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17. Bid Others to do Good and Reject Evil

17. Bid others to do good and you will be one of them; reject evil with your hand and your tongue, and do your utmost to separate from one who does evil. 'Strive in the way of God as is His due' (ref.22:78) and do not let the reproach of any reproacher have any influence on you in the path of God. Plunge into hardships for the sake of truth, wherever it may be.

In this paragraph, Imam 'Ali (as) emphasizes several issues:

A. Enjoining The Good And Forbidding The Evil

To encourage people to do the right things is termed "enjoining the good" and prohibiting them from doing wrong is called "forbidding the evil."

The employment of this principle is a public duty which is carried out in form of *wajib kifa'i* which means it is an obligation on all Muslims but it suffices when performed by some of them. This principle makes the foundation of all Divine commandments strong. Imam Baqir (as) says in this connection:

"The principle of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil is the way of the Prophets and path of the scholars. It is a tremendous obligation through which (other) obligatory tasks are undertaken, religious creeds are safeguarded, earnings are made lawful, restitution is made for wrongs, the earth is in a flourishing state, justice is exacted from enemies, and affairs are in order."

Islam considers that the prosperity of societies is fulfilled through the implementation of this sacred

principle. Islam thinks that the miseries and the deprivation of some societies of divine blessings and also their destruction and their annihilation are due to the fact that this principle is not carried out properly in those nations.2 Imam 'Ali (as), regarding this, in a sermon emphasizes that:

"The nations before you were only destroyed because of the sins they committed, and the priests and rabbis did not stop them from that. When they persevered in sinning and the priests and rabbis did not stop them, punishments descended on them".3

Since the implementation of this principle makes firm the foundations of Divine commandments and erases the vestiges of wrong belief, injustice and corruption, Islam considers the abandonment of this principle as war against God.4 Imam 'Ali (as), in his last will, considers this issue:

"Do not abandon the principle of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil, or else the the evil among you will have authority over you. Then you will pray but your prayers will not be answered."5

B. The Degrees Of The Principle Of Enjoining The Good And Forbidding The Evil

This principle has degrees, some of which apply to all individuals of a community without having related to the government; some other degrees apply to those individuals who are given some social tasks. These degrees include:

- i. Those who are happy by nature to do good and unhappy to perform the evil.
- ii. Those who verbally enjoin the good and forbid the evil.
- **iii.** Those who by force implement the principle of enjoing the good and forbidding the evil; these may use punishments if felt necessary.

Regarding these, let us observe the following traditions: Imam 'Ali (as) has stated:

"Only two things gather people together: pleasure and anger. Therefore, one who is pleased with a

matter has entered into it; and one who is displeased with it has left it. 6

Imam 'Ali (as) has also stated:

"One who is satisfied with the actions of a people is like one who has participated with them in it. Every one who participates in wrong-doing has two sins: the sin of committing it and the sin of being pleased with it."

Imam 'Ali (as) said:

"The one who does injustice, the one who is content with the injustice, and the one who helps carry out the injustice are three partners in the act."8

Imam Baqir (as), concerning the principle of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil, in a tradition, has said,

"Then deny it with your hearts, and reject it with your tongues and slap it on their foreheads and do not fear, in the way of God, the reproach of any reproacher."9

Ibn Jarir narrates in his history book from Abd al-Rahman b. Abi Layla, that when Imam 'Ali (as) was facing Mu'awiya's army he said:

"O believers! Whoever sees an act of aggression taking place or an evil act being called to, and rejects it with his heart, he is secure and free of responsibility. Whoever rejects it with his tongue will be rewarded, and he is better than his companion. Whoever rejects it with his sword so that the word of God may be uppermost and the word of the wrongdoers lowermost, such a one has attained the path of guidance and become established on the (right) way and certainty has illuminated his heart.""10

Of course, the degrees of the principle of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil are determined by the capacity of the individual. A person, if capable, should use his hand, tongue, and heart to implement the principle. If he is not capable, he may use his tongue and heart. In the third case, a person should announce his lack of consent through his heart, at least. Imam 'Ali (as), regarding this, has said:

فَمِهُم المُنْكِر بِقَلبِهِ وَلِسَانِهِ وَيَدِهِ فَذَلِكَ المُستَكْمِلُ لِخِصَالِ الخَيرِ وَمِنهُمُ المُنْكِرُ بِلِسَانِهِ وَقَلبِهِ التَارِكُ بِيَدِهِ فَذَلِكَ المُستَكْمِلُ لِخِصَالِ الخَيرِ وَمُضَيِّعٌ خِصَلَةً وَمِنهُم المُنْكِرُ بِقَلبِهِ وَالتَارِكُ بِيَدِهِ وَلِسَانِهِ فَذَلِكَ الَّذَي ضَيَّعَ مُستَمسِكٌ بِخِصَلَتَينِ مِنَ الثَّلاثِ وَتَمَسَّكَ بِوَاحِدَةٍ وَمِنهُم تَارِكٌ لاِنْكارِ المُنْكَرِ بِلِسَانِهِ وَقَلبِهِ وَيَدِهِ فَذَلِكَ مَيِّتُ الاَحيَاءِ "أَشْرِفَ الخِصَلْتَينِ مِنَ الثَّلاثِ وَتَمَسَّكَ بِوَاحِدَةٍ وَمِنهُم تَارِكٌ لاِنْكارِ المُنْكَرِ بِلِسَانِهِ وَقَلبِهِ وَيَدِهِ فَذَلِكَ مَيِّتُ الاَحيَاءِ

"Among them is one who rejects the evil action with his tongue, his hand and his heart. Such a person has perfected (the attainment of) good traits. Among them is one who rejects the evil with his tongue and his heart, but not his hand. Such a person has taken hold of two good traits and neglected one trait. Among them is one who rejects the evil with his heart, not with his hand and tongue. Such a person has neglected the two noblest traits of the three and held on to (only) one. Among them is one who neither rejects the evil deed with his tongue nor with his heart nor with his hand. Such a person is a dead person among the living". 11

Regarding this issue, the Prophet (S) has said:

"Whosoever of you sees an evil act being committed, let him alter it (rectify) it with his hand, and if he is unable (to do so), then with his tongue; and if he is unable (to do that) then with his heart". 12

Imam 'Ali (as) has said, regarding this:

"The Prophet (S) commanded us to confront sinners with stern faces". 13

The Highest Degree Of The Principle Of Enjoining The Good And Forbidding The Evil

The highest degree of the principle of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil should be implemented when the very foundations of Islam are endangered through the wrong-doings of an obstinate ruler. In such cases the world is sold for the hereafter. The believers will defend the above principle wholeheartedly in such a way that they, like Abu Dharr, may fall prey to others' anger, or like Husayn (as) and his followers get martyred. Regarding this, Imam 'Ali (as) has said:

"The highest degree of the principle of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil is speaking a just word before an unjust leader."14

When Uthman feared Abu Dharr's disclosure of the former's wrong-doings, he told him: It is none of your business to interefere with political affairs. Abu Dharr answered:

"I swear by God I do not have any excuse not to implement the principle of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil. I have to do it"15

When Imam Husayn (as) was in front of the enemy army and his sincere advisers were advising him not to confront with the foes, he explained the philosophy of uprising in the following manner: "O people! The Prophet (S) has said: 'Anybody who witnesses an obstinate ruler who considers allowable those things which are forbidden by God, who breaks God's contract, defies the Prophet's tradition and acts with injustice towards the people, but does not rise up against such a tyrannical ruler, he will receive from God the same punishment which the aggressor receives'.

Be aware: these people (the Umayyads) have accepted Satan's commandments and have rejected God's worship, have indulged in corruption, have stopped carrying out God's commands, have robbed Muslims of their treasures, have made allowable God's forbidden affairs and have forbidden God's lawful affairs. I deserve the most to prevent this corruption."16

When he was leaving Medina, Husayn (as) in a will described the philosophy behind his uprising in the following manner:

"I have not come forth in insolence or self-conceit or wrongfully or to create mischief. Rather I have only come forth for the reformation of the Ummah of my grandfather, Muhammad (as), and so that I may enjoin the good and forbid the evil." 17

But under the present lack of equilibrium where the results are unpredictable, should all people carry out this task, or is it the responsibility of a select group to carry out this principle? Is this task compulsory or optional? These are issues which are beyond our scope and will be found in books on jurisprudence. 18

C. The Types Of Struggle In The Way Of Allah

To struggle in the way of Allah means carrying out anything that is wanted by God. To fulfill such an aim, we should try our best, either financially or verbally. Imam 'Ali (as) in his will has emphasized:

"Fear Allah, and remember Him in striving with your wealth, your selves and your tongues in the way of Allah."19

Therefore, struggle against our very selves is also among struggles in the way of Allah. Upon the return of soldiers from the holy wars, the Prophet (S) told them:

"Welcome to a people who have performed the lesser jihad in the way of Allah, but their greater jihad is still ahead". It was said: "Messenger of Allah, what is the greater jihad?" The Prophet (S) replied: "The struggle against your self." 20

Imam 'Ali (as) has said in his will:

In all types of struggle for God, we should strive for God only and we should not pay attention to the reproach of those who blame us. We should do everything for God because He is above everything and His worship and obedience is compulsory at all times.

D. How Does This Principle Cause Man To Become Righteous?

The Holy Qur'an considers enjoining the good to be among the traits of believers, inhabitants of paradise, pious men and the best of the nation. 21 Therefore, anybody who indulges in this principle should be pious himself or else:

From a physician with a yellow countenance,

Do not ask for a rose-colored cheek.

Furthermore, such a person uses the approach of self-denial which is among great sins.

Thus, as Imam 'Ali (as) has said, a person who carries out the principle of enjoining the good should be among the pious ones, or else such a person is like a physician who cures people but he himself is sick.

- 1. . Al-Kafi, vol.5, p.56; Wasa'il al-Shia'h, vol.7, p.395.
- 2. "Those who disbelieved from among the children of Israel were cursed by the tongue of Dawood and Isa, son of Mariam; this was because they disobeyed and used to exceed their limit. They used not to forbid each other the hateful things which they did; certainly evil was that which they did" [Qur'an 5:78–79].
- 3. . Al-Kafi, vol.5, p.57.
- 4. . Al-Kafi, vol.5, p.59.
- 5. Nahj al-Balaghah, letter no 23.
- 6. . Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, vol. 11, p.411.
- 7. . Op.cit.
- 8. Op. cit p.410.
- 9. . Al-Kafi, vol.5, p.56.
- 10. . Wasa'il, vol. 11, p. 405; Nahj al-Balaghah, Hikmah 373.
- 11. Wasa'il vol. 11, p. 406; Nahj al-Balaghah, Hikmah 374.
- 12. Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, vol.2, p.361; lhya' al-'Ulum, vol.2, p.309.
- 13. . Al-Kafi, vol.5, p.54.
- 14. . Nahj al-Balaghah, Hikmah 374.
- 15. . Al-Ghadir, vol.8, p.306.
- 16. . Tabari History, vol.7, p.300.
- 17. . Nafs al-Mahmum, p.34.
- 18. . Concerning this refer to Figh al-Wilayah, Muntazari, vol. 2 and to Al-Qawa'id al-faqih, Makarem, vol. 3.
- 19. . Nahj al-Balaghah, Letter No 47.
- 20. Bihar, vol. 19, p. 182.
- 21. . Ghurar al-Hikam.

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