

Sermon 152: Praise be to Allah who is....

About the greatness and the attributes of Allah 1 and the qualities of the Imams

ومن خطبة له (عليه السلام)

في صفات الله جل جلاله، وصفات أئمة الدين

Praise be to Allah who is proof of His existence through His creation, of His being eternal through the newness of His creation, and through their mutual similarities of the fact that nothing is similar to Him. Senses cannot touch Him and curtains cannot veil Him, because of the difference between the Maker and the made, the Limiter and the limited and the Sustainer and the sustained.

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الدَّالِّ عَلَىٰ وُجُودِهِ بِخَلْقِهِ، وَيُمَحِّدُ خَلْقَهُ عَلَىٰ أَزَلِيَّتِهِ، وَبِاشْتِبَاهِهِمْ عَلَىٰ أَنْ لَا شَبَّهَ لَهُ. لَا تَسْتَلِمُهُ الْمَشَاعِرُ، وَلَا تَحْجُبُهُ السَّوَاتِرُ، لِإِفْتِرَاقِ الصَّانِعِ وَالْمَصْنُوعِ، وَالْحَادِّ وَالْمَحْدُودِ، وَالرَّبِّ وَالْمَرْبُوبِ.

He is One but not by the first in counting, is Creator but not through activity or labour, is Hearer but not by means of any physical organ, is Looker but not by a stretching of eyelids, is Witness but not by nearness, is Distinct but not by measurement of distance, is Manifest but not by seeing and is Hidden but not by subtlety (of body). He is Distinct from things because He overpowers them and exercises might over them, while things are distinct from Him because of their subjugation to Him and their turning towards Him.

الْأَحَدُ لَا يَتَأْوِيلُ عَدَدَ، وَالْخَالِقُ لَا بِمَعْنَى حَرَكَةٍ وَنَصَبٍ، وَالسَّمِيعُ لَا بِأَدَاةٍ،
وَالْبَصِيرُ لَا بِتَفْرِيقِ آلَةٍ، وَالشَّاهِدُ لَا بِمُمَاسَّةٍ، وَالْبَائِنُ لَا بِتَرَاحِي مَسَافَةٍ، وَالظَّاهِرُ
لَا بِرُؤْيَا، وَالْبَاطِنُ لَا بِلَطَافَةٍ. بَانَ مِنَ الْأَشْيَاءِ بِالْقَهْرِ لَهَا، وَالْقُدْرَةُ عَلَيْهَا، وَبَانَتِ
الْأَشْيَاءُ مِنْهُ بِالْخُسُوعِ لَهُ، وَالرُّجُوعُ إِلَيْهِ.

He who describes Him limits Him. He who limits Him numbers Him. He who numbers Him rejects His eternity. He who said "how" sought a description for Him. He who said "where" bounded him. He is the Knower even though there be nothing to be known. He is the Sustainer even though there be nothing to be sustained. He is the Powerful even though there be nothing to be overpowered.

مَنْ وَصَفَهُ فَقَدْ حَدَّهُ، وَمَنْ حَدَّهُ فَقَدْ عَدَّهُ، وَمَنْ عَدَّهُ فَقَدْ أَبْطَلَ أَرْزَلَهُ، وَمَنْ قَالَ:
كَيْفَ، فَقَدْ اسْتَوْصَفَهُ، وَمَنْ قَالَ: أَيْنَ، فَقَدْ حَيَّزَهُ. عَالِمٌ إِذْ لَا مَعْلُومٌ، وَرَبٌّ إِذْ لَا
مَرْبُوبٌ، وَقَادِرٌ إِذْ لَا مَقْدُورٌ.

A part of the same sermon about the Divine leaders (Imams)

منها: في أئمة الدين

The riser has risen, the sparkler has sparkled, the appearer has appeared and the curved has been straightened. Allah has replaced one people with another and one day with another. We awaited these changes as the famine-stricken await the rain. Certainly the Imams are the vicegerents of Allah over His creatures and they make the creatures know Allah. No one will enter Paradise except he who knows them and knows Him, and no one will enter Hell except he who denies them and denies Him.

فَقَدْ طَلَعَ طَالِعٌ، وَلَمَعَ لَا مِعٌ، وَلَا حَ لَائِحٌ، وَاعْتَدَلَ مَائِلٌ، وَاسْتَبَدَلَ اللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ قَوْمًا،
وَبِیَوْمٍ یَوْمًا، وَانْتَظَرْنَا الْغَیْرَ انْتِظَارَ الْمُجْدِبِ الْمَطَرِ. وَإِنَّمَا الْأَئِمَّةُ قُورَامُ اللَّهِ عَلَى
خَلْقِهِ، وَعُرْفَاؤُهُ عَلَى عِبَادِهِ، لَا يَدْخُلُ الْجَنَّةَ إِلَّا مَنْ عَرَفَهُمْ وَعَرَفُوهُ، وَلَا يَدْخُلُ
النَّارَ إِلَّا مَنْ أَنْكَرَهُمْ وَأَنْكَرُوهُ.

Allah the Glorified, has distinguished you with Islam and has chosen you for it. This is because it is the

name of safety and the collection of honour. Allah the Glorified, chose its way and disclosed its pleas through open knowledge and secret maxims. Its (Qur'an) wonders are not exhausted and its delicacies do not end. It contains blossoming bounties and lamps of darkness. (The doors of) virtues cannot be opened save with its keys, nor can gloom be dispelled save with its lamps. Allah has protected its inaccessible points (from enemies) and allowed grazing (to its followers) in its pastures. It contains cover (from the ailment of misguidance) for the seeker of cure and full support for the seeker of support.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَصَّكُمْ بِالْأَسْلَامِ، وَاسْتَخْلَصَكُمْ لَهُ، وَذَلِكَ لِأَنَّهُ اسْمٌ سَلَامَةٌ، وَجَمَاعُ
 كَرَامَةٍ، اصْطَفَى اللَّهُ تَعَالَى مِنْهُجَهُ، وَبَيَّنَّ حُجَجَهُ، مِنْ ظَاهِرِ عِلْمٍ، وَبَاطِنِ حِكْمٍ، لَا
 تَفْنَى غَرَائِبُهُ، وَلَا تَنْقُضِي عَجَائِبُهُ، فِيهِ مَرَابِيعُ النِّعَمِ، وَمَصَابِيحُ الظُّلْمِ، لَا تُفْتَحُ
 الْخَيْرَاتُ إِلَّا بِمَفَاتِحِهِ، وَلَا تُكْشَفُ الظُّلُمَاتُ إِلَّا بِمَصَابِحِهِ، قَدْ أَحْمَى حِمَاهُ،
 وَأَرْعَى مَرْعَاهُ، فِيهِ شِفَاءُ الْمُسْتَشْفِي، وَكِفَايَةُ الْمُكْتَفِي.

Alternative Sources for Sermon 152

(1) Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi*, I, 139;

(2) al-'Amidi, *Ghurar*, 232, 235.

1. The first part of this sermon consists of important issues concerning the science of knowledge about Allah, wherein Amir al-mu'minin has thrown light on the matter that Allah is from ever and His attributes are the same as He Himself. When we cast a glance at creation, we see that for every movement there is a mover, from which every man of ordinary wisdom is compelled to conclude that no effect can appear without a cause, so much so, that even an infant a few days old, when his body is touched, feels in the depth of his consciousness that someone has touched him. He indicates it by opening his eyes or turning and looking. How then can the creation of the world and the system of all creation be arranged without a Creator or Organiser?

Once it is necessary to believe in a Creator, then He should exist by Himself, because everything which has a beginning must have a centre of existence from which it should terminate. If that too needed a creator, there would be the question of whether this creator is also the creation of some other creator or exists by itself. Thus unless a Self-created Creator is believed in, who should be the cause of all causes, the mind will remain groping in the unending labyrinth of cause and effect, and never attain the idea of the last extremity of the series of creation. It would fall into the fallacy of circular arguing and would not reach any end.

If the creator were taken to have created himself, then there would be (one of the two positions, namely) either he should be non-existent or existent. If he were not existent, then it would not be possible for something non-existent to create any existent being. If he were existent before creating himself, there would be no sense in coming into being again. Therefore it is necessary to believe that the Creator should be a Being not dependent on any other creator for His own existence, and everything else should be dependent on Him. This dependence of the entire creation is a proof that the existence of the Source of all creation is from ever and eternal. And since all beings other than He are subject to change, are dependent on position and place and are similar to one another in qualities and properties, and since similarity leads to plurality whereas

unity has no like save itself, therefore nothing can be like Him.

Even things called one cannot be reckoned after His Unity because He is One and Singular in every respect. He is free and pure from all those attributes which are found in body or matter because He is neither body, nor colour, nor shape, nor does He lie in any direction, nor is He bounded within some place or locality. Therefore, man cannot see or understand Him through his senses or feelings, because senses can know only those things which accord with the limitations of time, place and matter. To believe that He can be seen is to believe that He has body, but since He is not a body, and He does not exist through a body, and He does not lie in any direction or place, there is no question of His being seen. But His being unseen is not like that of subtle material bodies, due to whose delicacy the eye pierces through them and eyes remain unable to see them; as for example the wind in the vast firmament. But He is unseen by His very existence. Nevertheless, nothing is unseen for Him. He sees as well as hears, but is not dependent on instruments of seeing or hearing, because if He were in need of organs of the body for hearing and seeing He would be in need of external things for His perfection and would not be a perfect Being, whereas He should be perfect in all respects and no attribute of perfection should be apart from His Self.

To believe in attributes separately from His Self would mean that there would be a self and a few attributes and the compound of the self and the attributes would be Allah. But a thing which is compounded is dependent on its parts and these parts must exist before their composition into the whole. When the parts exist from before, how can the whole be from ever and eternal because its existence is later than that of its parts. But Allah had the attributes of knowledge, power and sustaining even when nothing was existent, because none of His attributes were created in Him from outside, but His attributes are His Self and His Self is His attributes. Consequently, His knowledge does not depend on the object of knowledge existing first and then His knowledge, because His Self is prior to things coming into existence. Nor is it necessary for His power that there should first exist the object to be over-powered and then alone He would be called Powerful, because Powerful is that who has power equally for doing or abandoning and as such the existence of the object to be over-powered is not necessary.

Similarly Sustainer means master. Just as He is the Master of the non-existent after its coming into existence, in the same way He has power to bring it into existence from non-existence, namely if He so wills He may bestow existence upon it.

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