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54) The Hammam Sermon; The Pious in the Viewpoint of Imam Ali (AS)

Perhaps many people wish to know who the pious are, what their features or signs are, how they have lived in this world, what their states in the hereafter shall be, how they look at the world, what the worth of the hereafter is to them, how they pass their nights, what they do during days, how their lives are different from others', and what characteristics they have that make them distinct from others.

It is related that a companion of Ameerul Mo'minin called Hammam, who was devoted to worship, said: "O Ameerul Mo'minin, describe to me the pious in a way as if I see them." Ameerul Mo'minin avoided the reply and said: "O Hammam, fear Allah and perform good acts because "verily, Allah is with those who guard (themselves against evil), and those who do good (to others)"".1

Hammam was not satisfied with this saying, but he (Imam Ali) (a.s.), after praising Allah and praying for the Prophet (a.s.), kept on saying: "Now then, Allah, be Glorified and Exalted He, created the creation; He created them without any need for their obedience or to be safe from their sinning, because the sin of any one who sins does not harm Him nor does the obedience of anyone who obeys Him benefit Him. He has distributed among them their livelihood, and has assigned them their positions in the world."2

Then, Imam Ali (AS) elaborated the features of the pious and said: "Thus, the pious have special virtues. Their speech is to the point and just to please Allah, their clothing is moderate and their gait is humble."

It is not out of place to discuss briefly the two features of moderation and humbleness.

One of the outstanding features of a perfect man is moderation. How good it would be if moderation were observed in all affairs even in worship. In this relation, Luqman says: "And pursue the right course in your going about and lower your voice; surely the most hateful voices is braying of asses."3

Imam Ali (AS) has been reported as having said to Imam Hasan (a.s.) at his deathbed: "O my son! Be

moderate in your livelihood and in worship. It is incumbent on you to act in worship in a way that you can tolerate."4

The Messenger of Allah (SAW) has been reported by Imam Baqir (AS) as saying: "Be aware that for every worship, there is a inclination and willingness, and then it shall diminish. Therefore, whoever turns willingly toward my Sunnah has been guided and whoever contradicts my Sunnah shall be misled and his acts shall be ruined. As for me, I offer prayer, sleep, fast, break my fasting, laugh, and weep. So, whoever turns away from my way and Sunnah is not from me."5

As for extravagance, God says: "...and do not act extravagantly; surely He does not love the extravagant." 6

In another verse, God says: "Surely, the squanderers were ever brothers of the devils, and the devil was ever an ingrate to his Lord...And let not thy hand be chained to thy neck nor open it with a complete opening, lest thou sit down rebuked, denuded."7

Being asked about the meaning of the verse, Imam Sadiq (AS) said: "Whoever spends anything in other than the way of Allah is extravagant and whoever spends in the way of goodness is moderate."8

Imam Sadiq (AS) has been reported by Abu Baseer as saying: "Observe Taqwa, do not act extravagantly, and be moderate, for squander is like extravagance. God has said: "Do not squander wastefully." God will not punish the moderate." 10

Basheer ibn Marwan narrated: "I was in the presence of Imam Sadiq (AS). They brought dates for us. Some people threw away the stones of the dates. The Imam stopped them, saying: 'Do not do that. It is wastefulness. God does not like the wasteful ones."11

We should really take lessons from the Imam who speaks on behalf of the Holy Prophet and on behalf of God. What shall we do with our dustbins that are full of leftovers like bread, rice, other kinds of food, and fruits?

In the book *Makarim al–Akhlaq* by Tabarsi, Imam Sadiq (AS) has been reported as saying: "The least extravagance is to use extra water, to wear formal dress in working place and to throw away the stone of fruits." 12

The Imam has also been reported as saying: "The least extravagance is when your formal and casual clothes are the same." 13

Imam Sadiq (AS) has been reported as saying: "Luqman said to his son: 'For an extravagant one, there are three signs: he buys what is not proper for him, wears what is not proper for him, and eats what is not proper for him." 14

Imam Ali (AS) has been reported as saying: "One shall not experience the truth of faith unless he has

three features; knowledge in faith, patience with calamities, and moderation in living." 15

As for the second feature, that is to be humble, there are many verses and traditions about it. Being humble is a praiseworthy feature in the same way that arrogance is blameworthy, whether it is before God, before the Messenger of Allah or before people. Satan had been cast out of paradise because of his arrogance, despite the long years of his worship. Nations faced misfortunes because of arrogance. They used to say: Shall we believe in human beings who are like us ourselves? or they challenged scholars and admonishers. They considered perfections for themselves when it is said to them: "And when it is said to him: guard against (the punishment of) Allah; pride carries him off to sin." 16

Allah says in the Qur'an that Luqman said to his son: "And do not turn your face away from people in contempt, nor go about in the land exulting overmuch; surely Allah does not love any conceited boaster."17

God has also said: "And do not go about in the land exultingly, for you cannot cut through the earth nor reach the mountain in height." 18

About the pious, who are real believers, God says: "O you who believe! Whoever from among you turns back from his religion, then Allah will bring a people, whom He loves and who love Him, lowly before the believers, mighty against the unbelievers, they shall strive hard in Allah's way and shall not fear the censure of any censurers; this is Allah's grace, He gives it to whom He pleases, and Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing."19

The Messenger of Allah (SAW) has also said: "There are three things that Allah does not increase by them except good; humbleness by which Allah does not add to one except exaltation, humiliating oneself by which Allah does not add to one except honor, and chastity by which Allah does not add to one except wealth and independence." 20

Imam Ali (AS) has been reported as saying: "It is incumbent upon you to be humble which is a great worship."

It has been narrated that two believers, a father and his son came to visit Imam Ali (AS) who received them warmly in his house and made them sit in the best place of sitting, and he sat opposite to them. Food was brought for them and the father and the son ate from it. Qanbar, the servant of the Imam, brought a pitcher of water and a towel to wash and wipe the hands of the man. Imam Ali (a.s.) jumped up, took the tub and pitcher to wash and wipe the hands of the man who bowed down to Imam Ali, saying: "O Ameerul Mo'minin! You want to pour water on my hands while Allah is watching me!" Imam Ali said: "Sit down and wash your hands. God Almighty sees you and your brother (Imam Ali), the one who has no preference to you, who wishes for the Paradise by serving you, tenfold the number of this world and what is therein."

The man sat down and Imam Ali said: "I adjure you by my right on you which you have recognized,

allow me to have the honor of washing your hands and be pleased with it as you would be if Qanbar (Imam Ali's servant) would do it."

The man agreed, and when the Imam was through with it, he gave the pitcher and tub to his son, Mohammad ibnul Hanafiyyah, saying: "If this young boy came here alone, I would wash his hands myself, but God Almighty does not like to see a father and a son to be treated alike. Therefore, the father (host) should wash the hands of the father (guest) and the son (host) should wash the hands of the son (guest)." Then, Mohammad ibnul Hanafiyyah poured the water on the young boy's hands."21

Imam Sadiq (AS) has been reported as saying: "The Abyssinian king, Najashi (Negus) sent for Ja'far ibn Abi Talib and his companions. When they went to him, they found him sitting on the floor while wearing shabby clothes.

Ja'far reports: 'When I saw the king in this state, his faced changed in color and said: 'Praise be to Allah Who assisted Mohammad and enlightened my eyes with him. Shall I not give you good tidings?' I (Ja'far) said: 'Yes, Your Majesty!' He said: 'Right now news has come from your country that Allah has assisted His Messenger, Mohammad, perished his enemy (Abu Jahl, Utbah, Shaybah...), made so-and-so people captive and put so-and-so people to death. This happened in a desert called Badr and as if I am watching it.'

Ja'far said: 'Your Majesty! How is it that I find you sitting on the earth and wearing shabby clothes?'

Najashi said: 'O Ja'far! I found in what was revealed to Jesus (AS) that one of God's rights on His servants is that the servants should be (more) humble before Allah whenever He gives them from His blessings. As God Almighty has given me the new blessing of (following) Mohammad, I am renewing the state of humbleness.'

Imam Sadiq (AS) reports: "When the messenger of Allah heard this, he said to his companions: 'Surely, charity multiplies the wealth for one who gives it. Therefore, give alms, and God will have mercy on you. Be humble, and you will be exalted. Forgive people, for it will bring you honor."22

Imam Sadiq (AS) has said: "God Almighty revealed to Moses (AS): 'O Musa! Do you know why, from among all my people, I chose you as My interlocutor?'

Moses (AS) said: 'No, I do not.' God Almighty said: 'O Musa! I searched out everywhere, but I could not find anyone more humble than you are. O Musa, when you perform prayer, you put your cheeks on the earth."23

The meaning of being humble as inferred from traditions is to have a feeling of being in need of God Almighty when He gives us a new blessing and to show to people that we are not important.

Imam Musa ibn Ja'far (al-Kadhim) (AS) has been reported as saying: "Give to people humbly what you like to be given."24

Imam Sadiq (AS) has been reported as saying: "A sign of humbleness is that one should be pleased with a low seat in a meeting, greet everyone he meets, avoid disputing even if he is right, and should not like to be praised for piety."25

1– Another sign of the pious is that "they lower their eyes before what Allah has prohibited for them (not to look at), and make their hearings just listen to the knowledge that is beneficial to them." 26 In these statements, Imam Ali (AS) has mentioned two signs of the pious; lowering one's eyes (not to look lustfully) before what is unlawful and seeking knowledge. As for the first one, lowering one's eyes before what is unlawful means to refrain from looking (lustfully) at what is unlawful for one to look at, like looking at strange women other than one's wife, looking inside people's houses curiously and suspiciously and looking at the private parts of others. In this relation, God says:

"And say to the believing men that they cast down their looks and guard their private parts, that is purer for them; surely Allah is aware of what they do. And say to the believing women that they cast their looks and guard their private parts and do not display their ornaments except what appears thereof..."27

The Messenger of Allah has been reported as saying: "One who fills his eyes with what is unlawful for him to look at, on the Day of Judgment, God will fill his eyes with nails of fire, and then He will fill them (the eyes) with fire until people shall be resurrected, and then he shall be ordered to go to Fire." 28

Imam Sadiq (AS) has been reported as saying: "No one gains from anything as he gains from the lowering of the eyes. The sight is not lowered before what Allah has prohibited (to look at) except that one sees in his heart greatness and glory."29

Ameerul Mo'minin was asked: "How can we keep our eyes closed (not to look at what is unlawful to look at)?" The Imam said: "By the submission to the power of the One who is aware of your secrets. The eye is the spy of the heart and the herald of the mind. Therefore, lower your sight before what does not fit your religion, what your heart hates, and what your reason denies."

Prophet Jesus Christ (a.s.) said "Keep aloof from looking at what has been made unlawful to look at, for it is the seeds of lusts and the plants of debauchery."30

Imam Sadiq (AS) has been reported as saying: "All eyes shall be weeping on the Day of Judgment except three eyes; an eye that has been lowered before what Allah has prohibited (to look at), an eye that has remained sleepless in the worshipping of Allah, and an eye that has wept in the heart of night out of the fear of Allah."31

As for the second subject, that is that hearings that listen just to beneficial knowledge, there are over five hundred occasions in which the word "knowledge" has been used in the Holy Quran. In this relation, God says: "Say: Are those who know and those who do not know alike? Only the men of understanding are mindful."32

In another verse, God says: "Why should not then a company from every party from among them go forth that they may apply themselves to obtain understanding in religion, and that they may warn their people when they come back to them that they may be cautious?"33

In verses about power, God says "Thus do We make the revelations clear for a people who know."34 When God wants to show His greatness, He says "(Who) Taught man what he knew not."35

Addressing the Holy Prophet, God says: "And say: O my Lord! Increase me in knowledge."36

There are many traditions on the importance of knowledge, because the human worth depends on knowledge and piety.

The Messenger of Allah has been reported by Imam Sadiq (AS) as saying: "The most knowledgeable man is one who adds people's knowledge to his own, the worthiest people are the most knowledgeable ones of them, and the least worthy people are those with the least knowledge."37

The pious know that "The angles spread their wings for a seeker of knowledge while they are pleased with him. Whatever is in the heaven and the earth, even the fish in the sea, ask forgiveness for a seeker of knowledge. The superiority of a learned man over a worshipper is like the superiority of the moon over stars at a night of full moon. The learned men are heirs of the prophets."38

Imam Sadiq has been reported as saying: "Seeking knowledge is necessary under any condition."39

In another tradition, we read: "It is incumbent upon all Muslim men and Muslim women to seek knowledge."40

There are many traditions in this relation. In the section of piety and knowledge, we have already discussed that. Here is another tradition; Komail ibn Ziyad, the loyal companion of Imam Ali (AS), narrated: "Ameerul Mo'minin (AS) caught hold of my hand and took me to the graveyard. When he had passed through the graveyard and left the city behind, he breathed a deep sigh and said: 'O Komail, these hearts are containers. The best of them is that which preserves (its contents). So, preserve what I say to you.

People are of three types; One is a devoted scholar, one is a seeker of knowledge for his deliverance, and mobs who follow every cawing (calling) one and bend in the direction of every wind.

They seek no light from the effulgence of knowledge and do not take the protection of any reliable support.

O Komail, knowledge is better than wealth. Knowledge guards you, while you have to guard the wealth. Wealth decreases by spending, while knowledge multiplies by spending, and the favors of wealth die as wealth dies away.

O Komail, knowledge is a belief that is believed in. With it, man acquires obedience during his life and a good fame after his death. Knowledge is a ruler while wealth is a ruled subject.

O Komail, those who amass wealth are dead even though they may live long, while those endowed with knowledge will remain as long as the world lives. Their bodies are not available, but their figures exist in the hearts. Look, here is a heap of knowledge (Ameerul Mo'minin pointed to his bosom)."41

The pious keep their hearings on listening to such worthy words and not to nonsense and idle talks, such as backbiting, lies, singing, unlawful music, indecencies, and the like.

2- They behave in the times of trials and calamities as they behave in the times of ease and comfort. That is to say they give in to what God has destined for them in a way that ease and hardship are alike for them. Happiness and unhappiness, straitness and comfort, distress and blessing are equal for them. Their state in trial is the same as in comfort. Was it not for the appointed time fixed by God, their soul would leave their body in a twinkling of an eye out of eagerness for reward and fear of punishment.42

God Almighty says the same: "Say: Nothing will afflict us save what Allah has ordained for us; He is our patron; and on Allah let the believers rely."43

God says: "Say: Who is it that can withhold you from Allah if He intends to do you evil, or intends to show you mercy? And they will not find for themselves besides Allah any guardian or a helper."44

In another verses, God says: "Or, Who answers the distressed one when he calls upon Him and removes the evil?"45

Imam Sadiq (AS) has been reported as saying: "To be pleased with the hardships destined by the fate is the highest degree of certainty." 46

Imam Sadiq (AS) has also said: "Surely Allah has placed delight and happiness in conviction and contentment because of His justice, wisdom and knowledge, and He has placed sorrows in doubt. Therefore, be pleased with (what) Allah (determines) and submit to His order."47

Following the battles fought by the Holy Prophet (SAW), some people claimed to have faith. When the Holy Prophet (SAW) asked who they were, they said: "We are believers, O Messenger of Allah!" The Holy Prophet said: "What is the degree of your faith?" They said: "Patience in trials, gratefulness in straitness, and contentment with the divine fate." The Holy Prophet (SAW) said: "They are forbearing and scholars. Because of jurisprudence, they were about to be prophets... Therefore, do not build what you cannot dwell in. Do not gather what you cannot eat. Observe 'Taqwa', for you will return to Him."48

Imam Ali (AS) has said: "There are four pillars for faith: Relying on God, entrusting the affairs to Him, being content with the divine fate, and submitting to His will." 49

A companion of Imam Sadiq (AS) called Fodhail ibn Yasar, who had become very lean because of an ailment, was asked by the Imam: "Why are you weeping?" He said: "Why should I not while I see you in this condition?" The Imam said: Do not weep. A believer looks for every good, even if his limbs are cut off. If he owns what is there between the east and the west, it is good for him."50

The Imam has also said: "If a believer knows that he is rewarded in calamities, he will wish his limbs to be cut off with scissors."51

It is related that one day Jabir ibn Abdullah al-Ansari came to visit Imam Baqir (AS). He was then old and feeble. He said: "I am in a state that I prefer old age to youth, ailment to health and death to life." The Imam said: "If God makes me old, I like old age, if He makes me young, I like youth, if He makes me sick, I like sickness, if He cures me, I like cure, if He makes me die, I like death, and if He keeps me alive, I like life."

- 1. Qur'an, 16:128.
- 2. Nahj al-Balaghah, vol. 1, p. 602
- 3. Qur'an, 31:19.
- 4. Safeenat al-Bihar, vol. 2, p. 431
- 5. Safeenat al-Bihar, vol. 2, p. 113.
- 6. Qur'an, 6:141.
- 7. Qur'an, 17:27, 29.
- 8. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 72, p. 302.
- 9. Qur'an, 17:26.
- 10. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 72, p. 302.
- 11. Ibid., p. 303.
- 12. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 72, p. 303
- 13. Helayat al-Mottaqin
- 14. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 72, p. 304
- 15. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 72, p. 120
- 16. Qur'an, 2:206.
- 17. Qur'an, 31:18.
- 18. Qur'an, 17:37.
- 19. Qur'an, 5:54.
- 20. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 72, p. 133.
- 21. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 72, p. 117.
- 22. Ibid., p. 119.
- 23. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 72, p. 129.
- 24. Ibid.
- 25. Ibid., p. 135.
- 26. Hammam Sermon
- 27. Qur'an, 24:30-31.
- 28. Mostadrak, vol. 2, p. 554.
- 29. Ibid.
- 30. Ibid.
- 31. Minhaj al-Bara'ah, vol. 6, p. 6.
- 32. Qur'an, 39:9.

- 33. Qur'an, 9:122.
- 34. Qur'an, 7:32.
- 35. Qur'an, 96:5.
- 36. Qur'an, 20:114.
- 37. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 1, p. 164.
- 38. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 1, p. 164.
- **39**. Ibid., p. 172.
- 40. Ibid.
- 41. Nahj al-Balaghah, p. 1144.
- 42. Hammam Sermon.
- 43. Qur'an, 9:51.
- 44. Qur'an, 33:17.
- 45. Qur'an, 27:62.
- 46. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 68, p. 152.
- 47. Ibid.
- 48. Ibid.
- 49. lbid, p. 153.
- 50. lbid., p. 159.
- 51. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 68, p. 160.

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