

## 35) Choosing of Companions

One of the other issues in which man has to observe Taqwa is the matter of choosing friends. If one is indifferent, he shall suffer losses in this world and the hereafter. One should make friend with those who are Godly, whose speech and whose deeds are accepted by Allah. In this relation, God says:

***“And withhold yourself with those who call on their Lord morning and evening desiring His goodwill, and let not your eyes pass from them, desiring the beauties of this world’s life; and do not follow him whose heart We have made unmindful of Our remembrance, and he follows his low desires and his case has gone beyond all bounds.”<sup>1</sup>***

From this Quranic verse, it is inferred that we should associate with people who call God morning and evening, and who seek God’s pleasure and not the people of pleasures who are unmindful of God.

Ibn Abbas relates: “The Messenger of Allah (SAW) was asked: ‘Which friends are the best?’ He said: ‘One whose sight reminds you of God, whose saying adds to your knowledge, and whose deeds remind you of the hereafter.’<sup>2</sup>

The same tradition has been related on the authority of Prophet Jesus (AS) who has said: “Get close to God and away from people of sins. Befriend God by enmity with them and seek God’s pleasure at the cost of their anger.”<sup>3</sup>

Imam Ali (AS) advises us in this way: “It is incumbent on you to be truthful to your friends! Make friends as many as you can, for they are your power at the time of ease and a shield in trials. Counsel those who fear Allah. Love your brethren as much as you love Taqwa. Beware of bad women, and be careful even before the good ones.”<sup>4</sup>

The Messenger of Allah (SAW) has been reported by Imam Sadiq (AS) as saying: “Every man follows the faith of his friends. Therefore, each of you should take care whom he befriends.”<sup>5</sup>

A friend has great influence on his friends. Most of human sufferings and losses arise from friends. It is a friend who pushes one to addiction and causes him misfortune in this world and the hereafter. It is a friend who makes one a hypocrite, makes him enter battle against God, makes him corrupt and deviant.

It is on this basis that the Messenger of Allah (a.s.) has said: “Every man follows the religion of his friend.”

Therefore, we should be very careful in choosing our friends. Any negligence results in misfortune. One hour of friendship with a deviated friend might change our fate and cause a lot of regrets.

In traditions, it has been advised not to associate with fool, miser, timid, liar, astray, wrongdoer, adulterer, tyrant king, deceitful friend, wealthy oppressor, enemy, one who has no love for relatives, evildoers, women, people of heresies, and those who curse the friends of God. Addressing his son Imam Hassan (AS), Imam Ali (AS) says: “My son! Avoid making friend with a fool, for he intends to benefit you, but he will harm you. Avoid making friend with a miser, for he prevents you from getting what you need. Avoid making friend with a wrongdoer, for he betrays you out for a little. Avoid making friend with a liar, for he is like a mirage that makes far things appear close to you and makes close things appear far to you.”<sup>6</sup>

Imam Ali (AS) has been reported as saying: “Keep away from those whom your hearts do not like.”

Evidently, the Lord of the universe has naturally created all human beings pure and innocent. The conscience, which is the inner ruler of man, can say what is praiseworthy and what is blameworthy. Hence, a pure heart is not pleased with vices and does not approve any indecency.

Mostafa Lotfi, in his book *Ghorfat al-Ahzan* (chamber of sorrows), relates an admonitory story as follows: “I had a friend whom I loved very much. He was the only friend who never hurt me. I never hurt him either. I had to go on a long journey. Hence, I left Cairo and said farewell to my dear friend. We wrote to each other for a long time, but all of a sudden all the correspondence stopped. There was no news of him anymore. When I went back to Cairo, I went to his house, but I was said he had moved to a new place. I was very sad and did my best to find his address, but it was useless.

One night when I was going home, I got lost and found myself in a faraway neighborhood of the city. I felt I was being drowned in a black sea between two high mountains when I heard the moaning of a man. I said to myself: ‘How strange that this dark night has hidden the secrets of the miserable man in it.’ I had vowed to help any misfortunate man I found. The moaning came from a house. I knocked the door. A small girl in shabby dress opened the door. I asked her if there was a sick person at home. She said that her father needed help. I entered the house, feeling that I was going to the world of the dead from the world of living ones. I went near the sick person and sat beside him. He was nothing but skin and bones.

He looked at me for a long time, moving his lips and finally said: ‘Thanks God, I finally found my friend!’ He was my old friend! I became very upset and my heart stood still. I asked him surprisingly: ‘What is this condition?’ With a gesture, he suggested I should raise him to a sitting position. I did so. He started to talk with a weak voice, telling his story: ‘I was living with my mother for ten years. A wealthy man living in a splendid palace was our next-door neighbor. I was enchanted by his beautiful girl. I made friend

with her with the promise of marrying her, but before marriage, she became pregnant. I was double-hearted as to whether I should marry or leave her.

Finally, I made up my mind to leave her. I moved to a new house without any information. One day, I received a letter from the girl to whom I had lied about marriage. The letter greatly shook me.’ My friend stretched his hand and took out a letter from under the pillow. He gave the letter to me to read it.

The letter started with these words: ‘If I am writing to you, it is not because I love you, for your deceitful behavior is not important. When you left me, you did not think about the fate of me and the child I had with me. I cannot call you a human being with your merciless and inhumane behavior. You said you loved me, but you were lying. You seduce me and broke your promise! The result was that I escaped from home and took residence in a poor district of the city. My parents died frustrated in their hopes. I am in my deathbed in the last days of my life. You are a liar, deceitful, a criminal! I do not think that God will let you free and let you go unpunished! I am not writing this letter to express my love, for you are too mean to be loved. You have a trust with me and that is your innocent daughter. If you have a bit of fatherly love, come and take this miserable child!’

I had hardly finished the letter when I realized that he was bitterly weeping. He said: ‘When I read this letter, I was about to die. I speedily went to her place which is this very house. I found her lying motionless on this bed with her daughter sitting next to her. Seeing the girl weeping, I became unconscious. When I came to consciousness, I had the feeling that my inhumane crimes had turned into ferocious beasts which were about to attack me.

Therefore, I decided to live and die like her in the same room which I called the ‘chamber of sorrows’. Now my death has come and an inner call says to me that God has forgiven me.’ When he said this, he stopped talking and fell down on the bed. The last thing he said was: ‘I entrust my daughter to you, my friend.’”<sup>7</sup>

We can say that most of misfortunes, good or bad fate of human beings depend on friend and someone with whom we associate. Hence, we should observe Taqwa in relation to that.

<sup>1</sup>. Qur’an, 18:28.

<sup>2</sup>. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 71, p. 186.

<sup>3</sup>. Ibid., p. 189.

<sup>4</sup>. Ibid., p. 187.

<sup>5</sup>. Ibid., p. 192.

<sup>6</sup>. Nahj al-Balaghah Faiz, vol. 2, p. 1094

<sup>7</sup>. Javan, vol. 1, p. 322 quoted from Al-Nadharat, vol. 1, p. 245

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