

Sermon 170: If those at your back send you.....

About the obligation of following the truth after it has been established

When Amir al-mu'minin approached Basrah an Arab met him and spoke to him, as he had been sent to him by a group of people of Basrah to enquire from him on their behalf position vis-à-vis the people of Jamal. Amir al-mu'minin explained to him his position with respect to them, from which he was convinced that Amir al-mu'minin was in the right. Then Amir al-mu'minin asked him to swear allegiance, but he replied "I am just a message carrier of a people and shall not do anything until I get back to them." Upon this Amir al-mu'minin said to him:

ومن كلام له (عليه السلام)

في وجوب اتباع الحق عند قيام الحجّة

كلم به بعض العرب، وقد أرسله قوم من أهل البصرة لما قرب (عليه السلام) منها ليعلم لهم منه حقيقة حاله مع أصحاب الجمل لتزول الشبهة من نفوسهم، فبيّن له (عليه السلام) من أمره معهم ما علم به أنّه على الحقّ.

ثمّ قال له: بايع. فقال: إني رسول قوم، ولا أحدث حدثاً حتى أرجع إليهم. فقال (عليه السلام):

If those at your back send you as a forerunner to search out a rain-fed area for them, and you return to them and apprise them of greenery and water but they disagree with you and go towards dry and barren land, what would you do then? He said: I would leave them and go towards greenery and water. Amir al-mu'minin then said: So then extend your hand.

This man related that: By Allah, by such a clear argument I could not refrain from swearing allegiance to Amir al-mu'minin.

This man was know as Kulayb al-Jarmi.

أَرَأَيْتَ لَوْ أَنَّ الَّذِينَ وَرَاءَكَ بَعَثُوكَ رَائِدًا تَبْتَغِي لَهُمْ مَسَاقِطَ الْغَيْثِ، فَرَجَعْتَ إِلَيْهِمْ
وَأَخْبَرْتَهُمْ عَنِ الْكَلَاءِ وَالْمَاءِ، فَخَالَفُوا إِلَى الْمَعَاطِشِ وَالْمَجَادِبِ، مَا كُنْتَ صَانِعًا؟

قال: كُنْتُ تَارِكَهُمْ وَمُخَالَفَهُمْ إِلَى الْكَلَاءِ وَالْمَاءِ. فَقَالَ لَهُ - عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ - : فَاْمُدُّ
إِذَا يَدَكَ.

فَقَالَ الرَّجُلُ: فَوَاللَّهِ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُ أَنْ أَمْتَنَعَ عِنْدَ قِيَامِ الْحُجَّةِ عَلَيَّ، فَبَايَعْتُهُ عَلَيْهِ
السَّلَامُ.

وَالرَّجُلُ يُعْرَفُ بِكُلَيْبِ الْجَرْمِيِّ.

Alternative Sources for Sermon 170

(1) Al-Waqidi, *al-Jamal*, in al-Mufid, *al-Jamal*, 156;

(2) al-Tabari, *Ta'rikh*, V, 192, events of 36 H.;

(3) al-Zamakhshari, *Rabi`*, *bab al-jawabat al-muskitah wa rashaqat al-kalam*.

<https://www.al-islam.org/nahjul-balagha-part-1-sermons/sermon-170-if-those-your-back-send-you>