

Sermon 34: Woe to you! I am tired of rebuking you ...

To prepare the people for fighting with the people of Syria (ash-Sham) 1

After dealing with the Kharijites, Amir al-mu'minin rebukes the people and counsels them to be on the right:

ومن خطبة له (عليه السلام)

في استنفار الناس إلى الشام [بعد فراغه من أمر الخوارج]

[وفيها يتأفف بالناس، وينصح لهم بطريق السداد:]

Woe to you. I am tired of rebuking you. Do you accept this worldly life in place of the next life? Or disgrace in place of dignity? When I invite you to fight your enemy your eyes revolve as though you are in the clutches of death, and in the senselessness of last moments.

My pleadings are not understood by you and you remain stunned. It is as though your hearts are affected with madness so that you do not understand. You have lost my confidence for good. Neither are you a support for me to lean upon, nor a means to honour and victory. Your example is that of the camels whose protector has disappeared, so that if they are collected from one side they disperse away from the other side.

أَفْ لَكُمْ! لَقَدْ سَمَّمْتُ عَتَابَكُمْ! أَرْضَيْتُمْ بِالْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا مِنَ الْأَخْرَةِ عَوْضًا؟ وَبِالذُّلِّ
 مِنَ الْعِزِّ خَلْفًا؟ إِذَا دَعَوْتُمْ إِلَى جِهَادِ عَدُوِّكُمْ دَارَتْ أَعْيُنُكُمْ، كَأَنَّكُمْ مِنَ الْمَوْتِ
 فِي غَمْرَةٍ وَمِنَ الذُّهُولِ فِي سَكْرَةٍ، يَرْتَجِ عَلَيْكُمْ حَوَارِي فَتَعْمَهُونَ فَكَأَنَّ قُلُوبَكُمْ
 مَالُوسَةٌ فَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْقِلُونَ. مَا أَنْتُمْ لِي بِثِقَةٍ سَجِيسَ اللَّيَالِي وَمَا أَنْتُمْ بِرُكْنٍ يُمَالُ بِكُمْ
 وَلَا زَوَافِرُ عِزٍّ يُفْتَقَرُ إِلَيْكُمْ. مَا أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا كَابِلٌ ضَلَّ رِعَاتُهَا، فَكُلَّمَا جُمِعَتْ مِنْ جَانِبٍ
 انْتَشَرَتْ مِنْ آخَرَ،

By Allah, how bad are you for igniting flames of war. You are intrigued against but do not intrigue (against the enemy). Your boundaries are decreasing but you do not get enraged over it. Those against you do not sleep but you are unmindful. By Allah, those who leave matters one for the other are subdued. By Allah, I believed about you that if battle rages and death hovers around you, you will cut away from the son of Abi Talib like the severing of head from the trunk.2

لَبِئْسَ - لَعَمْرُ اللَّهِ - سَعْرُ نَارِ الْحَرْبِ أَنْتُمْ! تُكَادُونَ وَلَا تَكِيدُونَ، وَتُنْتَقِصُ أَطْرَافَكُمْ
 فَلَا تَمْتَعِضُونَ لَا يَنَامُ عَنْكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ فِي غَفْلَةٍ سَاهُونَ، غُلِبَ وَاللَّهِ الْمُتَخَاذِلُونَ! وَأَيْمُ
 اللَّهِ إِنِّي لَأَظُنُّ بِكُمْ أَنْ لَوْ حَمَسَ الْوَعْيِي، وَاسْتَحَرَّ الْمَوْتُ قَدْ أَنْفَرَجْتُمْ عَنِ ابْنِ أَبِي
 طَالِبٍ أَنْفِرَاجَ الرَّأْسِ

By Allah, he who makes it possible for his adversary to so overpower him as to remove the flesh (from his bones), crush his bones and cut his skin into pieces, then it means that his helplessness is great and his heart surrounded within the sides of his chest is weak. You may become like this if you wish. But for me, before I allow it I shall use my sharp edged swords of al-Mushrafiyyah which would cut as under the bones of the head and fly away arms and feet. Thereafter, Allah will do whatever He wills.

وَاللَّهِ إِنَّ أَمْرًا يُمَكِّنُ عَدُوَّهُ مِنْ نَفْسِهِ يَغْرُقُ لَحْمَهُ وَيَهْشِمُ عَظْمَهُ، وَيَفْرِي جُلْدَهُ،
 لِعَظِيمِ عَجْزِهِ، ضَعِيفٌ مَا ضُمَّتْ عَلَيْهِ جَوَانِحُ صَدْرِهِ أَنْتَ فَكُنْ ذَلِكَ إِنْ شِئْتَ،
 فَأَمَّا أَنَا فَوَاللَّهِ دُونَ أَنْ أُعْطِيَ ذَلِكَ ضَرْبٌ بِالْمَشْرِفِيَّةِ تَطِيرُ مِنْهُ فَرَاشُ الْهَامِ
 وَتَطِيحُ السَّوَاعِدُ وَالْأَقْدَامُ، وَيَفْعَلُ اللَّهُ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ مَا يَشَاءُ.

O people, I have a right over you and you have a right over me. As for your right over me, that is to counsel you, to pay you your dues fully, to teach you that you may not remain ignorant and instruct you

in behaviourism that you may act upon. As for my right over you, it is fulfilment of (the obligation of) allegiance, well-wishing in presence or in absence, response when I call you and obedience when I order you.

أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ! إِنَّ لِي عَلَيْكُمْ حَقًّا، وَلَكُمْ عَلَيَّ حَقٌّ: فَأَمَّا حَقُّكُمْ عَلَيَّ: فَالنَّصِيحَةُ لَكُمْ،
وَتَوْفِيرُ فَيْئِكُمْ عَلَيَّكُمْ، وَتَعْلِيمُكُمْ كَيْلًا تَجْهَلُوا، وَتَأْدِيبُكُمْ كَيْمًا تَعْلَمُوا. وَأَمَّا حَقِّي
عَلَيْكُمْ: فَالْوَفَاءُ بِالْبَيْعَةِ، وَالنَّصِيحَةُ فِي الْمَشْهَدِ وَالْمَغِيبِ، وَالْأَجَابَةُ حِينَ أَدْعُوكُمْ،
وَالطَّاعَةُ حِينَ أَمْرُكُمْ.

Alternative Sources for Sermon 34

- (1) Al-Tabari, *Ta'rikh*, VI, 51;
- (2) Ibn Qutaybah, *al-Imamah*, I, 150;
- (3) al-Baladhuri, *Ansab*, 380;
- (4) al-Mufid, *al-Majalis*, 79;
- (5) Nasr ibn Muzahim, see Ibn Abi al-Hadid, I, 179.

1. The word "ash-Sham" was a name used for a vast geographical area occupied by Muslim countries in those days. This area included present-day Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. Its capital was Damascus. Wherever the word Syria is mentioned (in this book) it should be understood in its larger meaning.

2. This sentence is employed for such severance after which there is no occasion or possibility of joining. The author of *Durrah Najafiyyah* has quoted several views in its explanation:

i)

Ibn Durayd's view is that it means that. "Just as when the head is severed its joining again is impossible, in the same way you will not join me after once deserting me."

ii)

al-Mufaddal says ar-ra's(head) was the name of a man, and a village of Syria, Bayt ar-ra's is named after him. This man left his home and went away somewhere and never again returned to his village after which the proverb sprang up "you went as ar-ra's had gone."

iii)

One meaning of it is that "Just as if the joints of the bones of the head are opened they cannot be restored, in the same way you will not join me after cutting from me.

iv)

It has also been said that this sentence is in the sense of separating completely. After copying this meaning from the *Sharh* of ash-Shaykh Qutbu'd-Din ar-Rawandi, the commentator Ibn Abi'l-Hadid has written that this meaning is not correct because when the word "ar-ra's" is used in the sense of whole it is not preceded by "alif" and "lam"

v)

It is also taken to mean that "You will so run away from me as one (fleeing for life) to save his head." Besides this, one or two other meanings have also been stated but being remote they are disregarded.

First of all it was used by the philosopher of Arabia Aktham ibn Sayfi while teaching unity and concord to his children. He says: "O my children do not cut away (from each other) at the time of calamities like the cutting of head, because after that you will never get together".

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