

3) The Worth Of Piety

If Taqwa (piety) is to be assessed, it can be appreciated through the states of the pious and its fruits. Nevertheless, if it is to be evaluated separately, several verses and narrations are invoked in order to understand its importance.

The Lord of the universe has said: ***“Surely the most honorable of you with Allah is the one among you most careful (of his duty); surely Allah is Knowing, Aware.”***^{[1](#)}

If there were no verses other than this in the Quran in honor of Taqwa, it would suffice us all, for God has laid down Taqwa as the highest stage self can attain.

Elsewhere Allah says: ***“and make provisions, for surely the provision is the guarding of oneself.”***^{[2](#)}

In another verse, Allah says: ***“and whoever is careful of (his duty to) Allah, He will make for him an outlet and give him sustenance from whence he thinks not.”***^{[3](#)}

In this connection, there are other verses which will be mentioned in the following pages. As for narrations, the late Koleini has reported Ya’qoob ibn Shu’aib as saying: “I heard Imam Sadiq (AS) say: “Allah has not promoted a servant from the inferior position of sin to the superior position of Taqwa unless He has made him independent without having riches and has honored him without having any family and kinship and has made him His friend without having any human companion.”^{[4](#)}

Imam Ali (AS) has been reported as saying: “People have not been recommended to anything greater than Taqwa, for it is the advice of we, the Ahl al-Bayt.”^{[5](#)}

Asked “which act is excellent?”, Imam Ali (AS) said: “Taqwa.”^{[6](#)}

The commander of the believers has been reported as saying: “With Taqwa, no act is unworthy. How can an act be unworthy when it is accepted?”^{[7](#)}

Hannan ibn Sadeer has reported his father and Abu Ja’far as saying: “Some of the companions of the holy prophet (SAW) were sitting in a place boasting of their lineage. Salman al-Farisi was among them

too. At this moment, turning to Salman, Umar said: “O Salman! What is your lineage?” Salman said: “I am Salman, the son of Abdullah! I used to be astray. God guided me through Muhammad (SAW).

I was needy and dependent. God made me independent with the help of Muhammad (SAW). I used to be a servant. God set me free by Muhammad (SAW). This is my lineage, O Umar!” After a few moments, the holy prophet (SAW) entered the place. Salman informed him of the story. The holy prophet (SAW) said: Surely, a man’s lineage is his faith and bravery. A man’s intellect is his temper. God Almighty has said:

“O you men! Surely We have created you of a male and a female, and made you tribes and families that you may know each other; surely the most honorable of you with Allah is the one among you most careful (of his duty).”⁸

Turning to Salman, the holy prophet (SAW) said: “O Salman! There is no preference for you to any one of them save for piety (Taqwa). Therefore, if you are more pious you will be better than them.” ⁹

Imam Ali in Nahj al-Balaghah has commented on Taqwa on numerous occasions. Some of them are as follows: “Beware, Taqwa is like tame camels whose reins are in the hands of their riders, leading them to paradise.” ¹⁰

In a sermon, Imam Ali (AS) says: “O creatures of Allah! I advise you to have fear of Allah which is the provision (for the next world) and with it is (your) return. This provision would take you (to your destination) and the return would be successful. The best one, who is able to make people listen, has called towards it and the best listener has listened to it. So the caller has proclaimed and the listener has listened and preserved.

O creatures of Allah! Certainly fear of Allah has saved the lovers of Allah from unlawful doings and gave dread to their hearts till their nights are spent in wakefulness and their days in thirst. So they achieve comfort through trouble and copious watering through thirst. They regarded death to be near and therefore hastened towards (good) actions. They rejected their desire and so they kept death in their sight.” ¹¹

In another sermon, Imam Ali (AS) says: “Know O creatures of Allah that piety is a strong house of protection while impiety is a weak house which does not protect its people, and does not give security to him who takes refuge therein. Know that the sting of sins is cut by piety and the final aim is achieved by conviction of belief.” ¹²

Still in another sermon, Imam Ali (AS) has said: “I advise you O creatures of Allah, to exercise fear of Allah and obey Him because it is salvation tomorrow and deliverance forever.” ¹³

On the same topic, Imam Ali (AS) says: “O creatures of Allah! I advise you to have fear of Allah because it is the best advice to be mutually given by persons, and the best of all things before Allah.” ¹⁴

Taqwa has been mentioned in another sermon by Imam Ali (AS) as follows: “He (Allah) has advised you to exercise fear and has made it the highest point of His creatures. You should therefore fear Allah, Who is such that you are as though just in front of Him, and your forelocks are in His grip, and your change of position is in His control. If you conceal a matter, He will know of it. If you disclose a matter, He will record it.

For this, He has appointed honored guards (angels) who do not omit any rightful matter nor include anything incorrect. You should know that whoever fears Allah, He would make for him a way to get out of troubles and (grant him) a light (to help him) out of darkness. He will ever keep him in whatever (condition) he wishes, and will make him stay in a position of honor near Himself, in the abode which He has made for Himself. The shade of this abode is His throne, its light is His effulgence, its visitors are His angels, and its companions are His prophets.”[15](#)

In another sermon, Imam Ali (AS) has said: “you should therefore exercise fear of Allah because it has a rope whose knob is strong and its pinnacle is lofty and invulnerable.”[16](#)

On Taqwa, Imam Ali (AS) further says: “I advise you, O creatures of Allah, that you should have fear of Allah because it is a right of Allah over you and it gives a right before Allah, and that you should seek Allah’s help in it, and its help in (meeting) Allah. Certainly, for today, fear of Allah is a protection and a shield, and for tomorrow (the Day of Judgment) it is the way to Paradise. Its way is clear and he who treads it is the gainer.

Whoever holds it guards it. It has presented itself to the people who have already passed and to those coming from behind, because they will need it tomorrow (on the Day of Judgment) when Allah will revive His creation again, take back what He has given and take account of what He has bestowed. How few will be those who accept it and practice it as it ought to be practiced. They will be very few in number, and they are the people who correspond to the description given by Allah, the Glorified, when He says “**... And very few of My creatures are grateful!**”[17](#)

Therefore, hasten with your ears towards it and intensify your efforts for it. Make it a substitute for all your past (shortcomings) to take their place as a successor, and make it your supporter against every opponent. Turn your sleep into wakefulness by its help, and pass your days with it. Make it the equipment of your hearts, wash your sins with it, treat your ailments with it, and hasten towards your death with it. Take a lesson from him who neglects, so that others who follow it should not take a lesson from you. Beware, therefore; You should take care of it and should take care of yourselves through it.

Keep away from this world and proceed towards the next world infatuatedly. Do not regard humble he whom the fear of Allah has given a high position, and do not accord a high position to him whom this world has given a high position.”[18](#)

In another sermon, Imam Ali (AS) has said: “I advise you, O creatures of Allah, to have fear of Allah, for it is the rein and the mainstay (of religion). Hold fast to its salient points, keep hold of realities. It will take

you to the abodes of easiness, places of comfort, fortresses of safety and houses of honor on the Day (of Judgment) when eyes will be wide open, when there will be darkness all round, when small groups of camels pregnant for ten months will be allowed free grazing, and when the Horn will be blown. Then every living being will die, every voice will become dumb, the high mountains and hard rocks will crumble (to pieces) so that their hard stones will turn into moving sand.”[19](#)

On the topic of Taqwa, Imam Ali (AS) further says: “Certainly the fear of Allah is the medicine for your hearts, sight for the blindness of your spirits, the cure for breasts, the purifier of the pollution of your minds, the light of the darkness of your eyes, the consolation for the fear of your hearts, and the brightness for the gloom of your ignorance.”[20](#)

In another sermon, Imam Ali (AS) has said: “Certainly the fear of Allah is the key to guidance, provision for the next world, freedom from every slavery, and deliverance from all ruin. With its help the seeker succeeds and he who makes for safety escapes and achieves his aims.”[21](#)

Imam Ali (AS) has been reported as having said: “The fear of Allah is the chief trait of human character.”[22](#)

As a reminder of Taqwa, in a sermon Imam Ali (AS) says: “O creatures of Allah, I advise you to have fear of Allah Who has set examples to you, and Who has timed for you your lives. He has given you covering of dress and He has made abundant for you your livelihood. He has surrounded you with His knowledge. He has ordained rewards. He has bestowed upon you vast bounties and extensive gifts. He has warned you through far reaching arguments... Therefore, fear of Allah like the fear of one who has listened (good advice) and submitted to it, and one who has committed sin and then, confessed and felt afraid... when he felt fear he acted virtuously, when he apprehended hastened (towards good acts), when he believed he performed virtuous acts, when he was asked to take lesson (from the happenings of this world) he did take lesson, when he was asked to desist he abstained (from evil), when he responded to the call (of Allah) he leaned (towards Him), when he turned back (to evil) he repented, when he followed he almost imitated, and when he was shown (the right path) he saw it.

Such a man was busy in search of truth and got rid (of the worldly evils) by running away. He collected the provision (of good acts) for himself, purified his inner self, built for the next world, and took with himself provision for the day of his departure, keeping in view his journey, his requirement and the position of his need. He sent ahead of him (good deeds) for the abode of his stay (in the next world). O creatures of Allah! Fear Allah, keeping in mind the reason why He created you, and be afraid of Him to the extent that He has advised you to do. Make yourself deserve what He has promised you, by having confidence in the truth of His promise and entertaining fear for the Day of Judgment...

Therefore, O creatures of Allah, fear Allah like the fearing of a wise man whom the thought (of the next world) has turned away from other matters, fear (of Allah) has afflicted his body with trouble and pain, his engagement in the night prayer has turned even his short sleep into awakening, hope (of eternal

recompense) keeps him thirsty in the day, abstention has curbed his desires, and remembrance of Allah is ever moving his tongue. He entertains fear before dangers. He avoids uneven ways in favor of clear ones. He follows the shortest route to secure his purpose. Wishfulness does not twist his thinking, and ambiguities do not blind his eyes. He enjoys deep sleep and passes his day happily because of the happiness of good tidings and pleasure (of eternal bounties).

He passes the pathway of this world in praiseworthy manner. He reaches the next world with virtues. He hastens (toward virtue) out of fear (of vice). He moves briskly during the short time (of life in this world). He devotes himself in seeking (eternal good) and runs away from evil. During day, he is mindful of tomorrow and keeps the future in mind. Certainly, paradise is the best reward and achievement, which hell, punishment, and suffering are enough. Allah is the best Avenger and Helper and the Quran is the best argument and confronter.”²³

In another sermon, Imam Ali (AS) has said: “Fear Allah like the one who prepares himself after extracting himself (from worldly affairs) and, after getting ready in this way, makes effort; then he acts quickly during the period of this life, hastens in view of the dangers (of falling into error) and has his eye on proceeding toward the goal, on the end of his journey and on the place of his (eventual) return.”²⁴

¹. Qur'an, 49:13.

². Qur'an, 2:197.

³. Qur'an, 65:2-3.

⁴. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 67, p. 282.

⁵. Wasa'il al-Shiah, vol. 12, p. 155.

⁶. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 67, P. 289.

⁷. Ibid., P. 292.

⁸. Qur'an, 49:13.

⁹. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 67, P. 289.

¹⁰. Nahj al-Balaghah, P. 67.

¹¹. Ibid., P. 353.

¹². Ibid., P. 498.

¹³. Ibid, P. 506.

¹⁴. Nahj al-Balaghah, P. 559.

¹⁵. Ibid., P. 602.

¹⁶. Ibid., P. 763.

¹⁷. Qur'an, 34:13.

¹⁸. Nahj al-Balaghah, P. 770.

¹⁹. Ibid., P. 629.

²⁰. Nahj al-Balaghah, P. 635.

²¹. Ibid., P. 723.

²². Ibid., P. 1278.

²³. Nahj al-Balaghah, pp. 183-192

²⁴. Nahj al-Balaghah, p. 1181

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