides me with sustenance is Allah (SwT) alone, thus, I do not fear anyone other than Him and I will not humiliate myself in front of anyone. If He helps me, and even if the entire universe was to be against me, still they could not do a thing to harm me!”

Therefore when we see people humiliating themselves in front of others, we should know that this stems from a weak sense of certainty which has taken over them.

Certainty has various degrees and levels to it and these various levels have an effect on the way a person acts in his life as actions are a reflection of our inner belief. Therefore, the stronger a person's inner beliefs are, the purer his actions will be.

Most of the time, the spiritual contamination in our actions is due to a contamination of our theological beliefs.

It has been said that, 'All things, even the ethical teachings and the branches of the religion (Furu' ad-Din) must be put in order through our principal beliefs (Usul ad-Din)'¹ and this is because of the reason mentioned above.

Certainty has three levels to it:

1. 'Ilmul Yaqin [The Knowledge of Certainty]
2. 'Ainul Yaqin [The Eye of Certainty]
3. haqqul Yaqin [The Truth of Certainty]

In order to better understand these three levels, think about the following example. Sometimes a person sees smoke bellowing from somewhere and through this, concludes that there must be a fire – this is referred to as 'Ilmul Yaqin (the Knowledge of Certainty); it is possible that he may even see the fire itself – and this is referred to as 'Ainul Yaqin (the Eye of Certainty); and sometimes the person would experience the fire with all of his senses – and this is referred to as haqqul Yaqin (the Truth of Certainty).

In other words, sometimes the proofs are logical; other times, the proofs are that which a person sees with his own eyes (through employing his senses) and sometimes the proofs are through trial and experiment.³

In relation to the wealth of the orphan (and misappropriation of it), we see that there are such levels (of certainty) and thus the Qur`an states:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَأْكُلُونَ أَمْوَالَ الْيَتَامَىٰ ظُلْمًا إِنَّمَا يَأْكُلُونَ فِي بُطُونِهِمْ نَارًا

“Surely those who oppressively take the wealth of the orphan are only eating fire in their stomachs...”⁴

If only we were to have true faith that by giving in charity our wealth does not diminish, rather, we have even more wealth at our disposal just as it is mentioned in the Qur`an:

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَنْبَتَتْ سَبْعَ سَنَابِلَ فِي كُلِّ سُنْبُلَةٍ
مِائَةُ حَبَّةٍ وَاللَّهُ يُضَاعِفُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ

“The example of the person who spends his wealth in the way of Allah is similar to the seed which grows seven ears and in every ear there are one hundred seeds and Allah adds (the blessings) to whomever He pleases.”⁵

If our level of certainty was at this level for all things in our life, then we would never come close to sinning!

The higher level of certainty can be described as such (keeping in mind the verse dealing with orphans that was quoted above) that: even if the best fruits (which were the property of the orphan) were to be placed beside a person, while fire was to be placed on the other side, in a person's estimation, both would be equal to one another. Thus, just as he would keep himself away from the fire which is comparable to the wealth of the orphan, so too he would keep away from the good fruits (which are not his property)!

Thus, we must seek to strengthen the foundations of certainty and some portion of this strengthening must be sought from Allah (SwT) through prayer and supplication. In addition, we must request this supreme level of certainty through showing humility in the middle of the night in the prayer and say:

يَا وَاهِبَ الْيَقِينِ! أَرْزُقْنِي الْيَقِينَ - عِلْمَ الْيَقِينِ وَ عَيْنَ الْيَقِينِ وَ حَقَّ الْيَقِينِ!

“O' the Granter of Certainty! Grant me certainty – ‘Ilmul Yaqin (the Knowledge of Certainty); ‘Ainul Yaqin (the Eye of Certainty) and haqqul Yaqin (the Truth of Certainty).”

If Allah (SwT) was to grant these levels of certainty to a person and was to take away all of the attractions of the transient world from him, one would be able to lead a very easy life. The opposite is true is also true that if the entire transient world was to be given to a person and he was not blessed to have these levels of certainty, then he would have nothing but pain, suffering and misfortune!

Therefore, the reality of this discussion is that certainty must be achieved through learning and acting according to what one has learnt.

Without doubt, true faith and actions have a reciprocating effect upon one another and it is for this reason that in the Qur`an, along side true faith («man), righteous actions has also been mentioned.

In summary, if a person was to reach to the level of haqqul Yaqin (the Truth of Certainty) then this would be an insurance policy from sinning.

2. Another sign of possessing a weak level of certainty is when the person thinks that those around him are the ones who provide his sustenance and thus, he thanks them and compliments them, forgetting Allah (SwT).

There are some people who say, “If such and such person was not there, I would have been unable to do anything” or “If such and such person was not there, I would have died of hunger.”

Sometimes the words of such people take on the contamination of polytheism when people say things like, “First Allah, then you” where they put another person alongside Allah (SwT) – however the truth is that no comparison can be drawn – where is the servant and where is the Master!?

مَنْ لَمْ يَشْكُرِ الْمَخْلُوقَ لَمْ يَشْكُرِ الْخَالِقَ.

“The one who does not thank the creations has not thanked the Creator.”

However, when a person makes a statement in which he places a person alongside Allah (SwT) in the help he receives, then this is polytheism!

3. The opposite of the second point is also true when a person says, “Such and such a person took my daily sustenance” as this means that someone took something away from you which Allah (SwT) had intended and had given to you! In actuality, Allah (SwT) has taken your sustenance away for His own known reason and this could be done to be the completion of the proof over you or as a punishment! The person who 'took' that thing from you was simply the means through which Allah (SwT) carried this out.

In continuation, the Prophet (S) stated three things:

1. If a person leaves something for the pleasure of Allah (SwT), then He will give that person something better than what he left! God forbid a person thinks that he has suffered a loss due to whatever he has given to Allah (SwT) – not only has he not suffered a loss, rather, he will actually gain a benefit from it.
2. If a person performs all of his actions for Allah (SwT), then He will grant that individual an even greater reward.
3. A person's struggles should be for the next life since the Divine rewards and punishments are ever lasting.

The Qur`an tells us:

الشَّيْطَانُ يُعِدُّكُمْ الْفَقْرَ وَيَأْمُرُكُمْ بِالْفَحْشَاءِ وَاللَّهُ يَعِدُّكُمْ مَغْفِرَةً مِنْهُ وَفَضْلًا وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

“Satan threatens you with poverty and encourages you to be miserly, however Allah promises you forgiveness from Himself and abundance; and Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing.”⁶

When a person wants to give something in charity, Satan takes him by the hand and threatens him with poverty – however the opposite of this actually happens as Allah (SwT) gives the promise of forgiveness and more in return for what was given!

In another verse of the Qur`an we read:

يَمْحَقُ اللَّهُ الرِّبَا وَيُرِي الصَّدَقَاتِ

“Allah does not bless usury, however He causes charitable deeds to prosper...”⁷

In addition, in yet another place in the Qur`an we read:

يَعْلَمُونَ ظَاهِرًا مِنَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ عَنِ الْآخِرَةِ هُمْ غَافِلُونَ

“They know the outward aspect of this world's life, but they are completely heedless of the hereafter.”⁸

People always look at the material aspects of the transient world, however Islam looks at the inner aspects and tells us, “Giving in charity does not result in you having less for yourself!”

Even in our own reckoning, the martyrs (Shuhada) are classified as being dead, however the Qur`an tell us, “Greater than your own reckoning is that of others, as they (the martyrs) are actually alive.”

If we weigh our own understanding with that of the Qur`an, the outcome would be the reverse of what we assume to be the reality. Whereas we think that destruction and nothingness exists in relation to the martyrs, we are told that existence and perpetuity is actually there; the place where we think death resides is actually the place of permanent life. However thinking in this mode is not easy and can only be achieved with the vision of true faith.

In the world we live in, the apparent view of some of the benefits that quickly pass us by actually have a detrimental aspect to them that last a long time, while the opposite of this as also true.

Without doubt, any rational person would say, “If a long term gain can only be achieved through a short, yet difficult action, then that action which is accompanied by difficulty must be performed.”

If one was to be completely cured of his sickness, albeit in the future, by going through an operation right now, he would definitely welcome that operation. Sometimes in the face of a tasty but fat-filled food a person would say, “I have a cold right now and thus, I will pass up this good tasting food whose taste shall only last briefly for the betterment of my own health which shall remain for a long time.” Thus, why do we not act in such a logical manner in relation to the next life?

Is it that, may Allah (SwT) forbid – we do not have the same level of certainty in regards to the next life as we do for the life of this world? Do we accept what has been mentioned in Du’a Kumayl in regards to the punishment of the next life:

... تَطُولُ مُدَّتُهُ وَيَدُومُ مَقَامُهُ وَلَا يَخْفَفُ عَنْ أَهْلِهِ ...

“The period of punishment in the hell fire is a long and perpetual one and for the people who are in that punishment, there shall never be any reduction in its chastisement...”

Do we accept what has been mentioned in the Qur`an that:

إِنَّ زَلْزَلَةَ السَّاعَةِ شَيْءٌ عَظِيمٌ. يَوْمَ تَرَوْنَهَا تَذْهَلُ كُلُّ مُرْضِعَةٍ عَمَّا أَرْضَعَتْ وَ
تَضَعُ كُلُّ ذَاتِ حَمَلٍ حَمْلَهَا وَ تَرَى النَّاسَ سُكَارَىٰ وَمَا هُمْ بِسُكَارَىٰ وَلَٰكِنَّ
عَذَابَ اللَّهِ شَدِيدٌ

“Surely the earthquake of the Hour is a grievous thing. On the day when you shall see it, every woman who is nursing her child will stop due to the confusion, and every pregnant woman shall miscarry her child and you shall see the people in a state of intoxication while they are not intoxicated, however the chastisement of Allah shall be severe.”⁹

Thus, why do we not bear the difficulties of a few days of this transient world so that we can enjoy the perpetual and everlasting Divine reward? Why is it that in relation to the next life, we do not use the same logic as is employed for matters of the material world:

أَكُلْهَا دَائِمًا.

When a person sits down to review these issues, he would sometimes become frightened and think to himself that “God forbid that I do not have faith in these things!” !

1. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 74, pg. 185

2. Surat ale Imran (3), verse 26

3. The late ayatullah Dastghaib has written the following on page 49 of his work, Amazing Stories: “A man who was sincere in the wilayah of the Ahlu'l Bayt, Aqa Mirza Abul Qasim Attar Tehrani, has narrated from the great scholar, the Late hajj Shaykh Abdul-Nabi Nuri who was one of the students of the great Divine thinkers – the late hajj Mullah Hadi Sabzwari that in the last years of the life of the late hajj Mullah Hadi Sabzwari, a person once came into one of his classes and informed him that a person, who was alive, was found in the graveyard with half of his body in the grave while the other half of his body was outside of the grave. This man was continuously staring towards the sky and however much the children who were playing around tried to pester him, he would not pay any attention to them.

Hajj Mullah Hadi Sabzwari said, “I myself must go and see what is happening.”

When hajj Sabzwari went to the graveyard and saw the man, he was amazed! He went closer to the person and saw that the man was not even paying attention to him!

Hajj Mullah Hadi Sabzwari says, “Who are you and what are you doing? I don't think you are crazy, however the way you are acting is not the way of an intelligent person.”

In reply, the man said to him, “I do not have knowledge (of Islam and the world) and am a uniformed person, however I have firm belief on two things. The first is that I know that there is a grand Creator who has created me and the entire world of existence and I must not be negligent in recognizing Him and worshipping Him.

The second thing is that I know that I will not remain in the transient world forever and that I must go to the other world however I do not know what my state shall be in that world. O' hajj Mullah! I am in a state of total desolation and confusion such that the people think I have gone insane. Since the people consider you as a scholar for the entire Muslim community and you possess much knowledge, please tell me why do these people not even have an atom's weight of grief in relation to the next life and are negligent of this?”

This admonition felt as an arrow piercing the heart of hajj Mullah Hadi Sabzwari and it has been narrated that hajj Mullah returned back in a completely changed state and whatever amount of his life which remained was spent in the pondering of the travel of the next life and how to acquire the goods needed for that journey which is full of dangers – and he continued in this way until he left this mortal world.”

Therefore, whatever rank a person is at, he is still in need of hearing council and advice. If we know what we are hearing, then the words of wisdom would be a reminder for us – meaning that they would be something to bring back our memories (to that which we knew but had forgotten) since mankind is prone to forget things and is always in need of someone to remind him; and if the person was ignorant of the thing which he is hearing, then this admonition would be a way for him to

acquire knowledge and cognizance.

4. Surat al-Nisa (4), verse 10
5. Surat al-Baqarah (2), verse 261
6. Ibid., verse 268
7. Ibid., verse 276
8. Surat al-Rum (30), verse 7
9. Surat al-Hajj (22), verses 1 and 2

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