

34. Forbearance

Allah, the Wise, has said:

إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لَحَلِيمٌ أَوَّاهٌ مُنِيبٌ

“Most surely Ibrahim was forbearing, tender-hearted, oft-returning (to Allah).”¹

Imam Sadiq (as) had said:

إِذَا لَمْ تَكُنْ حَلِيمًا فَتَحَلَّمْ

“If you are not forbearing then portray yourself as one possessing forbearance.”²

Short Expalantion

Forbearance is Allah’s lantern from the illumination of which a person achieves the proximity of Allah. A forbearing person, in the face of ill treatment by his family, friends and other people, exhibits patience for the sake of divine pleasure. The reality of forbearance is when a person, despite having the power and ability to extract revenge, pardons the person who has caused him harm and injury; we read in the supplications: “O’ Lord! Your grace is (too) expansive and Your forbearance is (too) immense that You should punish me for my deeds and disgrace me for my sins.”

Since the significance of a true believer more than anyone else, thus, it is imperative for him to exhibit forbearance in the face of troubles and inconveniences of the foolish ones, for if he were to stand up in confrontation with them, it would be tantamount to adding fuel to the fire and only serve to aggravate the issue.³

1) The Nuisances of the Pigeon-Fancier

Sheikh Abu 'Ali Thaqafi had a neighbour who loved pigeons. His pigeons would perch on the roof of the Sheikh's house and in order to make them fly away, he would fling stones at them, an act that caused disturbance and inconvenience to the Sheikh.

One day, the Sheikh was sitting in his house reciting the Noble Qur'an, when the neighbour hurled a stone at the pigeons. The stone struck the Sheikh on his forehead, injuring him and causing blood to flow down his forehead.

The Sheikh's companions were overjoyed and spoke amongst themselves: "Tomorrow, the Sheikh is bound to complain to the governor of the city and we shall soon be relieved of the pigeon-fancier's nuisance."

The Sheikh summoned his servant and instructed him to bring a long branch of a tree. When the slave had brought the branch, the Sheikh said to him: "Now take this branch to the pigeon-fancier and ask him not to throw stones but to use this instead to make the pigeons fly."⁴

2) Tolerance Towards the Commander's Deeds

While Hisham Ibn Isma'il (the maternal uncle of 'Abdul Malik Ibn Marwan) was the governor of Madinah, having been appointed by Yazid, he used to harass Imam Sajjad (as) immensely. When he was dismissed from the post, Walid took his place, ordered him to be arrested and placed him in custody so that all those people who had grievances against him could come forward and seek compensation.

Hisham said, "I do not fear anyone except 'Ali Ibn al-Husain (as)." This fear was because he had subjected the Imam (as) to enormous troubles.

However, the Imam (as) had instructed some of the individuals known to him (and who had had a hand in Hisham's arrest) not to cause any harm to him, even by using a bad word. He even sent a message to Hisham stating: "Listen, if you are unable to pay the money which they have imposed upon you as penalty and punishment, we can arrange to have it paid for you. Rest assured! You need not be worried, either with respect to us or with respect to our followers."

When Hisham realised the Imam's civility and courteousness towards him in spite of his improper conduct, he recited aloud⁵: "Allah knows best where He places His message."⁶

3) Qais Minqari

A narrator says: "I learnt to practice forbearance from Qais Ibn 'Asim Minqari. Once, I watched him preaching and exhorting the people as he leaned on his sword in front of his house. In the course of his

preaching, I observed that some people came to him with a dead body together with a person whose hands were tied.

“This is your nephew and he has killed your son,” they said to Qais.

The narrator continues: “By Allah! Qais neither discontinued his speech nor did he get up from his place. Instead, he continued till his speech finished, after which, he turned to his nephew and said: “O’ Nephew! You have committed an evil deed, disobeyed your Lord, severed your relationship, used your weapon to your own detriment and dishonoured the people of your tribe!”

Then, turning to his other son, he said: “Untie the hands of your cousin, bury your brother and give your mother, from my property, a hundred camels as blood money for the death of your brother, for she comes from a different family.”⁷

4) Imam Hasan and the Syrian

One day, Imam Hasan (as) was sitting in his place when he was confronted by a man who had come from Syria. As soon as the man set his eyes upon the Imam (as), he began to curse and revile him; but the Imam (as) remained silent till he had completed his outburst.

When he had stopped, the Imam (as) turned towards him, greeted him, smiled and then said: “Brother! You seem to be a stranger here and you have apparently made a mistake. If you want me to disregard your behaviour and forgive you, I shall do so; if you seek something from me, I shall grant it to you; if you want me to guide you, I shall do so; if you are hungry, I shall feed you; if you are in need of clothes, I shall provide them to you; if you are needy, I shall give you all that you need; if you have been expelled, I shall grant you shelter and if you have a desire, I shall fulfill it for you. If you can be my guest for the duration of your stay here, it would be to your benefit, since my house is large and contains all amenities.”

Hearing these words of Imam Hasan (as), the man burst into tears and said: “I bear witness that you are Allah’s Caliph upon the earth and Allah knows best where He places His message and caliphate. Before this meeting of ours, I regarded you and your father as my greatest enemies amongst the people, but now you are the most beloved of them all for me.”

The man stayed with Imam Hasan (as) as his guest for the entire duration of his stay in Madinah and eventually became one of the sincere followers of the Ahlul Bayt.⁸

5) Sheikh Ja’far Kashif al-Ghita

Sheikh Kashif al-Ghita was one of those illustrious scholars who were known to possess a high degree of forbearance.

One day, the Sheikh distributed some money amongst the impoverished people of the city of Isfahan

after which he began to lead the congregational prayers. Between the two prayers, when the people were engaged in reciting their supplications, a poor sayyid⁹ entered the mosque, stood before the Sheikh and shouted rudely: “O’ Sheikh! Hand over the money of my grandfather (khums) to me.”

“You have arrived late; unfortunately, I have nothing left with me,” the Sheikh replied.

The sayyid, with great impertinence, spat on his beard!

Instead of reacting violently, the Sheikh spread out his cloak and began to walk amidst the rows of people, saying, “Whoever loves and respects the Sheikh’s beard, should help this sayyid.” The people, having witnessed what had transpired between the two, immediately obeyed and very soon the Sheikh’s cloak was filled with money. He handed all the money to the sayyid and proceeded to lead the congregation for the ‘Asr prayers.¹⁰

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1. Noble Qur’an, Surat Hud (11), Verse 75
 2. Jame’ al-Sa’adat, Volume 1, Page 297
 3. Tadhkeratul Haqaiq, Page 54
 4. Namunah-e-Ma’arif, Volume 4, Page 368
 5. Noble Qur’an, Suratul An’am (6), Verse 124
 6. Ba Mardum In Guneh Barkhord Konim, Page 22; Tarikh Tabari, Volume 8, Page 61
 7. Payghambar Wa Yaran, Volume 5, Page 180; Asad al-Ghabbah, Volume 4, Page 229
 8. Muntahal A’mal, Volume 1, Page 222
 9. A descendant of the Noble Prophet ﷺ. (Tr.)
 10. Seema-e-Farzanegan, Page 338; Fawaid al-Ra’awiyah, Page 74

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