

Sermon 111: So now, certainly I frighten you....

Caution about this world

ومن خطبة له (عليه السلام)

في ذم الدنيا

So now, certainly I frighten you from this world for it is sweet and green, surrounded by lusts, and liked for its immediate enjoyments. It excites wonder with small things, is ornamented with (false) hopes and decorated with deception. Its rejoicing does not last and its afflictions cannot be avoided. It is deceitful, harmful, changing, perishable, exhaustible, liable to destruction, eating away and destructive. When it reaches the extremity of desires of those who incline towards it and feel happy with it, the position is just what Allah, the Glorified, says (in the Qur'an):

... like the water which send We down from heaven, and the herbage of the earth mingleth with it, then it becometh dry stubble which the winds scatter; for Allah over all things hath power. (18:45)

أَمَّا بَعْدُ فَإِنِّي أُحذِّرُكُمْ الدُّنْيَا، فَإِنَّهَا حُلْوَةٌ خَضِرَةٌ، حُفَّتْ بِالشَّهَوَاتِ، وَتَحَبَّبَتْ بِالْعَاجِلَةِ، وَرَاقَتْ بِالْقَلِيلِ، وَتَحَلَّتْ بِالْأَمَالِ، وَتَزَيَّنَتْ بِالْغُرُورِ، لَا تَدُومُ حَبْرَتُهَا، وَلَا تُؤْمَنُ فَجَعَتُهَا، غَرَارَةٌ ضَرَّارَةٌ، حَائِلَةٌ زَائِلَةٌ، نَافِدَةٌ بَائِدَةٌ، أَكَالَةٌ غَوَالَةٌ، لَا تَعْدُو إِذَا تَنَاهَتْ إِلَى أُمْنِيَّةِ أَهْلِ الرَّغْبَةِ فِيهَا وَالرِّضَى بِهَا - أَنْ تَكُونَ كَمَا قَالَ اللَّهُ سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى: (كَمَا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ فَاخْتَلَطَ بِهِ نَبَاتُ الْأَرْضِ فَأَصْبَحَ هَشِيمًا تَذْرُوهُ الرِّيَّاحُ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُقْتَدِرًا).

No person gets rejoicing from this world but tears come to him after it, and no one gets its comforts in the front but he has to face hardships in the rear. No one receives the light rain of ease in it but the heavy rain of distress pours upon him. It is just worthy of this world that in the morning it supports a man but in the evening it does not recognise him. If one side of it is sweet and pleasant the other side is bitter and distressing.

لَمْ يَكُنْ أَمْرٌ مِنْهَا فِي حَبْرَةٍ إِلَّا أَعْقَبَتْهُ بَعْدَهَا عِبْرَةٌ وَلَمْ يَلْقَ مِنْ سَرَائِهَا بَطْنًا إِلَّا
مَنْحَتَهُ مِنْ ضَرَائِهَا ظَهْرًا وَلَمْ تَطْلُهُ فِيهَا دِيمَةٌ رَخَاءٍ إِلَّا هَتَنْتَ عَلَيْهِ مُزْنَةً بِلَاءٍ!
وَحَرِيٌّ إِذَا أَصْبَحَتْ لَهُ مُنْتَصِرَةً أَنْ تُمْسِيَ لَهُ مُتَنَكِّرَةً، وَإِنْ جَانِبٌ مِنْهَا اعْدُوذِبَ
وَاحْلَوْلَى، أَمْرٌ مِنْهَا جَانِبٌ فَأَوْبَى.

No one secures enjoyment from its freshness but he has to face hardship from its calamities. No one would pass the evening under the wing of safety but that his morning would be under the feathers of the wing-tip of fear. It is deceitful, and all that is there in it is deception. It is perishable and all that is on it is to perish. There is no good in its provisions except in piety. Whoever takes little from it collects much of what would give him safety, while one who takes much from it takes much of what would ruin him. He would shortly depart from his collection. How many people relied on it but it distressed them; (how many) felt peaceful with it but it tumbled them down; how many were prestigious but it made them low and how many were proud but it made them disgraceful.

لَا يَنَالُ أَمْرٌ مِنْ غَضَارَتِهَا رَغْبًا إِلَّا أَرْهَقَتْهُ مِنْ نَوَائِبِهَا تَعْبًا! وَلَا يُمْسِي مِنْهَا فِي
جَنَاحِ أَمْنٍ، إِلَّا أَصْبَحَ عَلَى قَوَادِمِ خَوْفٍ! غَرَارَةٌ، غُرُورٌ مَا فِيهَا، فَانِيَةٌ، فَانٍ مَنْ
عَلَيْهَا، لَا خَيْرَ فِي شَيْءٍ مِنْ أَزْوَادِهَا إِلَّا التَّقْوَى. مَنْ أَقَلَّ مِنْهَا اسْتَكْتَرَ مِمَّا يُؤْمِنُهُ!
وَمَنْ اسْتَكْتَرَ مِنْهَا اسْتَكْتَرَ مِمَّا يُؤْبِقُهُ وَزَالَ عَمَّا قَلِيلَ عَنْهُ. كُمْ مِنْ وَائِقٍ بِهَا قَدْ
فَجَعَتْهُ، وَذِي طُمَأْنِينَةٍ إِلَيْهَا قَدْ صَرَعَتْهُ، وَذِي أُبْهَةٍ قَدْ جَعَلَتْهُ حَقِيرًا، وَذِي نَخْوَةٍ قَدْ
رَدَّتْهُ ذَلِيلًا!

Its authority is changing. Its life is dirty. Its sweet water is bitter. Its sweetness is like myrrh. Its foods are poisons. Its means are weak. The living in it is exposed to death; the healthy in it is exposed to disease. Its realm is (liable to be) snatched away. The strong in it is (liable to be) defeated and the rich is (liable to be) afflicted with misfortune. The neighbour in it is (liable to be) plundered.

سُلْطَانَهَا دُولٌ وَعَيْشُهَا رِنَقٌ وَعَذِيبُهَا أُجَاجٌ وَحُلُوهَا صَبْرٌ وَغِذَاؤُهَا سِمَامٌ وَأَسْبَابُهَا
رِمَامٌ حَيْهًا بَعْرَضٍ مَوْتٌ، وَصَحِيحُهَا بَعْرَضٌ سَقَمٌ! مُلْكُهَا مَسْلُوبٌ، وَعَزِيْزُهَا
مَغْلُوبٌ، وَمَوْفُورُهَا مَنكُوبٌ، وَجَارُهَا مَحْرُوبٌ.

Are you not (residing) in the houses of those before you, who were of longer ages, better traces, had bigger desires, were more in numbers and had greater armies. How they devoted themselves to the world and how they showed preference to it! Then they left it without any provision that could convey them through, or the back (of a beast for riding) to carry them.

أَلَسْتُمْ فِي مَسَاكِنَ مَنْ كَانَ قَبْلَكُمْ أَطْوَلَ أَعْمَارًا، وَأَبْقَى آثَارًا، وَأَبْعَدَ آمَالًا، وَأَعَدَّ
عَدِيدًا، وَأَكْتَفَ جُنُودًا! تَعَبَدُوا لِلدُّنْيَا أَيَّ تَعَبَدٍ، وَأَثَرُوهَا أَيَّ إِثَارٍ، ثُمَّ ظَعَفُوا عَنْهَا
بَغَيْرِ زَادٍ مُبْلَغٍ وَلَا ظَهْرٍ قَاطِعٍ.

Did you get the news that the world was ever generous enough to present ransom for them, or gave them any support or afforded them good company? It rather inflicted them with troubles, made them languid with calamities, molested them with catastrophes, threw them down on their noses, trampled them under hoofs and helped the “*vicissitudes of time*” (52:30) against them.

You have observed its strangeness towards those who went near it, acquired it and appropriated it, till they depart from it for good. Did it give them any provision other than starvation or make them stay in other than narrow places, or give them light other than gloom, or give them in the end anything other than repentance? Is this what you much ask for or remain satisfied with, or towards which you feel greedy? How bad is this abode for him who did not suspect it (to be so) and did not entertain fear from it?

فَهَلْ بَلَغَكُمْ أَنَّ الدُّنْيَا سَخَتْ لَهُمْ نَفْسًا بِفِدْيَةٍ أَوْ أَعَانَتْهُمْ بِمَعُونَةٍ؟ أَوْ أَحْسَنْتَ لَهُمْ
صُحْبَةً؟ بَلْ أَرْهَقْتَهُمْ بِالْفَوَاحِشِ وَأَوْهَنْتَهُمْ بِالْقَوَارِعِ وَضَعُضَعْتَهُمْ بِالنَّوَائِبِ، وَعَفَّرْتَهُمْ
لِلْمَنَاخِرِ، وَوَطَّيْتَهُمْ بِالْمَنَاسِمِ وَأَعَانْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ (رَيْبَ الْمُنُونِ)، فَقَدْ رَأَيْتُمْ تَنكُرَهَا
لِمَنْ دَانَ لَهَا وَآثَرَهَا وَأَخْلَدَ إِلَيْهَا، حِينَ ظَعَنُوا عَنْهَا لِفِرَاقِ الْآبِدِ. هَلْ زَوَّدْتَهُمْ إِلَّا
السَّغْبَ أَوْ أَحَلَّتَهُمْ إِلَّا الضَّنْكَ أَوْ نَوَّرْتَ لَهُمْ إِلَّا الظُّلْمَةَ؟ أَوْ أَعَقَبْتَهُمْ إِلَّا النَّدَامَةَ؟
أَفَهَذِهِ تُؤْتِرُونَ؟ أَمْ إِلَيْهَا تَطْمَئِنُّونَ؟ أَمْ عَلَيْهَا تَحْرِصُونَ؟ فَبِئْسَتِ الدَّارُ لِمَنْ لَمْ
يَتَّهَمَهَا، وَلَمْ يَكُنْ فِيهَا عَلَى وَجَلٍ مِنْهَا!

You should know as you do know, that you have to leave it and depart from it. While in it, take lesson from those "who proclaimed 'who is more powerful than we'" (Qur'an 41:15) but they were carried to their graves, though not as riders. They were then made to stay in the graves, but not as guests. Graves were made for them from the surface of the ground. Their shrouds were made from earth. Old bones were made their neighbour. They are neighbours who do not answer a caller nor ward off trouble, nor pay heed to a mourner.

فَاعْلَمُوا - وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ - بِأَنَّكُمْ تَارَكُوهَا وَظَاعِنُونَ عَنْهَا، وَاتَّعَظُوا فِيهَا بِالَّذِينَ
 (قَالُوا مَنْ أَشَدُّ مِنَّا قُوَّةً): حُمِلُوا إِلَى قُبُورِهِمْ فَلَا يُدْعَوْنَ رُكْبَانًا وَأُنزِلُوا الْأَجْدَاثَ
 فَلَا يُدْعَوْنَ ضَيْفَانًا، وَجُعِلَ لَهُمْ مِنَ الصَّفِيحِ أَجْنَانٌ وَمِنَ التُّرَابِ أَكْفَانٌ، وَمِنَ
 الرُّفَاتِ جِيرَانٌ . فَهُمْ جِيرَةٌ لَا يُجِيبُونَ دَاعِيًا، وَلَا يَمْنَعُونَ ضَيْمًا، وَلَا يُبَالُونَ
 مَنَدَبَةً،

If they get rain they do not feel happy, and if they face famine they do not get disappointed. They are together but each one apart. They are close together but do not see each other. They are near but do not meet. They are enduring and have no hatred. They are ignorant and their malice has died away. There is no fear of trouble from them and no hope of their warding off (troubles). They have exchanged the back (surface) of the earth with its stomach (interior), vastness with narrowness, family with loneliness, and light with darkness.

They have come to it (this world) as they had left it with bare feet and naked bodies. They departed from it with their acts towards the continuing life and everlasting house as Allah has said:

. . . **As We caused the first creation, so will We get it return. (It is) a promise binding Us, verily We were doing it. (Qur'an, 21:104)**

إِنْ جِيدُوا لَمْ يَفْرَحُوا، وَإِنْ قُحِطُوا لَمْ يَقْنَطُوا، جَمِيعٌ وَهُمْ آحَادٌ، وَجِيرَةٌ وَهُمْ
 أَبْعَادٌ، مُتَدَانُونَ لَا يَتَزَاوَرُونَ، وَقَرِيبُونَ لَا يَتَقَارِبُونَ، حُلَمَاءٌ قَدْ زَهَبَتْ أَضْغَانُهُمْ،
 وَجُهَلَاءٌ قَدْ مَاتَتْ أَحْقَادُهُمْ، لَا يُخْشَى فَجْعُهُمْ، وَلَا يُرْجَى دَفْعُهُمْ، اسْتَبَدَّلُوا بظَهْرِ
 الْأَرْضِ بَطْنًا، وَبِالسَّعَةِ ضَيْقًا، وَبِالْأَهْلِ غُرْبَةً، وَبِالنُّورِ ظُلْمَةً، فَجَاوَوْهَا كَمَا
 فَارَقُوهَا، حُفَاةَ عُرَاةٍ، قَدْ ظَعَنُوا عَنْهَا بِأَعْمَالِهِمْ إِلَى الْحَيَاةِ الدَّائِمَةِ وَالِدَارِ الْبَاقِيَةِ،
 كَمَا قَالَ اللَّهُ سُبْحَانَهُ: (كَمَا بَدَأْنَا أَوَّلَ خَلْقٍ نَعِيدُهُ وَعَدَّا عَلَيْنا إِنَّا كُنَّا فَاعِلِينَ).

Alternative Sources for Sermon 111

(1) Al-Marzbani, *al-Munîq*, see Ibn Abi al-Hadid, II, 242;

(2) al-Harrani, *Tuhaf*, 127;

(3) al-Qadi al-Quda`i, *Dustur*, 51;

(4) Ibn Talhah, *Matalib*, 144;

(5) Ibn al-'Athir, *al-Nihayah*, I, 18, 25, 308;

(6) al-Jahiz, *al-Bayan*, II, 112;

(7) Ibn Qutaybah, *Uyun*, II, 250.

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