

Sermon 156: Whoever can at this time keep himself....

About the malice borne by `A'ishah; and warning the people of Basrah about what was to occur

ومن كلام له (عليه السلام)

خاطب به أهل البصرة على جهة اقتصاص الملاحم

Whoever can at this time keep himself clinging to Allah should do so. If you follow me I shall certainly carry you, if Allah so wills, on the path of Paradise, even though it may be full of severe hardship and of bitter taste.

فَمَنْ اسْتَطَاعَ عِنْدَ ذَلِكَ أَنْ يَعْتَقِلَ نَفْسَهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ، فَلْيَفْعَلْ، فَإِنْ أَطَعْتُمُونِي فَإِنِّي حَامِلُكُمْ إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ عَلَى سَبِيلِ الْجَنَّةِ، وَإِنْ كَانَ ذَا مَشَقَّةٍ شَدِيدَةٍ وَمَذَاقَةٍ مَرِيرَةٍ.

As regards a certain woman,¹ she is in the grip of womanly views, and malice is boiling in her bosom like the furnace of the blacksmith. If she were called upon to deal with others as she is dealing with me she would not have done it. (As for me), even hereafter she will be allowed her original respect, while the reckoning (of her misdeeds) is an obligation on Allah.

وَأَمَّا فُلَانَةٌ، فَأَذْرَكَهَا رَأْيُ النِّسَاءِ، وَضِغْنٌ غَلَا فِي صَدْرِهَا كَمِرْجَلِ الْقَيْنِ، وَلَوْ

دُعِيَتْ لِتَنَالَ مِنْ غَيْرِي مَا أَتَتْ إِلَيَّ، لَمْ تَفْعَلْ، وَلَهَا بَعْدُ حُرْمَتُهَا الْأُولَى، وَالْحِسَابُ عَلَى اللَّهِ.

A part of the same sermon: describing faith

منه: في وصف الايمان

This path is the lightest course and the brightest lamp. Guidance towards virtuous actions is sought through faith while guidance towards faith is achieved through virtuous actions. Knowledge is made to prosper through faith, and death is feared because of knowledge. This world comes to an end with death, while the next world is secured (by virtuous actions) in this world. With the Day of Resurrection, Paradise is brought near and **“hell will be brought into view for the perverse” (26:91)** For people there is no escape from resurrection. They are heading for this last end in its appointed course.

سَبِيلٌ أَبْلَجُ الْمُنْهَاجِ، أَنْوَرُ السِّرَاجِ، فَبِالْإِيْمَانِ يُسْتَدَلُّ عَلَى الصَّالِحَاتِ،
وَبِالصَّالِحَاتِ يُسْتَدَلُّ عَلَى الْإِيْمَانِ، وَبِالْإِيْمَانِ يُعْمَرُ الْعِلْمُ، وَبِالْعِلْمِ يُرْهَبُ الْمَوْتُ،
وَبِالْمَوْتِ تُخْتَمُ الدُّنْيَا، وَبِالدُّنْيَا تُحْرَزُ الْأَخْرَةُ، وَبِالْقِيَامَةِ تُزْلَفُ الْجَنَّةُ وَ (تُبْرَزُ
الْجَحِيمُ لِلْغَاوِينَ) وَإِنَّ الْخَلْقَ لَا مَقْصَرَ لَهُمْ عَنِ الْقِيَامَةِ، مُرْقَلِينَ فِي مِضْمَارِهَا
إِلَى الْغَايَةِ الْقُصْوَى.

A part of the same sermon

منه: في حال أهل القبور في القيامة

They have got up from the resting places in their graves and have set off for the final objectives. Every house has its own people. They are not changed nor shifted from there.

Commanding for good and refraining from evil are two characteristics of Allah, the Glorified. They can neither bring death near nor lessen sustenance.

قَدْ شَخَّصُوا مِنْ مُسْتَقَرِّ الْأَجْدَاثِ، وَصَارُوا إِلَى مَصَائِرِ الْغَايَاتِ، لِكُلِّ دَارٍ أَهْلُهَا،
لَا يَسْتَبْدِلُونَ بِهَا وَلَا يَنْقُلُونَ عَنْهَا.

وَإِنَّ الْأَمْرَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ، وَالنَّهْيَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ، لَخُلُقَانٌ مِنْ خُلُقِ اللَّهِ سُبْحَانَهُ، وَإِنَّهُمَا
لَا يُقَرَّبَانِ مِنْ أَجْلِ، وَلَا يَنْقُصَانِ مِنْ رِزْقِ.

You should adhere to the Book of Allah because it is the strong rope, a clear light, a benefiting cure, a quenching for thirst, protection for the adherent and deliverance for the attached. It does not curve so as to need straightening and does not deflect so as to be corrected. Frequency of its repetition and its falling on ears does not make it old. Whoever speaks according to it, speaks truth and whoever acts by it is forward (in action).

وَعَلَيْكُمْ بِكِتَابِ اللَّهِ، فَإِنَّهُ الْحَبْلُ الْمَتِينُ، وَالنُّورُ الْمُبِينُ، وَالشِّفَاءُ النَّافِعُ، وَالرِّيُّ
النَّاقِعُ، وَالْعِصْمَةُ لِلْمُتَمَسِّكِ، وَالنَّجَاةُ لِلْمُتَعَلِّقِ، لَا يَعْوَجُّ فَيُقَامُ، وَلَا يَزِيغُ فَيُسْتَعْتَبُ،
وَلَا تُخْلِقُهُ كَثْرَةُ الرَّدِّ، وَوُلُوجُ السَّمْعِ، مَنْ قَالَ بِهِ صَدَقَ، وَمَنْ عَمِلَ بِهِ سَبَقَ.

A man stood up and said: O Amir al-mu'minin, tell us about this disturbance and whether you enquired about it from the Holy Prophet.

وقام إليه (عليه السلام) رجل فقال: أخبرنا عن الفتنة، وهل سألت عنها رسول
الله (صلى الله عليه وآله)؟

Thereupon Amir al-mu'minin said:

When Allah, the Glorified sent down the verse:

Alif lam mim. What! Do people imagine that they will be let off on (their) saying: "We believe!" and they will not be tried? (Qur'an, 29: 1-2)

I came to know that the disturbance would not befall us so long as the Prophet (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his progeny) is among us.

فقال (عليه السلام) : لَمَّا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ سُبْحَانَهُ، قَوْلُهُ : (الم) * أَحْسَبَ النَّاسُ أَنْ يُتْرَكُوا أَنْ يَقُولُوا آمَنَّا وَهُمْ لَا يُفْتَنُونَ) عَلِمْتُ أَنَّ الْفِتْنَةَ لَا تَنْزِلُ بِنَا وَرَسُولِ اللَّهِ (صلى الله عليه وآله) بَيْنَ أَظْهُرِنَا.

So I said, "O Prophet of Allah, what is this disturbance of which Allah, the Sublime, has informed you?" He replied, "O `Ali, my people will create trouble after me." I said, "O Prophet of Allah, on the day of Uhud, when people had fallen martyrs and I was not among them, and that was distressing for me, did you not say to me, 'cheer up, as martyrdom is for you hereafter?" The Prophet replied, "Yes it is so, but what about your enduring at present?" I said, "O Prophet of Allah, this is not an occasion for endurance, but rather an occasion for cheering up and gratefulness."

فَقُلْتُ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، مَا هَذِهِ الْفِتْنَةُ الَّتِي أَخْبَرَكَ اللَّهُ بِهَا؟ فَقَالَ: يَا عَلِيُّ، إِنَّ أُمَّتِي سَيُفْتَنُونَ مِنْ بَعْدِي. فَقُلْتُ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، أَوَلَيْسَ قَدْ قُلْتَ لِي يَوْمَ أُحُدٍ حَيْثُ اسْتُشْهِدَ مَنْ اسْتُشْهِدَ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ، وَحِيزَتْ عَنِّي الشَّهَادَةُ، فَشَقَّ ذَلِكَ عَلَيَّ، فَقُلْتَ لِي: «أَبَشِّرْ، فَإِنَّ الشَّهَادَةَ مِنْ وَرَائِكَ»؟. فَقَالَ لِي: «إِنَّ ذَلِكَ لَكَذَلِكَ، فَكَيْفَ صَبْرُكَ إِذَنْ»؟. فَقُلْتُ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، لَيْسَ هَذَا مِنْ مَوَاطِنِ الصَّبْرِ، وَلَكِنْ مِنْ مَوَاطِنِ الْبُشْرَى وَالشُّكْرِ.

Then he said: "O `Ali, people will fall into mischief through their wealth, will show obligation to Allah on account of their faith, will expect His mercy, will feel safe from His anger and regard His unlawful matters as lawful by raising false doubts and by their misguiding desires. They will then hold lawful (the use of) wine by calling it barley water, a bribe by calling it a gift, and taking of usurious interest by calling it sale." I said, "O Prophet of Allah, how should I deal with them at the time, whether to hold them to have gone back in heresy or just in revolt." He said, "In revolt."

وَقَالَ: «يَا عَلِيُّ، إِنَّ الْقَوْمَ سَيُفْتَنُونَ بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ، وَيَمْنُونَ بِدِينِهِمْ عَلَى رَبِّهِمْ، وَيَتَمَنَّوْنَ رَحْمَتَهُ، وَيَأْمَنُونَ سَطْوَتَهُ، وَيَسْتَحِلُّونَ حَرَامَهُ بِالشُّبُهَاتِ الْكَاذِبَةِ، وَالْأَهْوَاءِ السَّاهِيَةِ، فَيَسْتَحِلُّونَ الْخَمْرَ بِالنَّبِيدِ، وَالسُّحْتَ بِالْهَدِيَّةِ، وَالرِّبَا بِالْبَيْعِ». قُلْتُ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، فَبِأَيِّ الْمَنَازِلِ أَنْزَلَهُمْ عِنْدَ ذَلِكَ؟ أِبْمَنْزِلَةٍ رِدَّةٍ، أَمْ بِمَنْزِلَةٍ فِتْنَةٍ؟ فَقَالَ: «بِمَنْزِلَةٍ فِتْنَةٍ».

Alternative Sources for Sermon 156

- (1) Al-Tusi, *Talkhis al-Shafi*, I, 326;
- (2) al-Hilli, *Mukhtasar Basa'ir al-darajat*, 195;
- (3) al-Tabarsi, *al-Ihtijaj*, I, 326;
- (4) al-Muttaqi, *Kanz*, VIII, 215;
- (5) al-Majlisi, *Bihar, bab al-fitān wa al-mihan*, 448.

1. There is no denying the fact that `A'ishah's behaviour towards Amir al-mu'minin was throughout inimical, and very often her heart's turbidity expressed itself on her face, and her hatred and dislike became quite apparent, so much so that in connection with some affair Amir al-mu'minin's name came up a frown appeared on her forehead and she did not relish pronouncing it with her tongue. For example, when `Ubaydullah ibn `Abdillah ibn `Utbah mentioned to `Abdullah ibn `Abbas the narration by `A'ishah namely that "in his death-illness the Prophet, taking support on al-Fadl ibn `Abbas and another person, came to her (`A'ishah's) house," `Abdullah ibn `Abbas said: "Do you know who this 'other man' was?" He said, "No." Then he said, "Ali ibn Abi Talib, but she is averse to name him in a good context." (Ahmad ibn Hanbal, al-Musnad, vol. 6, pp. 34, 228; Ibn Sa'd, at-Tabaqat al-Kabir, vol. 2, part 2, p. 29; at-Tabari, at-Tarikh, vol. 1, pp. 1800-1801; al-Baladhuri, Ansab al-ashraf, vol. 1, pp. 544-545; al-Bayhaqi, as-Sunan al-kubra, vol. 3, p. 396).

One cause for this hatred and malice was the presence of Hadrat Fatimah (p.b.u.h.) whose wholesome dignity and esteem pricked her heart like a thorn. Her jealousy towards the other wives (of the Prophet) did not allow her to let the Prophet love the daughter of his other wife to such a degree that he should stand on her approach, seat her in his own place, declare her most honourable of all the women of the world and bear such love towards her children as to call them his own sons. All these things pained her much and naturally her feelings on such an occasion were that if she had borne children they would have been the Prophet's sons and they would have been the pivot of the Prophet's affection instead of Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn. But she was not gifted with any issue and she gratified her own desire to be a mother by adopting the surname Umm `Abdillah (mother of the slave of Allah) after her sister's son. In short all these things created the passion of hatred in her heart, as a result of which she off and on complained to the Prophet against Hadrat Fatimah but could not succeed in diverting the Prophet's attention from her.

News about this mortification and estrangement also reached the ears of Abu Bakr. That would only perturb him as he too could do nothing, except that his verbal sympathies were with his daughter. At last the Prophet left this world and the reins of Government fell into his hands. Now was the opportunity for him to avenge as best as he could and to perpetrate whatever violence he had in mind. Consequently the first step he took was that, in order to deprive Hadrat Fatimah of inheritance, he denied the principle of inheritance in the case of the prophets and held that neither do the prophets inherit nor are they inherited from, but the property left by them escheats to the state. Fatimah was so much affected that she gave up speaking to him and passed away from this world with these very feelings. `A'ishah did not even take the trouble to express any sorrow at her tragic death. Thus Ibn Abi'l-Hadid has written:

When Fatimah expired, all the wives of the Prophet came to Bani Hashim in condolence except `A'ishah. She did not come and showed herself sick and words from her reached `Ali which displayed her joy. (Sharh Nahjul Balaghah, vol. 9, p. 198). As long as she bore so much malice against Hadrat Fatimah, how could Fatimah's spouse be spared similar enmity and malice. Particularly when such events also occurred which worked like a fan and roused her feeling of hatred, such as the incident of "Ifk" when Amir al-mu'minin said to the Prophet: "She is no better than the buckles of your shoe, leave her and divorce her away." On hearing this `A'ishah must have felt miserable in her bed, and must have developed the severest feeling of hatred against him. There were also moments when distinction was conferred on Amir al-mu'minin in preference

to Abu Bakr. For instance, in connection with the dispatch of the Qur'anic verses on Bara'ah (innocence), the Prophet removed Abu Bakr from the job, recalled him and assigned it to Amir al-mu'minin saying that he had been commanded by Allah to take it himself or send it through a member of his family. Similarly the Prophet closed all the doors opening into the mosque including that of Abu Bakr but allowed the door of Amir al-mu'minin's house to continue to open thereinto. `A'ishah could not relish Amir al-mu'minin's distinction over her father, and whenever there was any occasion for such distinction she did her best to undo it. When in his last days the Prophet ordered the contingent under Usamah ibn Zayd to march, and ordered Abu Bakr and `Umar also to go under his command, they received a message from the wives of the Prophet that his condition was serious and therefore the contingent should come back instead of proceeding further. This was because their far-reaching sight had realised that the only purpose in getting Medina vacated by the muhajirun and the ansar could be that after the death of the Prophet no one should stand in Amir al-mu'minin's way and that he should get the caliphate without any trouble. On receipt of this message the contingent under Usamah came back. When the Prophet learnt this he again ordered Usamah to march with the contingent and even said, "Allah may curse him who keeps away from the contingent," whereupon they again set off, but they were again called back till the Prophet's illness assumed serious proportions, but Usamah's contingent did not go out as it did not want to. After this Abu Bakr was sent word through Bilal that he should deputise the Prophet in leading the prayers in order to pave the way for his Caliphateship. Accordingly, keeping this in view he was first shown as the Prophet's caliph (deputy) in prayers and eventually was accepted as his caliph for all purposes. Thereafter matters were so contrived that Amir al-mu'minin could not get the Caliphate. However, after the reign of the third caliph circumstances took such a turn that people were obliged to swear allegiance at Amir al-mu'minin's hand. On this occasion `A'ishah was present in Mecca. When she learnt about Amir al-mu'minin's caliphate her eyes began emitting flames, and rage and anger perturbed her mind, and her hatred for Amir al-mu'minin assumed such seriousness that she rose against him on the excuse of avenging blood of the same man (`Uthman) whom she had herself proclaimed fit to be killed, and openly declared war as a result of which so much bloodshed occurred that the whole land of Basrah was smeared with the blood of those killed, and the door of disunity was opened for good. (Sharh, Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, vol. 9, pp. 190-200).

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/nahjul-balagha-part-1-sermons/sermon-156-whoever-can-time-keep-himself>