

Sermon 119: What has happened to you?....

Amir al-mu'minin collected the people and exhorted them¹ to jihad but they observed long silence. Then he said: "What is the matter with you. Have you become dumb?" A group of them replied: "O' Amir al-mu'minin if you go forth we shall be with you." Whereupon Amir al-mu'minin said:

ومن كلام له (عليه السلام)

وقد جمع الناس وحضهم على الجهاد، فسكتوا ملياً، فقال (عليه السلام)

مَا بِالْكُمِ أَمْخَرَسُونَ أَنْتُمْ؟ فقال قوم منهم: يا أمير المؤمنين، إن سرت سرنا معك.

فقال (عليه السلام):

What has happened to you? You may not be guided aright or shown the right path. Should in these circumstances I go forth? In fact, at this time one of the brave and the valorous among you whom I select should go out. It does not suit me to leave the army, the city, the public treasury, the land revenue, the dispensation of justice among Muslims and looking after the demands of the claimants and to follow one contingent after the other moving here and there like a featherless arrow moving in the quiver.

مَا بِالْكُفْرِ! لَا سُدَّتُمْ لِرُشْدِ! وَلَا هُدَيْتُمْ لِقَصْدِ! أَفِي مِثْلِ هَذَا يَنْبَغِي لِي أَنْ أُخْرَجَ؟
 إِنَّمَا يَخْرُجُ فِي مِثْلِ هَذَا رَجُلٌ مِمَّنْ أَرْضَاهُ مِنْ شُجْعَانِكُمْ وَذَوِي بَأْسِكُمْ، وَلَا يَنْبَغِي
 لِي أَنْ أَدَعَ الْجَنْدَ، وَالْمِصْرَ، وَبَيْتَ الْمَالِ، وَجَبَايَةَ الْأَرْضِ، وَالْقَضَاءَ بَيْنَ
 الْمُسْلِمِينَ، وَالنَّظَرَ فِي حُقُوقِ الْمُطَالِبِينَ، ثُمَّ أُخْرَجَ فِي كِتَابَةِ أَتْبَعُ أُخْرَى، أَتَقَلُّقُ
 تَقَلُّقَ الْقِدْحِ فِي الْجَفِيرِ الْفَارِغِ،

I am the axis of the mill. It rotates on me while I remain in my position. As soon as I leave it the centre of its rotation would be disturbed and its lower stone would also be disturbed. By Allah, this is a very bad advice. By Allah, if I had not been hoping for martyrdom by my meeting with the enemy – and my meeting with him has been ordained, I would have secured my carrier and gone away from you and would not have sought you so long as North and South differed.

وَإِنَّمَا أَنَا قُطْبُ الرَّحَا، تَدُورُ عَلَيَّ وَأَنَا بِمَكَانِي، فَإِذَا فَارَقْتُهُ اسْتَحَارَ مَدَارُهَا،
 وَاضْطَرَبَ ثِفَالُهَا. هَذَا لَعَمْرُ اللَّهِ الرَّأْيُ السُّوءُ. وَاللَّهِ لَوْ لَا رَجَائِي الشَّهَادَةَ عِنْدَ
 لِقَائِي الْعَدُوِّ - وَلَوْ قَدْ حُمَّ لِي لِقَاؤُهُ - لَقَرَبْتُ رِكَابِي ثُمَّ شَخَصْتُ عَنْكُمْ، فَلَا أَطَلِبُكُمْ
 مَا اخْتَلَفَ جَنُوبٌ وَشَمَالٌ.

(You are) calumniators, fault-finders, deviators (from the truth) and guileful! There is no benefit in the majority of your numbers because of lack of unity of your hearts. I have put you on the clear path whereon no one will perish except who perishes by himself. He who sticks to it would achieve Paradise and he who deviates goes to Hell.

طَعَانِينَ عِيَابِينَ حِيَادِينَ رَوَاعِينَ! إِنَّهُ لَا غِنَاءَ فِي كَثْرَةِ عَدَدِكُمْ مَعَ قَلَّةِ اجْتِمَاعِ
 قُلُوبِكُمْ. لَقَدْ حَمَلْتُمْ عَلَى الطَّرِيقِ الْوَاضِحِ الَّتِي لَا يَهْلِكُ عَلَيْهَا إِلَّا هَالِكٌ، مَنْ
 اسْتَقَامَ فَآلَى الْجَنَّةِ، وَمَنْ زَلَّ فَآلَى النَّارِ!

Alternative Sources for Sermon 119

Ibn al-'Athir, *al-Nihayah*, I, 215 (th.f.l) .

1. When after the Battle of Siffin, Mu'awiyah's forces began to attack various places in Amir al-mu'minin's area, he asked

the Iraqis to check them but they declined on the plea that they would follow him if he himself came forward. Thereupon he delivered this sermon, and clarified his limitations, that if he himself went out it was impossible to run the affairs of the state, and that the enemy's attacks had already started on all sides. In these circumstances it was impolitic to keep the centre unguarded. But what could be hoped from those who changed the victory at Siffin into defeat and opened the door for these attacks.

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