

55) Friends of Allah (Saints)

In the Holy Quran, the Lord of the universe has considered the pious as the guardians or the friends of Allah. God says: ***“And what (excuse) have they that Allah should not chastise them while they hinder (men) from the Sacred Mosque and they are not (fit to be) guardians of it; its guardians are only those who guard (against evil), but most of them do not know.”***¹

In another verse, God says: ***“Verily on the friends of Allah there is no fear, nor shall they grieve.”***²

Imam Sadiq (AS) has narrated from the Messenger of Allah (SAW) his saying: “Whoever recognizes Allah and glorifies Him prevents his mouth from (idle) speaking and his stomach from having food and busies himself with fasting and praying.” They said: “May our fathers and mother be sacrificed for you, O Messenger of Allah! Are they the friends of Allah?” The Holy Prophet (SAW) said: “Be aware that the friends of Allah are silent; their silence is remembrance, their look is meaningful, they speak and their speech is full of wisdom, and they walk and their walk is full of blessing. If there had not been fixed periods of life for each, their spirits would not have remained in their bodies, because of their eagerness for paradise and fear of chastisement.”

Sheikh Baha'iy, in a commentary on this tradition, says: “This tradition includes the important features of the mystics and traits of the friends of Allah.” Then, he sums up these features as the following:

- 1- Silence which is the gate of salvation
- 2- Hunger which is the key to all good
- 3- Busying oneself with fasting and spending the night in worshipping (this is a reference to the worship of the Messenger of Allah, Imam Ali and others)
- 4- Reflection which is better than the worships of sixty years
- 5- Remembrance with tongue and the heart
- 6- Pondering to take lessons

7- Wise speech of knowledge and sciences which contains the good of this world and the hereafter

8- Helping people by fulfilling their deeds, guiding and delivering them from perishment

9- & 10- Fear and hope together, which is the ultimate goal of every perfect man

The meaning of the eagerness for reward (paradise) is clear, but the fear of chastisement is to remain in this world and to be exposed to fire because of passions and desires.

Imam Ali (AS) has said: "The saints of Allah are those who look at the inward side of the world, while other people look at its outward side; they busy themselves with its remoter benefits, while other people busy themselves with the immediate benefits. They kill those things which they feared that they might kill them, and leave here in this world what they think would leave them. They consider trivial what others consider as much. They are enemies of those things which others love while they love things which others hate. Through them, the Quran has been learnt and they have been taught by the Quran. By them, the Quran is followed, and by the Qur'an, they are followed. They do not see any object of hope above what they hope and no object of fear above what they fear."³

3. "The greatness of the Creator is seated in their hearts, and so, everything else appears small in their eyes. Thus, to them, paradise is as if they see it and are enjoying its favors. To them, Hell is also as if they see it and are suffering torture in it."⁴

The pious are in such a state because they have a realistic worldview. Whatever they see (in this world) they consider powerless and is in need of God, and when they look at God, they find Him All-wise, All-powerful, Self-subsistent and Lord of all beauty and perfection. They see all creatures controlled by Him and humble before Him. It is good for human beings to look at the creation of beings in the universe, to see their needs, to have a look at heavens and to walk on the earth, to have a glance at the material and spiritual worlds, to reflect on the world of plants, animals and inanimate objects, to see the human beings and the jinn and to have a look at the world of angels and archangels.

God says: "***Most surely in the variation of the night and the day, and what Allah has created in the heavens and the earth, there are signs for a people who guard (against evil).***"⁵

In another verse, God says: "***Most surely in the heavens and the earth there are signs for the believers. And in your (own) creation and in what He spreads abroad of animals there are signs for a people that are sure; and (in) the variation of the night and the day, and (in) what Allah sends down of sustenance from the cloud, then gives life thereby to the earth after its death, and (in) the changing of the winds, there are signs for a people who understand.***"⁶

"Allah is He Who made subservient to you the sea that ships may run therein by His command, and that you may seek of His grace, and that you may give thanks. And He has made subservient to you whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth, all from Himself; most surely

there are signs in this for a people who reflect.”[7](#)

About the verse ***“would that you know with a certain knowledge”***,[8](#) Imam Sadiq (AS) said: “It means to see with one’s own eyes.”[9](#)

Abu Baseer narrated: “Imam Sadiq said: ‘There is nothing for which there is no limit. I asked: ‘What is the limit of reliance?’ The Imam said: ‘Certainty.’ I asked: ‘What is the limit of certainty?’ He said: ‘It means that when you are with God, you will not fear anything.’”[10](#)

It is related that Imam Ali’s servant Qanbar loved Imam Ali (a.s.) greatly. Whenever Imam Ali went out of home, Qanbar would follow him. One night, Imam Ali saw Qanbar behind him, so he asked: “What are you doing here, Qanbar?” Qanbar said: “I followed you to protect you, O Ameerul Mo’minin!” The Imam said: “May Allah have mercy on you! Are you protecting me from the inhabitants of heaven or those of the earth?” Qanbar said: “from the inhabitants of the earth.” The Imam said: “The inhabitants of the earth have no power over anything except with the permission of God. Go back!” Qanbar returned home.”[11](#)

Ishaq ibn Ammar narrated: “I heard Abu Abdullah (Imam Sadiq) (a.s.) say: ‘The Messenger of Allah was offering the Fajr (dawn) Prayer in the mosque when he saw a young man with sunken eyes, bent down head, and was pale, lean and slumbering. The Holy Prophet said: ‘How did you pass the night?’ The young man said: ‘I passed the night in a state of certainty.’

The Holy Prophet (SAW) said: ‘For every conviction, there is a truth. What is the truth of your conviction?’ The young man said: ‘O Messenger of Allah! It is He who makes me feel sad, makes me wakeful at night and hungry during the day. I am detached from this world and what is in it that as if I look at the Throne of my Lord that has been set up for reckoning and people have been resurrected for this purpose, and I am among them, and as if I look at the inhabitants of paradise who enjoy the bliss of it.

They are sitting on couches looking at each other. And it is such that I look at the inhabitants of hell and see them crying. I can hear the sound of the blazing fire with my own ears.’ The Holy Prophet said: ‘This is the servant whom God has enlightened his heart with faith.’ Then, he said: ‘Keep to what you are in!’

The young man said: ‘O Messenger of Allah! Pray God to reward me with martyrdom.’ The Holy Prophet (SAW) prayed for him. Soon, he took part in a battle and was the tenth martyr after nine other martyrs.”[12](#)

The same happened to Harithah ibn Malik. When he was asked: “How are you?” He said: “A true believer.” When the Holy Prophet asked him about it, he said: “It is as if I can see the people of paradise who meet one another and as if I hear the voice of the people of fire.” The Holy Prophet said to him what he had said to the young man. Haritha too asked the Holy Prophet to pray for him to be martyred. After killing nine men (from the enemy) in the battle, he was martyred too.[13](#)

8–12: Their hearts are grieved, they are protected against evils, their bodies are thin, their needs scanty, and their souls are chaste. These are the features of the pious. They have a right to grieve when they see this world and the hereafter. Imam Ali (AS) has said: “A believer is happy in the face and grieved in the heart.”[14](#)

They are protected against evils. This is clear, for “love of the world is the root of all evils.”[15](#) The pious have no love to the worldly pleasures, and hence they are away from its evils.

Their bodies are thin, for anyone who is afraid of death, the Day of Judgment, and Reckoning shall be naturally thin. Anyone who remembers the resurrection, paradise and hell, Sakran, Ghadhban, and the woes in the Hell must be naturally thin. Anyone who cares for religion, and cares much for Muslims and suffers to see unmanly acts must be thin. Anyone who thinks of his sins, his failure to do his religious duties, spends his nights offering prayer, and eats little must be naturally thin.

Their needs are scanty, for they are not fond of the world. The world is worthless to them. In the words of Imam Ali, the pious see the world as the house of the wretched, the house of sorrows, the house of opponents, the source of every sin and calamity, a passing cloud–shadow, a dream, a vanity fair, or the ultimate goal of the wretched.[16](#) Therefore, there is no room for the pious to give importance to such a world. Hence, they are content with what is as little as possible.

Their souls are chaste. They avoid evil acts and make chastity their motto. They have self–restraining against what is unlawful. They overcome their passions: “The best worship is to abandon what is unlawful.”[17](#)

In a commentary on the verse: **“O children of Adam! We have indeed sent down to you clothing to cover your shame, and (clothing) for beauty and clothing that guards (against evil); that is the best. This is of the communications of Allah that they may be mindful”**,[18](#) Imam Baqir (AS) says: “The clothing of Taqwa is chastity which is the best.”[19](#)

Imam Hasan (AS) was asked about fairness and manliness, and he said: “Chastity in faith, good measure in livelihood, and patience in calamities.”[20](#)

The Messenger of Allah (SAW) was asked what might make man enter paradise, and he said: “Taqwa (piety) and good temper.” He was asked what would make man enter hell, and he said: “The two hollows: the stomach and the private parts.”[21](#)

The Holy Prophet (a.s.) has also said: “Whoever guarantees to me what is between his jaws (mouth; whether by eating just well–gotten foods or saying just good) and between his legs (to be chaste), I will guarantee the Paradise for him.”[22](#)

It is truly so, for most of vices like blasphemy, unlawful acts, adultery, sodomy, backbiting and slander are rooted in these two sensitive organs. Therefore, safeguarding these two organs is the same as the

safeguarding of one's faith, and the self-restraining against them is abstinence from all sins and keeping aloof from vices and crimes.

13-14: Patience is another feature of the pious. Imam Ali (AS) says: "They endured (hardship) for a short while, and in consequences they secured comfort for a long time. It is a beneficial transaction that Allah made easy for them. The world aimed at them, but they did not aim at it. It (worldly life) captured them, but they ransomed themselves from it."[23](#)

Certainly, patience, as we have already discussed, shall lead to salvation in the hereafter. Imam Baqir (AS) has said: "Paradise has been intermingled with hardships. Therefore, whoever endures hardship will enter paradise. Hell is intermingled with pleasures and passions. Therefore, whoever makes himself enjoy (all) the pleasures (of this worldly life) shall enter fire."[24](#)

The Messenger of Allah (SAW) has been reported by Imam Sadiq (AS) as saying: "There shall come a time when kingdom will not be obtained save by killing and oppression, wealth shall not be obtained except by usurpation and avarice, and love shall not be obtained except by deviation from religion and adherence to desires; therefore, if one who live at that time is patient with poverty while he can be rich, patient with grudge while he is capable of love, and patient with humiliation while he can be mighty, God will give him the reward of fifty true believers who believe in me."[25](#)

As for the world which aims at the pious, but they turn their backs to it, it is a blameworthy world, for the world is of two kinds; praiseworthy and blameworthy. In the words of Allamah Majlisi, first of all the blameworthy world has to be identified.

Allamah Majlisi believes that the world and the hereafter are two states from the states of the heart. The near state is this world and the distant state is the hereafter. In the near state, if man has knowledge and practice, it will be a praiseworthy world even if it is filled with pleasure as in the state of the well-known Mir-Damad. When he finished his night study and resolved scientific problems, he would go out of his chamber and would say: How can kings and princes enjoy such a pleasure?!

However if man spends his life in pleasures of sins, silver, gold, and mammonism, there shall be no provision for the hereafter. Such a world is blameworthy. Scholars of ethics have classified the world into that of mines, plants and animals.

Mines are related to gold, credits, buildings, palaces, tools, dishes and their likes. Plants are related to fun, entertainments, medicine, food and clothes. Animals are related to eating, riding, defeating enemies, traveling, and idle sport. One type of human beings is like animals; exploited, alienated, and indulged in pleasure. Perhaps it is due to the same reason that God says:

"Know that this world's life is only sport and play and gaiety and boasting among themselves, and a vying in the multiplication of wealth and children..."[26](#)

This verse has its root in what God says in another verse: ***“The love of desires, of women and sons and hoarded treasures of gold and silver and well bred horses and cattle and tilth, is made to seem fair to men; this is the provision of the life of this world; and Allah is He with Whom is the good goal (of life).”***[27](#)

This is the world which Imam Sadiq (AS) describes as follows: “The parable of this world is like the water of the sea, the more you drink from it, the more thirsty you will become until it will kill you.”[28](#)

This is the same world which Imam Sadiq (AS) has described in one of his sermons, saying: “O people! This world is transient and the hereafter is perpetual. Therefore, take from this world for your abode. Do not tear off the veils with One for Whom your secrets are not hidden. You live in this world, but you have been created for the hereafter. Surely, the world is like poison that only one, who does not know it, will eat it.”[29](#)

Imam Sajjad (AS) has been reported as saying: “By Allah! This world and the hereafter are but like the two pans of the scales. When one of them outweighs, it shall remove the other.” Then, he recited this verse: ***“When the great event comes to pass, there is no denying that it will befall.”***[30](#) [31](#)

Imam Ali (AS) has been reported as saying: “The world and the hereafter are two enemies with different directions. One, who loves the world and is fond of it, hates the hereafter and becomes its enemy. The world and the hereafter are like the east and the west. When one approaches one of them, he becomes distant from the other. They are like two women having one husband.”[32](#)

It suffices this world to be lowly that it has taken many things from the saints of Allah and put them at the disposal of His enemies. This does not mean that the friends of Allah are not capable of obtaining it (worldly pleasures), but they have voluntarily abandoned it. In fact, God does not will this world for them.

The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) had put a rock on his belly (because of hunger). Prophet Moses (a.s.) ate little and was extremely lean. Prophet Jesus (a.s.) used to say: “My food is hunger, my shirt is fear, my garment is woolen, my horse is my two feet, my lamp is the moon, my warmth is the sunlight, my fruit is what is grown out of the earth for the quadrupeds, I spend the night while I have nothing, but yet there is no one wealthier than I am.”[33](#)

Solayman ibn Dawood (Prophet Solomon son of David) (a.s.) ate barley bread, wore shabby clothes at nights, fastened his hands to his neck, passed the night weeping, and said: “O Lord! I have been unjust to myself. If You do not forgive me, and have no mercy on me, I will be among losers. There is no god but You. Glory be to You. Surely I am among the wrongdoers.”

Abdullah ibn Sinan narrated from Imam Sadiq (AS) his saying: “The Messenger of Allah (SAW) was leaving his house for a battle while he was sorrowful. An angel, with the keys of treasures of the earth, came down and said to him: ‘O Mohammad! These are the keys to the treasures of the world. Your Lord says: Open them and collect for yourself whatever you want!’ The Messenger of Allah said: ‘The world is

the house of one who has no house (in the hereafter), and one, who has no reason, heaps (wealth) in it.”³⁴ The angel said: “(I swear) By the One who has deputed you as a prophet, I heard the same from an angel in the forth heaven when I was given the keys.”

15–16: One of the other features of the pious is that “During the night they are upstanding on their feet reciting the Quran ponderingly. With it, they grief themselves, and by pondering and deeply thinking on it they find the cure of their ailments. If they come across a verses having encouragement (toward paradise), they pursue it avidly, their spirits turn towards it eagerly, and they feel as if it is in front of them. And when they come across a verse having frightening (against hell), they turn the ears of their hearts toward it, and feel as if the sound of Hell and its cries are reaching their ears. They are bending down, putting their foreheads, hands, knees, and toes on the ground, beseeching Allah the Sublime for their deliverance (from Fire).”³⁵

Thus, three important subjects are benefited; spending the night in worshipping an supplicating, reciting the Qur'an ponderingly to seek the cures of one's sufferings, and the frequent prostrating before Allah.

- [1.](#) Qur'an, 8:34.
- [2.](#) Qur'an, 10:63.
- [3.](#) Nahj al-Balaghah, p. 1277.
- [4.](#) Hammam Sermon.
- [5.](#) Qur'an, 10:6.
- [6.](#) Qur'an, 45:3–5.
- [7.](#) Qur'an, 45:12–13.
- [8.](#) Qur'an, 102:5.
- [9.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 67, p. 176.
- [10.](#) Al-Kafi, vol. 3, p. 95.
- [11.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 67, p. 158.
- [12.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 67, pp. 159,174.
- [13.](#) Al-Kafi, vol. 3, p. 90
- [14.](#) Minhaj al-Bara'ah, vol. 6, p. 7.
- [15.](#) Nahj al-Balaghah, vol. 2, p. 1233.
- [16.](#) Ghurar al-Hikam.
- [17.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 68, p. 269.
- [18.](#) Qur'an, 7:26.
- [19.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 68, p. 271.
- [20.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 68, p. 273.
- [21.](#) Ibid
- [22.](#) Ibid, p. 272.
- [23.](#) Hammam Sermon.
- [24.](#) Al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 73.
- [25.](#) Ibid., p. 74.
- [26.](#) Qur'an, 57:20.
- [27.](#) Qur'an, 3:14.
- [28.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 70, p. 79.
- [29.](#) Ibid., p. 88.
- [30.](#) Qur'an, 56:1–2.

- [31.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 70, p. 88.
- [32.](#) Nahj al-Balaghah, p. 1123.
- [33.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 70, p. 110.
- [34.](#) Ibid.
- [35.](#) Hammam Sermon.

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