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Chapter 9: On ethics and pieces of Advice

Discourse 1: On the real Advisor

Introduction

From amongst the statements of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) to Imam Hassan Al-Mujtaba (a.s.) is, "Revive your heart and soul by means of advice and control your lust by means of abstinence and piety."1

Firstly; you must know that the real advisor is the Holy God as God the Blessed the Sublime says,

"O mankind! there hath come to you a direction from your Lord and a healing for the (diseases) in your hearts, – and for those who believe, a guidance and a Mercy." The Holy Quran: Yunus 10:57.

Of course, the Quran is also a cure for physical illnesses based on what is stated in the narrations. However, it is a cure for all the inner pains and it is a source of blessings for the ones who have certitude.

The Prophet (S) and the Immaculate Imams (a.s.) as Advisors on behalf of God

The real Advisor is God the Sublime who has advised all the people by means of the Quran. After God the Sublime, the Prophet (S) is an advisor on behalf of God as we read in the following verse,

"Say: 'I do admonish you on one point: that ye do stand up before Allah, - (It may be) in pairs, or (it may be) singly, - and reflect (within yourselves): your Companion is not possessed: he is no less than a warner to you, in face of a terrible Penalty." The Holy Quran: Saba' 34:46.

Thus, the Noble Prophet (S) has the rank of an advisor on behalf of God the Sublime. After the Prophet

(S), the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) and the Immaculate Imams (a.s.) have this rank. After them, the scientists and the learned men have this rank. Their speeches and preachings which have been narrated in the Quranic verses and narrations are expressed for all the people. It is because of this fact that the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) stated to Imam Al– Mujtaba (a.s.), "Revive your heart and soul by means of advice and control your lust by means of abstinence and piety."2

Now a question comes to mind that is "What is meant by 'revive your heart' and 'control your lust'?" It must be stated in response that the meaning of reviving the heart is strengthening the Intellect by listening to advice. And controlling the lust means fighting one's selfish desires.

The Means of abstinence

The most pious of the people is the one who avoids the doubtful acts. And the best worshipper is the one who carries out the religious obligatory deeds. The most abstinent of the people is the one who does not do the forbidden acts. And the most assiduous of the people is the one who avoids sins. 4

The most pious of the people avoids Doubtful Acts

Thus, the most pious of the people are the ones who not only avoid the forbidden acts but also protect themselves from the doubtful acts. And piety means that a human protects himself against all the sins. For example, this is just like the one who wants to pass through a thorny place and protects himself against the thorns so that they do not injure him. A pious person protects himself against all the sins with the same quality.

There is a narration on the authority of God's Prophet Muhammad (S), "The lawful and forbidden acts are evident, and the doubtful acts are somewhere in between. Thus, a person should protect himself against both the doubtful acts and the forbidden ones. If an individual does not protect himself against doing the doubtful deeds, then he may engage in doing some of the forbidden acts without having realized what he has done." Based upon this it has been stated that the most pious of the people is the one who protects himself against all of the doubtful acts.

Discourse 2: On fulfilling the needs of the people

Introduction

The Master of the Martyrs Al–Husayn (a.s.) stated in one of his sermons, "O people! Get more inclined to do generous acts and take the lead in getting the booties (referring to ethical virtues). Beware that the people's need of you is one of the greatest blessings of God the Blessed the Exalted. Thus, do not become tired of fulfilling the people's needs. Should that happen, then these very blessings will change into disasters."6

This saying is similar to the saying of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) who stated, "Indeed there are people who gain God's blessings by fulfilling the people's needs. Thus, as long as they fulfill the people's needs those blessings will remain. However, if they do not do so those blessings will be taken away from them."7

Of course, the people have different needs. Sometimes they become fulfilled with some financial assistance. At other times some other action is needed. Sometimes needs are fulfilled by writing; sometimes by giving guidance and verbal advice; and sometimes they are fulfilled by using one's position. Even, sometimes one helps the people by means of his knowledge and wisdom and guides them. Of course, this is the best form of help because it has a lot of benefits for the people. On this basis, those who are learned have a heavy duty. They must not neglect guiding the people. Another form of helping the people is guiding them by giving them consultation.

Let's return to the saying of the Master of the Martyrs Al-Husayn (a.s.) who said, "O People! Anyone who is generous will reach lordship, greatness and manliness. However, anyone who withholds generosity will be debased. The most generous of the people is the one who bestows to those who have no hopes. The most forgiving of the people is the one who forgives when he is in power. The most strengthener of the ties of kinship among the people is the one who establishes bonds with his relatives who have cut off the bonds of relationship with him."

Of course, these attributes are amongst the most pariseworthy attributes as they have been referred to in a narration. This means that amongst the pariseworthy morals these are the attributes in the first rank, because they are the reasons for the humanity and the manliness of man. Every person's generosity is displayed through these attributes. These were evidently amongst the attributes of the Noble Prophet (S) and the Immaculate Imams (a.s.) as reported in the narrations and historical records.

For example, it has been reported in history that when the Prophet (S) conquered Mecca, the people of Mecca were the same people who had fought with the Prophet (S), martyred his companions and showed much enmity towards him. All of them were wondering about how the Prophet (S) would treat them. In that same state, the Noble Prophet (S) told them, "How do you think I will treat you?" All of them stated, "You are my big brother and master, and you are the son of our big brother and master." In other words, they meant to say that they expected nothing other than goodness from the Prophet (S). Due to this the Prophet (S) stated, "I forgive you and from today on you are all free." Even Abu Sufyan

who was their chief and had led many battles against the Prophet (S) was amongst them. However, the Prophet of Mercy (a.s.) even forgave his number one enemy. That is why God the Sublime praises the deeds of the Prophet (S) and says,

" And thou (standest) on an exalted standard of character." The Holy Quran: Al-Qalam 68:4.

A similar instance occurred when Basra was conquered in the Battle of Jamal. The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) forgave those who had fought with him and dispatched Ayesha with complete respect to Medina.9

Or for example, in the Battle of Seffin Muaviyah's army entered Seffin first and took control of the Euphrates River closing off the waterway. This was so that when the army of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) entered Seffin, they could not use the Euphrates River.

When the army of Ali (a.s.) entered Seffin and saw that Muaviyah's army would not let them fetch any water; he (a.s.) did not start the battle. However, after some time passed and it became hard for them to suffer from thirst, Ali (a.s.) allowed his army to attack. They kept fighting until Malik Ashtar – May God sanctify his grave – and others took over control of the river. 10 Then they closed off the water on Muaviyah's army. It was then that some people were dispatched by Muaviyah to seek Ali's permission to use the water. Some of the companions of Ali (a.s.) said, "O Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.)! Take an eye for an eye and do not give them water as they did to us." The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) stated, "I will not close the waterway for any servant of God" and ordered them to open the waterway for Muaviyah's army to go and use the water. 11

A similar situation arose when the Master of the Martyrs Al-Husayn (a.s.) went towards Kufa. He ordered his (a.s.) companions to carry a lot of water with them. When they reached the army of the enemy headed by Hurr, the enemy soldiers were thirsty. Imam Al-Husayn (a.s.) ordered his companions to give the enemy soldiers as much water as they needed to quench their thirst.

Discourse 3: On the benefits of the Mosque

Introduction

There is a narration on the authority of Imam Hassan Al-Mujtaba (a.s.) on the nobility and the virtue of the mosque as follows, "Those who go to the mosque often shall acquire one of the following eight characteristics: strong verses; brotherhood for the sake of the Honorable God the Exalted; new knowledge or words of guidance; awaited Mercy; or something which may save them from destruction; or shyness or fear due to which they abandon sins." 12

من أدام الإختلاف إلى المساجد أصاب إحدى ثمان: أية محكمة وأخا مستفادا وعلما مستظرفا ورحمة منتظرة ، وكلمة تدله على الهدى أو ترده عن ردى وترك الذنب حياء أو خشية

In this narration the Arabic word Al-ikhtelaf is used to mean going or associating. The same word Al-ikhtelaf appears in the following verse,

"Behold! in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day, - there are indeed Signs for men of understanding," The Holy Quran: Al-Imran 3: 190.

which is translated to mean 'alternation.' However, the one used here means going. This is similar to its use in Ikhtelafe ummati rahmat 13 which means association amongst the Muslims is a source of mercy.

There are many benefits in going to mosques. The first benefit mentioned here is 'strong verses.' One of the deeds which has been emphasized upon in mosques is reading the Quran and learning the truths, the knowledge and the commentary of the Noble Verses. By practicing this important issue man becomes familiar with the reasons for and the reasonings behind monotheism, Prophethood, the other religious principles and Quranic knowledge which are the firmest reasoning and the signs of recognizing God.

The second thing mentioned is 'brotherhood for the sake of the Honorable God the Exalted' since by going to the mosque man finds religious brothers who are useful for him, because the mosque is the place of brotherhood. The people's sense of brotherhood and friendliness becomes firmly established when they go to the mosque.

At the beginning of Islam it was also in the mosque that the Noble Prophet (S) established the relation of brotherhood amongst the Muslims and it was also in that very place that he called the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) his brother and stated, "You are my brother in this world and the Hereafter." 14

Due to this text and the other recorded texts the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) is the brother, substitute and the Trustee of the Prophet (S). The Holy Religion of Islam is the religion of brotherhood, kindness and friendship, unity, righteousness and honesty. In short, Islam is the religion of worshipping God. We also read in the Quran.

"The Believers are but a single Brotherhood..." The Holy Quran: Al-Hujurat 49:10.

Thus we see that one of the important benefits which is derived from acting upon the precepts and commandments is establishing brotherhood, kindness, and unity which has received especial attention in the Islamic commandments.

Brotherhood in Religious Precepts and minor Religious Principles

It was said that going to the mosques and gathering together in the mosques causes the strengthening of the bonds of brotherhood and friendship. Moreover, the gathering together of the people in the Friday congregational prayer; the Festival prayers; and the acts of worship and circumambulations in the Great Mecca – with all its glory and greatness where Muslims with different nationalities gather together

strengthens the bonds of unity and brotherhood. All of these make the bonds of friendship and unity so firm that if the Muslims properly utilize this strong unity, the enemies of Islam cannot dominate over them at all.

The moral aspects of brotherhood

We see a similar point in the moral aspects of brotherhood in Islamic jurisprudence. It can be seen that adhering to this important issue of unity and brotherhood is highly stressed in the Holy Islamic law. For example, we see that righteousness which is one of the greatest admirable moral attributes causes kindness and friendship. The Muslims will trust each other when they tell the truth. As a result of this assurance friendship, familiarity and intimacy, unity and monotheism are fostered amongst them. Once this happens, the Muslims will never be disunited.

It has been stated in a narration, "A Muslim is the brother of other Muslims. No one ever oppresses him or talks badly with him." 15

Of course, the same holds true regarding other good moral attributes. Adhering to moral values causes firmness of the bonds of brotherhood. On the contrary, acting against moral values will cause misfortune. For example, gossiping causes the people to become seperated from each other.

In another narration we read, "The Muslims are united against others." 16

Thus, the issues of brotherhood, kindness and unity have been stressed in the ethics and the percepts of Islam which form the practical decrees in Islam. Moreover, the practice of going to the mosque is one of Islam's practical decrees which is meant to strengthen the bonds of brotherhood amongst them.

The third thing mentioned in the above narration is "new knowledge or words of guidance" since the mosque is the place of acquiring and spreading knowledge. It is in the mosque that man can learn new religious knowledge. All the sermons of the Noble Prophet (S) and the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) were delivered in the mosques.

The fourth benefit of going to the mosque is receiving the "awaited Mercy" since whoever enters a mosque may receive God's Favor and Mercy.

The fifth benefit for the people going to the mosque is hearing "something which may save them from destruction" since the mosque is the place of advice. Whenever man goes to the mosque, he may hear something which guides him towards the right path or saves him from going astray.

The next benefit of going to the mosque is "shyness or fear due to which they abandon sins." The shyness or fear may be either from the people or God. One knows that if he commits any sins the people there would blame him and they will object to him and say "If you are blessed by going to the mosque and endowed with saying your prayers, then why do you pollute yourself with sins?"

The mosque has extreme nobility and virtue since it is the House of God and the place to worship God the Blessed. God has ascribed the mosque to Himself and said that the mosque is His House. Of course, God is not of a physical form to fit in a physical place like a mosque. This is like the Ka'ba which is the most sacred place of worship on the planet Earth as we read in the Holy Quran,

"Behold! We gave the site, to Abraham, of the (Sacred) House, (saying): 'Associate not anything (in worship) with Me; and sanctify My House for those who compass it round, or stand up, or bow, or prostrate themselves (therein in prayer)." The Holy Quran: Al-Hajj 22:26.

In another instance we read that the blood of the Master of Martyrs Al-Husayn (a.s.) is ascribed to God when we read the pilgrimage prayers of Imam Al-Husayn, "Assalmu Alayk ya sarallah..." which means, "Peace be upon you O he whose blood-claimer is God!" 17 In another instance God ascribes man's soul to Himself and says,

"When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of My spirit..." The Holy Quran: Suad 38:72.

Or in another instance God relates the female camel of Saleh (a.s.) to Himself since its appearance from out of a mountain was an important miracle and stated,

"It is a She-camel of Allah. And (bar her not from) having her drink!" The Holy Quran: Ash-Shams 91:13.

Therefore, God ascribes the mosque to Himself and calls it as His Own House due to its nobility as a place of worship. There is a narration in this regard in which we read, "My houses on the Earth are the mosques and My pilgrims are those who worship Me there." 18 One may ask whether God can be seen for whose pilgrimage they must go to the mosque? The answer is simply no. God is not visible. However, but those who go to the mosques and are familiar with the mosque see God – but not with their physical eyes. Rather they see and visit that Pure Essence with their insight.

There is a lot of reward for going to the mosque as we read, "Blessed be the servants who purify themselves at home, and then come to visit Me in My house." 19 Also we read in another narration, "It is a duty for the one being visited to honor his pilgrims." 20

In another narration we read, "The mosques are God's houses, and it is from these mosques that light shines into the sky as a result of the people's worship, in the same way that the star shines upon the Earth." 21 Thus, one of the places which is very noble is the mosque as God the Blessed the Exalted states in the Holy Quran,

"(Lit is such a Light) in houses, which Allah hath permitted to be raised to honor; for the celebration, in them, of His name: In them is He glorified in the mornings and in the evenings, (again and again), – By men whom neither traffic nor merchandise can divert from the

Remembrance of Allah, nor from regular Prayer, nor from the practice of regular Charity: Their (only) fear is for the Day when hearts and eyes will be transformed (in a world wholly new)." The Holy Quran: Al-Nour 24:36-37.

The houses which God has permitted to be raised so that they gain popularity include the mosques as we may conclude from the literature on narrations. Also, there are other examples of such houses. For example, the homes of the Noble Prophet (S), the Immaculate Imams (a.s.), and Fatima Zahra (a.s.) may be cited from which knowledge and wisdom is constantly propagated. The shrines of the Noble Prophet (S) and the Immaculate Imams (a.s.) are also other examples of such houses. These places are so noble that God the Blessed has ordered that they be respected and honored forever.

Discourse 4: On Purification

Introduction

In his will to Ali (a.s.) God's Prophet (S) stated, "O Ali! There are three ranks, three expiations, three things which destroy, and three things which save. As for the three things which raise the ranks they are making ablutions with cold water; waiting for the next prayer after you pray; walking in the day and night to the prayers; and attending congregational prayers. As for the three expiations, they are greeting aloud, feeding the needy, and spending the night in prayer when other people are asleep. As for the three things which destroy, they are being really stingy; following one's selfish desires; and being haughty and selfish. As for the three things which save, they are fearing God in private and in public, moderation in times of affluence and poverty, and saying what is fair whether you are pleased or angry."22

عن النبي صلى الله عليه وأله أنه قال: في وصيته له: يا علي ثلاث درجات وثلاث كفارات ، وثلاث مهلكات ، وثلاث منجيات ، فأما الدرجات فإسباغ الوضوء في السيرات ، وانتظار الصلاة بعد الصلاة ، والمشي بالليل والنهار إلى الجمعات. وأما الكفارات فإفشاء السلام وإطعام الطعام والتهجد باليل والناس نيام ، وأما المهلكات فشح مطاع ، وهوى متبع وإعجاب المرء بنفسه. وأما المنجيات فخوف الله في السلا والعلانية ، والقصد في الغنى والفقر ، وكلمة العدل في الرضا والسخط

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Making ablutions with cold water

A Muslim individual must be clean. His clothing, body, home, carpets and whatever belongs to him must be clean. It has been stated in a narrartion, "Islam has been established upon cleanliness." Also it has been stated in another well–known narration, "Cleanliness is due to faith." 26

Cleanliness has many ranks as follows:

Rank One: Personal cleanliness of the body and one's clothing.

Rank Two: Spiritual cleanliness such that one is free of committing sins.

Rank Three: Spiritual purification such that one purifies his own soul from all bad traits and attributes, and attends only to the Lord of the Universe. However, since the love for the Prophet (S), the Divine Leaders (a.s.) and the believers is rooted in the love for God, one can express this kind of love and it is not in contradiction to the love for God.

Rank Four: Ultimate Purification that is to purify one's self from everything other than God such that nothing but the love for God has any room in his heart.

These were the various ranks of purification and cleanliness.

One who prays to God and says, "O God! Please purify me in every aspect of life!", should be ready to purify himself from all baseness, and acquire all ranks of purification. That is why it is recommended for one to rinse out his mouth thrice and recite the following supplication when he wants to make ablutions, "O my God! On the day I meet you, please dictate Your Proof to me and turn my tongue into expressing your words of remembrance."27

One will never disobey God because the origin of God's remembrance is remembrance in the heart. Thus if man pays attention to God and in every condition remembers God in his heart, he will never disobey God. And once one rinses out his nose, he should recite the following supplication, "O my God! Do not deprive me from the scent of Paradise and make me one of those who smells that scent." 28 And when one wants to wash his face, he says the following at the Threshold of God, "O my God! Make my face shiny and white on the day on which the faces are enlightened, and do not darken my face on the day on which the faces are darkened." 29

In fact, when an individual physically stands before God's Threshold, what actually connects him up to God the Sublime is his soul. For this very reason, man must pay attention to free his soul from any sense of belonging to anyone other than God. This is required so that he is able to establish contact with God the Sublime. Of course, the state of purity when man's soul is free from anyone but God is the highest rank of purity.

Also when one wipes his right hand with water, he should say, "O My God! Hand over my letter of deeds to my right hand and entrust the decree of Eternal Life in Paradise to my left hand. Please take the reckoning of my deeds easy on me"30. And when one wipes his left hand, he should say, "O My God! Please do not give my book of deeds to my left hand and do not hang it into my neck and I take refuge to you from the flames of the Hell–fire"31.

It has been quoted in a narration on the authority of the Noble Prophet Muhammad, "On the Resurrection Day the hands, the faces and the feet of the people in my nation will shine because of the

ablutions they have made in this world."32 And when one wipes the part of his hair with water during his ablutions, he should say, "O God! Act in such a way that mercy, forgiveness and happiness encompass me". And when he wipes his right and left foot, he should say, "O God! Keep me firmly on the Right Path in this world so that I do not slip off the Bridge (Sirat) in the Hereafter when many shall slip. Please grant me the success to do things which You like me to do."

One must be very careful and follow the Right Path in this world so that he can easily cross over the Bridge on the Resurrection Day since it is his worldy state which will be reflected then.

The people who have followed the Straight Path and the religious commandments have in fact held the fire firmly in their grip. There is a famous saying regarding the Bridge as follows, "The Bridge over Hell is thinner than a strand of hair, sharper than a sword and it is located in the darkest place."33

This means that the people are different from each other in the Hereafter. If they have passed through this world in a pariseworthy manner, then they will pass over the Bridge as if they are riding on something. Of course, a real model to follow is the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) since the Right Path is exactly the path which Ali (a.s.) has followed. Therefore, we must try to follow in the footsteps of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.).

Waiting for the next prayer after you pray

This means that when man has completed his prayer, he must wait for the coming of the next prayer like one who has invited a dear guest and waits for his arrival. The individual awaiting his prayer is like a host awaiting his guest.

Attending congregational prayers

This means that it is recommended to say the prayers in the day and night in congregation.

However, those three things which are the expiation for committing sins are:

Greeting aloud

This means that one formally pays attention to greeting others. He greets others in such a way that greeting others becomes an official act amongst the people. Greeting others in the religious laws of Islam is like greeting of the nation of Islam and it has a lot of effects. Some have stated that saying salam (hello) is asking for the health of the person greeted from God the Exalted. However, a more agreed upon meaning of salam is that "you are safe from me." There is a narration that has been quoted on the authority of God's Prophet (S) who stated, "Salam is a greeting for our nation and a form of security for the minorities who are subject to our rule."34 Or it has been stated in another narration, "A Muslim is one from whose tongue and hands other Muslims are safe."35 And the Prophet (S) goes on and says, "And a believer is one from whom the people's lives and property are safe."36

Feeding the needy

Spending the night in prayer when other people are asleep.

There is a question that can be raised here. Consider the case of a person who has committed a major sin or who is in debt to someone. Would saying the night prayers, greeting others or feeding needy people eliminate these rights of God and the people? Islamic scholars have pointed out that the sins referred to in the above–mentioned narrations are minor ones in which one does not insist on doing. This can be understood from the following Quranic verse,

"If ye (but) eschew the most heinous of the things which ye are forbidden to do, We shall expel out of you all the evil in you..." The Holy Quran: An-Nisa 4:31.

In another honorable verse it is stated.

"And establish regular prayers at the two ends of the day and at the approaches of the night: For those things, that are good remove those that are evil..." The Holy Quran: Hud 11:114.

The Islamic scholars have stated "the two ends of the day" mentioned in this verse refer to the morning and the afternoon. They also hold that "at the approaches of the night" mentioned in this verse refers to the evening (Maqrib) and the early night prayers (Isha). Saying these prayers would eliminate wicked deeds or "those that are evil." The commentators have pointed out the wicked deed referred to here mean minor sins which are eliminated by praying.

It is stated in the continuation of the narration, "As for the three things which save, they are fearing God in private and in public; moderation in times of affluence and poverty; and saying what is fair whether you are pleased or angry."37

Fearing God in private and in public

Of course, this fear of God must be accompanied by hope. One of the recommendations of Loqman the Wise (a.s.) to his son is also this issue of fear and hope. He stated, "If they cut apart the heart of a believer or a servant of God, two lights are seen in them which are fear and hope. Neither one of them dominates over the other. On the contrary, they are of equal strength."38

It has been quoted in a narration on the authority of God's Prophet (S), "The foremost form of wisdom is fearing God the Blessed the Sublime."39

Therefore, the most outstanding form of wisdom is fear of God and being humble before God, because fear of God causes man not to commit sins. There is another narration in which we read, "The foremost

form of knowledge is recognizing God the Blessed the Sublime."40

Therefore, so long as man does not recognize God and does not understand God's Majesty, he will not become afraid. It is for this very reason that the most outstanding of all wisdom is recognizing God.

Moderation in times of affluence and poverty

This means that we must live economically and in balance.

Speaking what is fair whether you are pleased or angry

This means that he must observe justice when he is happy as well as when he is angry and upset. A narration has been quoted on the authority of Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (a.s.) in which we read, "Anger is the key to all evil."41

It has also been narrated on the authority of some wise scholars who said, "A ship that has fallen into a whirlpool and the wind takes it here and there is about to sink. However, such a ship is nearer to being rescued than the ones who became angry."42

Thus, patience at the time of anger, which is the very same attribute of perseverance, has great results. God also describes His Prophets as having this attribute of perseverence where He states,

"For Abraham was, without doubt, forbearing (of faults), compassionate, and given to look to Allah." The Holy Quran: Hud 11:75.

Also in another verse God says,

"So We gave him the good news of a boy ready to suffer and forbear." The Holy Quran: As-Saffat 37: 101.

There is a narration on the authority of Imam As–Sadiq (a.s.) who said, "Nothing has been mixed and united with another thing better than mixing of perseverance with knowledge."43

The narration goes on to say that the three things which destroy are:

- 1-Being really stingy
- 2-Following one's selfish desires

3- Being haughty and selfish.

The cure for this is to get a better recognition of God. Then once one gains more knowledge about God the Sublime selfishness will disappear in him. In a narration on the authority of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) we read, "If God's Greatness becomes apparent in your soul and you understand His Majesty yourself, then all creatures will become unimportant in your mind. Let alone you compare yourself to God's Majesty!"44

The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) says the following in a part of the Hammam Sermon which is about the pious people, "The pious people are those who have recognized God's Majesty so much that they see everything other than God as being unimportantly small."45

The opposite of the characteristic of selfishness and admiring oneself, is the attribute of humbleness. By including it in one's morals, man becomes one of God's servants and beloved by God.

Discourse 5: On whims and high aspirations

Introduction

God's Prophet (S) stated, "What I am most afraid of for my nation is whims and unreachable hopes. Whims would hinder one from the truth and unreachable hopes would make one forget the Hereafter. The life in this world is to be ended while the life in the Hereafter is ahead of you. Each life has its own children. Try to be of the children of the Hereafter if you can. Try not to be of the children of this world. Today you are alive, can do things and there is no reckoning. However, tomorrow you will die and will be in the World of Reckoning where you cannot do anything."46

The mention of whims here refers to the case when lust and anger rebel in man. God the Sublime has granted the blessings of lust and anger upon man so that he may use them moderately. He should benefit from the power of lust to attract the benefits and he should benefit from the power of anger to ward off the detriments. However, he should not forget God completely as a result of following these two powers. He should not do whatever he pleases whether it be forbidden or allowed, whether it be a sin or it be an obeyance as a result of the rebellion of these two powers within him.

Since these two powers may rebel, God the Sublime has granted the Intellect upon man to moderate them. The Intellect does not destroy these two powers, rather it just prevents them from rebelling. Once the Intellect obeys the holy religious laws, it distinguishes good deeds from bad deeds and ugly things from beautiful things. Thus it will moderate lust and anger and will struggle with these two powers if they rebel.

Thus, the rebellion of lust and anger are whims. Whims are those actions in which God is not considered and is absolutely forgotten. In these cases, whatever the heart wants is acted upon whether it be lawful or unlawful, whether it be a sin or not.

From amongst the commandments of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) is, "Perseverence is a protective covering and the Intellect is a sharp sword. Cover up your moral disorders with perseverance. And pacify and wipe out the rebellion of the Whims (Lust and Anger) with the Intellect."47

We may also read the following in the Holy Quran,

"Then, for such as had transgressed all bounds, And had preferred the life of this world, The Abode will be Hell-Fire; And for such as had entertained the fear of standing before their Lord's (tribunal) and had restrained (their) soul from lower desires, Their abode will be the Garden." The Holy Quran: An-Naziat 79:37-41.

Unreachable hopes

In the afore-mentioned narration the Prophet (S) also streesed unreachable hopes and said, "What I am most afraid of for my nation is whims and unreachable hopes. Whims would hinder one from the truth and unreachable hopes would make one forget the Hereafter. The life in this world is to be ended while the life in the Hereafter is ahead of you. Each life has its own children. Try to be of the children of the Hereafter if you can. Try not to be of the children of this world. Today you are alive, can do things and there is no reckoning. However, tomorrow you will die and will be in the World of Reckoning where you cannot do anything."48

Thus the Prophet (S) expressed his worries about his nation having unreachable hopes or lifelong aspirations in which case they will become extremely involved in worldly affairs, and they will get far away from the other world. One of the examples that show lifelong aspirations to be reproachable a story in which Sa'di narrates in Golestan as follows, "I knew a merchant who had a hundred and fifty camels of burden and forty bondsmen and servants in his caravan. One night he entertained me at his lodgings on the island of Kish, in the Persian Gulf, and continued for the whole night talking idly, and saying: "Such a store of goods I have in Turkestan, and such an assortment of merchandise in India; this is the mortgage-deed of a certain estate, and this is the security bond of a certain individual's concern."

Then he would say: "I have a mind to visit Alexandria, the air of which is salubrious; but that can not be, for the Mediterranean Sea is boisterous. O Sadi! I have one more journey in view, and, that once accomplished, I will pass my remaining life in retirement and leave off trade." I asked: "What journey is that?" He replied: "I will carry the sulphur of Persia to China, where, I have heard, it will fetch a high price; thence I will take China porcelain to Greece; the brocade of Greece or Venice I will carry to India; and Indian steel I will bring to Aleppo; the glassware of Aleppo I will take to Yemen; and with the bardimani, or striped stuffs, of Yemen I will return to Persia. After that I will give up foreign commerce and settle myself in a warehouse."

He went on in this melancholy strain 'till he was quite exhausted with speaking. He said: "O Sadi! do you too relate what you have seen and heard." I replied: "Hast thou not heard that in the desert of Ghor as

the body of a chief merchant fell exhausted from his camel, he said, 'Either contentment or the dust of the grave will fill the stingy eye of the worldly-minded."

The Noble Prophet (S) says in the continuation of his commandments, "...Whims would hinder one from the truth and unreachable hopes would make one forget the Hereafter. The life in this world is to be ended while the life in the Hereafter is ahead of you. Each life has its own children. Try to be of the children of the Hereafter if you can. Try not to be of the children of this world. Today you are alive, can do things and there is no reckoning. However, tomorrow you will die and will be in the World of Reckoning where you cannot do anything."49

Therefore, each day we live in this world, we become farther away from this world and become closer to the Hereafter and the duration of our remaining life span – which is the greatest Divine Capital – decreases. Given the fact that the lost lifetime does not return back to us, we must make the most of it so that not even a single moment of it is spent without any benefits. Rather man must make as much use of his life as possible to gain much perfection and knowledge.

It has been reported that the Noble Prophet (S) said, "You should appreciate five things before five other things: Firstly, appreciate being young before you get old. Secondly, appreciate being healthy before becoming ill. Thirdly, appreciate being rich before becoming poor. Fourthly, appreciate being free before becoming too busy. Fifthly, appreciate being alive before you die."50

Moreover, it has been reported that the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) said, "Time is passing like a cloud, thus make the most of the good chances." 51 Sa'di said, "Since yesterday has gone and tomorrow has not come, take account of this one moment that now exists."

Discourse 6: On the praised world and the blamed world

Introduction

There is a narration on the authority of the Noble Prophet (S) which says, "World- loving is the main cause of committing all sins."52

The world has been blamed in several narrations. And in some other narrations the blaming of the world has been admonished against. In other words, the world has been both praised and blamed. And in fact, there are two worlds: One is praised and the other is blamed.

Firstly, we must understand what the world is. And after that we must understand why the world is praised and why it is blamed.

The meaning of the world

The world has a meaning for itself and a meaning in relation to us. However, the meaning of the world

for itself is that it is the earth, what grows on it, the sky and what is within it. Thus the world includes everything such as the trees, the fruits, rain, sunshine, the moon and stars, etc. If this is what the world is, then it is not bad. Not only should we not blame it, but rather all of the world consists of God's verses. This earth and what is on it, the sun, the moon, the stars, the weather, water and fruits, are all divine blessings. They are all God's verses and all point to having a single Creator.

Thefore, this world is neither unpleasant nor is it to be blamed. Rather it must be praised a lot. And for this very reason, it has been stated in the narrations that once someone blamed the world in the presence of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.). Then the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) said, "Were you proud of the world and then you blamed it?..."53

أيها الذام للدنيا المغتر بغرورها المخدوع باباطيلها اتغتر بالدنيا ثم تذمها؟ إن الدنيا دار صدق لمن صدقها ودار عافية لمن فهم عنها ودار غنى لمن تزود منها ودار موعظة لمن إتعظ بها مسجد أحباء الله ومصلى ملائكة الله ومهبط وحي الله ومتجر أولياء الله اكتسبوا فيها الرحمة ورجوا فيها الجنة فمن ذا يذمها فقد أذنب بينها ونادت بفراقها

Now several questions come to mind regarding this narration as follows: When did the world make you proud? When did it deceive you!? How could the world deceive us since the world is full of moral lessons and advice for man. Did you become proud of this world because of seeing the passing away of your parents and other next of kin while all of these awaken man as we read in the continuation of the above, "Indeed, this world is the house of truthfulness and righteousness for the one who verifies it, and treats it with truthfulness and righteousness."54

All the world is based on righteousness and justice. The whole world is based on order and discipline. The sun rises and sets at a certain time. Nothing ever goes wrong in the process of the rising and the setting of the sun – the night never comes instead of the day and vice–versa. This system remains forever and the same holds true for the four seasons, etc.

Finally, all of this world which we can see is based upon righteousness, justice, discipline, order, rules and laws. The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) goes on and says, "And it is the house of healthiness for the one who understands this and it is the house of prosperity for the one who wants to take provisions for the Hereafter from it." God the Sublime has provided all the means of servitude so that man is able to serve God in all his affairs and under all conditions.

Man can use everything as means for the Hereafter and have only God in mind when he does things. Even his sleeping and walking can be for God's sake. For example, he can sleep with the intention of getting vigorous for worshipping God. He can walk with the intention of gaining power for worship, and he can eat food so that he can worship God. Thus, man can use everything he possesses in the way of God, so that the provisions for the Hereafter are provided.

Then the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) added, "... The world is the place of advice for the one who accepts.

The world is the place for prostration and the servitude of God's worshippers and companions. It is also the place of worship and praying of God's angels. Revelation for the Prophets – including for the Seal of the Prophets Muhammad Mustafa (S) – descended in this very same world. The friends of God the Sublime did business in this very world. And they sold all they had to God and in return they bought the Eternal Heaven. It was in this world that God's friends provided God's Mercy and the Eternal Heaven for themselves. Who can blame this world? Meanwhile, this very world has announced that man is separated from it by dying and going to the Hereafter."55

The world consists of lessons and tests

Thus all this world is just a lesson and a verse of God the Sublime. And God the Glorified has adorned this world so as to examine mankind as we read,

"That which is on earth we have made but as a glittering show for the earth, in order that We may test them – as to which of them are best in conduct." The Holy Quran: Al-Kahf 18:7.

In other words, it is so that it becomes clear who is attached only to this world and has forgotten God, and who is not attached to this world. We should know that we must not reproach this world because the world which is the place of examining people is nothing other than goodness, blessings and felicity.

Our benifit from this world

Our share of the world is the benefit we take from this world and we use it in our lifetime: water; air; the Earth; shelter (housing); children; spouses, etc are all the benefits we take from this world in our lifetime. Our benefitting from and using of this world is of two kinds. Sometimes what we gain from this world is used by us as a means for our Hereafter and our purpose in all our deeds is only God. And we set these deeds as the provisions for the Hereafter. In such cases, we worship God in all phases of life. This world of ours is to be praised.

The other possibility is that one uses this world as a means to commit sins. It means that if one uses all this world including the blessings that God the Sublime has granted us such as the eyes, the ears and the other parts of the body, the moon, the sun, the wife, the children, the wealth, the ambitiousness, the position, etc. as the means for committing sins, then this world is to be blamed.

Thus, the parise-worthy world and the blameworthy world are clarified by considering how the world is used by us. Therefore, we must try to take the most benefit from this lifetime, our health and what God has granted us in the way of gaining perfection and prosperity. We must make all of them the means for the Hereafter. And we must act in a way in all affairs and phases which is due to the decree of God the Glorified. And in any task we want to do, we must first consider God's Decree about that deed. A

narration from the Noble Prophet (S) exists which says, "Man must provide provisions for himself, from this world for his Hereafter and from his youth for his old age. This world has been created for you, but you are created for the Hereafter."56

Also the Quran states,

"And take a provision (with you) for the journey, but the best of provisions is right conduct. So fear Me, O ye that are wise." The Holy Quran: Al-Baqara 2: 197.

One must provide provisions from his youth for his old age. During one's youth one must get educated and worship God, so that he is not deprived of anything during his old age. This world has been created for our sake, but we have been created for the Hereafter. It is stated in the Quran,

"It is He Who hath created for you all things that are on earth..." The Holy Quran: Al-Baqara 2:29.

We have not been created for this world, but rather we have been created for the Hereafter. This world is only a preliminary phase before the Hereafter. In a Prophetic tradition it is stated, "O man! I have created everything for you, but you have been created for Me."57

Of course, this does not mean that man's worship of God benefits God, but rather God means, "I have created you so that you become near to Me, and by becoming near to Me you attain the stage of perfection and benefit." This means that one must worship God so that he reaches the rank of being near to God.

Discourse 7: On supplications, gratitude, perseverance and asking for forgiveness

Introduction

Ja'far ibn Muhammad as-Sadiq (a.s.) stated, "Whoever is granted four things would not be deprived of four other things. Whoever is granted the opportunity to supplicate would not be disappointed of its being answered. Whoever is granted the opportunity to ask for God's forgiveness would not be disappointed of repentance. Whoever is granted the opportunity to be grateful would not be disappointed of an increase in his blessings. Whoever is granted the opportunity to persevere would not be disappointed of its reward."58

قال الصادق عليهما السلام: من أعطى أربع لم يحرم أربعا من أعطى الدعاء لم يحرم الإجابة ، ومن أعطى الإستغفار لم يحرم التوبة ، ومن أعطى الشكر لم يحرم الزيادة ، ومن أعطلى الصبر لم يحرم الأجر282

Making supplications to God and their benefits

As we read in the above narration, "... Whoever is granted the opportunity to supplicate would not be disappointed of its being answered..." Supplicating to God has been strongly emphasized in the Quran and narrations, for example, it states,

"And your Lord says: "Call on Me; I will answer your (Prayer): but those who are too arrogant to serve Me will surely find themselves in Hell – in humiliation!" The Holy Quran: The Believer, the Forgiver 40:60

It can be understood from this Noble verse that making supplications is a kind of worship. Man must make supplications to the Threshold of God the Sublime whenever he has a problem.

One of the recommendations made by the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) to his son Imam Hasan Mujtaba (a.s.) in his will is the following, "O My dear offspring! Know that God who controls all of the treasures of the sky and the Earth is that very same God who has given you permission to ask something from Him. And He Himself guarantees that it will be fulfilled."59

When the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) stated that "He Himself guarantees that it will be fulfilled" refers to this Noble verse which states,

"When My servants ask thee concerning Me, I am indeed close (to them): I listen to the prayer of every suppliant when he calleth on Me: Let them also, with a will, Listen to My call, and believe in Me: That they may walk on the right way." The Holy Quran: Baqara 2:186.

Then the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) added, "And God has decreed you to ask of Him your requests, so that He may grant them to you. And He has decreed to you to ask Him for kindness, so that He may be kind to you. And He has not placed a person who would be a cover and an obstacle between you and Himself (so that you may state your request to that intercessor and he relates it to God the Sublime)."60

Man can turn his face towards the Threshold of God the Sublime without any intercessor – in all moments and hours and in public or private and ask of Him his requests. This is because God the Glorified is so close to an individual that He is nearer to him than any other person or intercessor, as He states,

"It was We Who created man, and We know what dark suggestions his soul makes to him: for We are nearer to him than (his) jugular vein." The Holy Quran: Qaf 50:16.

It is for this very reason that the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) stated, "He is so close to you that you may directly ask your requests from Him. If you want to repent and turn back to Him, there will never be an obstacle before you." However, this issue of being able to directly turn to God is in no way in

contradiction to the issue of intercession which is one of our religion's necessities. If your supplication is perfect, intercession will be done on your behalf. However, making supplications does not necessarily result in intercession. The intercession of the Prophet (S), and the Immaculate Imams (a.s.) is as follows.

An individual requests those Holy Lights who are close to God's Threshold to intercede for him. Meanwhile he himself states his request to God and tries to use those individual's intercession, so that his supplications may become complete and be fulfilled sooner. This is because God has given the Prophet (S) and the Imams (a.s.) permission to intercede as He states in the Quranic verse, "Allah. There is no god but He,—the Living, the Self–Subsisting, Eternal. No slumber can seize Him nor sleep. His are all things in the heavens and on earth. Who is there can intercede in His Presence except as He permitteth? He knoweth what (appeareth to His creatures as) before or after or behind them. Nor shall they compass aught of His knowledge except as He willeth. His Throne doth extend over the heavens and the earth, and He feeleth no fatigue in guarding and preserving them for He is the Most High, the Supreme (in glory)."

Also we read in the pilgrimage supplication entitled Jame'a, "O God! Could I have ever found ones to intercede near Thee on my behalf who would be closer to Thee than Muhammad and the Members of his Household – the leaders of the Company of Good – the pious ones?"61

Thus, the same God who has not placed a shield between himself and his servant – so that his servant's requests may be answered sooner – has given the permission of intercession to those Holy Lights – the Prophet's Household (a.s.). Of course, there are a lot of questions to be asked about supplications and their conditions. Here we just refer to the sentence which has come in a Prophetic tradition, "Making supplications is your job, however, fulfilling them is My job."62 Also Imam As–Sadiq (a.s.) stated in the previously mentioned narration, "...Whoever is granted the opportunity to supplicate would not be disappointed of its being answered..."63 We also read in another narration that the Prophet (S) said, "The origin and the truth of servitude is supplication and making it to the needless Divine Threshold. Nobody who makes supplications gets ruined."64

In another narration we read that Imam Ridha (a.s.) said, "Saying supplications is the weapon of the Prophets (a.s.)."65 And yet in another narration we read that the Prophet (S) said, "Sayings supplications is the weapon of the believer."66 Some may ask why we should make all these supplications, although many of them are not fulfilled?

Some may ask why many of our supplications are not answered. It can be stated in answer to this question: "The reason why some of the supplications are not fulfilled is that the Wise God does not deem it proper to fulfill those supplications. However, God's servant who makes these supplication does not

know that the thing he wants from God may harm him. And for this very reason God does not fulfill his supplications. For example, a child may ask his parents for a needle, a scissor or other similar objects, but they know that he would injure himself with these things.

Thus, the kind parents would not fulfill his requests and in return they may give him things better than these.

There is another narration in which we read, "If God does not deem it proper to grant something to his servant, God will grant him something better in return in this world and the Hereafter."67

Success for repentance

We read in the afore-mentioned narration by Imam As-Sadiq (a.s.), "...Whoever is granted the opportunity to ask for God's forgiveness would not be disappointed of repentance..."

God the Sublime said,

"But, without doubt, I am (also) He that forgives again and again, to those who repent, believe, and do right, who, in fine, are ready to receive true guidance." The Holy Quran: Ta-Ha 20:82.

If man thinks carefully, he will understand that all of the sins which he commits, in fact are rooted in the spirituial ailments and diseases which he suffers from. Man suffers from spiritual aliments just as he may suffer from physical illnesses. The sins which he commits are the results of his spiritual illness. A healthy soul demands good morality, and an ill and distressed soul demands bad morality and committing bad deeds. It has been narrated in a narration from the Prophet of Islam Muhammad Ibn Abdullah (S) who stated, "Should I not inform you about your ailments and their cures?"

They stated, "O God's Prophet! Surely say them." Then the Noble Prophet (S) stated, "Your ailments are your sins and their cure is repentance." This narration is similar to the narration in which Imam Ja'far As–Sadiq (a.s.) stated to a man, "You are your own doctor and your illnesses and cures exist in yourself. You know how to be healthy. And you have been shown the cures. Thus, look at how you treat your own soul." Thus, this agrees with "Your ailments are your sins and their cure is repentance." This means that man must be his own doctor and by means of the intellect and the religious laws he can completely protect himself against spiritual illnesses and cure the ailments which he suffers from. On the whole God has shown the way to man as we read in the Holy Quran,

"We showed him the Way: whether he be grateful or ungrateful (rests on his will)." The Holy Quran: Insan 76:3.

God has clearly stated what bad deeds are so that we can avoid them and He has stated what the good deeds are so that we may do them. Now this is man who can commit a sin or can obey and worship God.

Thus man's insight is in his own existence and in the same way which he knows his ailment, he can also cure his spiritual diseases by using the intellect and the religious laws. Thus man will be held responsible if he does not cure them. Thus, you are your own doctor so treat your ailments with the medicine which is in your own existence.

Success for gratitude

In the narration stated in the beginning of this discourse, we read that Ja'far ibn Muhammad as-Sadiq (a.s.) stated, "...Whoever is granted the opportunity to be grateful would not be disappointed of an increase in his blessings..."71

"And remember! your Lord caused to be declared (publicly): 'If ye are grateful, I will add more (favours) unto you; But if ye show ingratitude, truly My punishment is terrible indeed."'The Holy Quran: Ibrahim 14:7

In another verse it is stated,

"If ye reject Allah, Truly Allah hath no need of you; but He liketh not ingratitude from His servants: if ye are grateful, He is pleased with you..." The Holy Quran: Az–Zumar 39:7.

Thus, being thankful for blessings is necessary and it is in two forms:

- 1– Thanking the Nourisher of the World.
- 2-Being thankful for the goodness which the people do for us.

It must be known that being thankful for God's blessings is based upon four things. If those exist, then being thankful has been done.

- 1- After man has come to know God he should realize that blessings are from God.
- 2- Man should be content with the blessings of God
- 3- Man should be grateful both verbally and wholehearteldly.

Being wholeheartedly grateful implies that man shoud be a true servant of God. Being grateful verbally is done by saying: Praise be to the Lord of the Two Worlds. This implies that both praise and glorifications

are from God - the Nourisher of the Two Worlds.

4– Man should spend the blessing where it should be spent and of course, this matter needs a lot of knowledge and it is not possible for one to do so except by using Divine Guidance.

It is not possible to acknowledge all of God's blessings as we read,

"But if ye count the favors of Allah, never will ye be able to number them..." The Holy Quran: Ibrahim 14:34.

On the other hand, using the blessings properly requires one to know jurisprudence, since man's intellect alone does not dominate over all the benefits and the corruptions of the affairs. Thus, it can not state the correct ways of using the blessings.

These were the basics of being grateful. If all these things are done, then man has acted upon the duty of being grateful. However, finally man is unable to reach the rank of being grateful for these countless Divine Blessings. Thus the only thing which he can do is to thank God and say, "O Nourisher! I am unable to be thankful for even one of Your Blessings, lest to be thankful for all of them."

Of course, one must note that the greatest of the blessings is the blessing of the Noble Prophet Muhammad (S). The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) also says after the recommendations he made about the world's condition in the Age of the appointment of Muhammad to Prophethood, "O worshippers of God! Take lessons from your previous conditions and think about your parents' conditions in the Age of Ignorance and before the Prophet came. Think what acts they were involved in. And think about their conditions after the Prophet Muhammad (S) came."72

Although, this was addressed to the people of that time, these recommendations are for all the people up until the Judgement Day. Thus man must be fair and thank this great blessing and appreciate the greatest blessing which is the Prophet Muhammad (S), although God cannot be thanked for even this blessing. Also the Noble Qur'an describes this unique Divine Blessing as a great favor and states,

"Allah did confer a great favor on the believers when He sent among them an apostle from among themselves...' The Holy Quran: Al-Imran 3: 164.

Likewise, we cannot really get to know the Prophet (S) just as we cannot be grateful enough for him as we read, "Do not use your powers of thought in recognizing the truth of the Noble Prophet (S), because His Holy Existence is a truth which you can not truly recognize."73

We should also try to be thankful for the goodness which the people do for us, since it has been stated in a narration that if one does not thank the people he has not indeed thanked God. There is a narration on the authority of Imam Al–Ridha in which we read, "Whoever does not thank the blessings from the creatures has indeed not thanked the Honorable God the Exalted."74

Success for perseverance

Ja'far ibn Muhammad as-Sadiq (a.s.) stated, "... Whoever is granted the opportunity to persevere would not be disappointed of its reward."75

Perseverance is the struggling of the soul under the order of the intellect and using the religious laws. Perseverance is of several kinds and includes patience against committing sins; patience against love for the world (abstinence); patience at the time of anger; and patience at the time of waging a Holy war (bravery). Many people believe that many of the virtues and perfection are rooted in perseverance as many others are rooted in gratitude. Also it has been quoted in a narration from the Noble Prophet (S) who stated, "There are two halves of faith: one half is perseverance and the other half is gratitude."76

There is another narration on the authority of Imam as–Sadiq (a.s.) who stated, "Whoever is granted three things would not be deprived of three things. Whoever is granted 'the chance to call upon God' is also granted 'an answer to his prayers'. Whoever is granted 'being grateful is also granted 'an increase in favors'. Whoever is granted 'reliance' is also granted 'sufficiency'"77

What is especially stressed in this narration is about reliance on God as we read, "Whoever is granted 'reliance' is also granted 'sufficiency." 78

This same concept is stated in the following Noble verse of the Holy Quran,

"...And if anyone puts his trust in Allah, sufficient is Allah for him..." The Holy Quran: At-Talaq 65:3.

There is also a narration on the authority of Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.) who stated, "Trusting God and entrusting the businesses to God is the cost for many valuable things and is the ladder to progress and prosperity." Thus, we must rely on God in all our affairs and we must trust God. However, this does not mean that we should abandon the apparent means of reaching our goal since they are the natural means which God has determined for us to reach our goals. We must go through the proper means, but rely on God to succeed. For example, businessmen must engage in business and put their trust in God. Or students of religious sciences should try their best to study and discuss all of their lessons with certainty while trusting in God to help them acquire true knowledge which is the ever greatest imagined forms of perfection for man.

Discourse 8: On the Servitude of God

Introduction

Abi Abdullah as–Sadiq (a.s.) stated, "The Honorable God the Exalted revealed to Adam (a.s.), the father of all men, that He would summarize all knowledge and wisdom for him in four sayings. Adam (a.s.) asked, 'O Lord! What are they?' God stated, 'One of them is for Me; one is for you; one is about Me and you and one is about you and the people.' Adam (a.s.) stated, 'O my Lord! Please tell them to me so that I may learn them.' God stated, 'The one that is for Me is that you should worship Me and not ascribe any partners for Me. The one which is for you is that I will give the recompense of your work to you when you are very needy for it. The one which is about you and Me is that you should supplicate to Me and I will answer. The one that is about you and the people is that you should accept for yourself whatever you accept for the people."80

عن أبي عبد الله عليه السلام قال: أوحى الله عز وجل إلى أدم عليه السلام أني سأجمع لك الكلام في أربع كلمات ، قال: قال: يا رب ومن هن؟ واحدة لي ، وواحدة لك ، وواحدة فيما بيني وبينك ، وواحدة فيما بينك وبين الناس ، فقال: يا رب بينهن لي حتى أعلممهن ، فقال: أما التي لي فتعبدني ولا تشرك بي شيئا ، وأما التي لك فأجزيك بعملك أحوج ما تكون إليه وأما التي بيني وبينك فعليك الدعاء وعلى الإجابة ، وأما التي بينك وبين الناس فترضى الناس ما ترضاه لنفسك 307 308

We must stress the major point in the above as, "The one that is for Me is that you should worship Me and not ascribe any partners for Me..."81

We must know that the aim of man's creation is that he should worship God, and man has been born to recognize and serve God. God says the following,

"Not an apostle did We send before thee without this inspiration sent by Us to him: that there is no god but I; therefore worship and serve Me." The Holy Quran: Al-Anbiya 21:25.

He also says,

"And they have been commanded no more than this: To worship Allah, offering Him sincere devotion, being true (in faith)..." The Holy Quran: Al-Baiyinah 98:5.

God also states,

"O ye people! Adore your Guardian-Lord, who created you and those who came before you, that ye may have the chance to learn righteousness;" The Holy Quran: Al-Baqara 2:21.

The issue of servitude is of utmost importance. This is to such an extent that in the prayer's profession (tashahud) of monotheism and the Prophethood of the Noble Prophet Muhammad (S), firstly he must bear witness to the fact that there is no god but God (monotheism). Then he must bear witness that the Prophet (S) is a servant of God. After these two testimonies are given, we bear witness to the mission of

the Prophet Muhammad (S) and say, "Ashadu an la illaha ilallah vahdahu la sharika lah va ashahu ana Muhammadan abduhu va rasuleh"82

And it is clear that here the issue of serving God has been stated before the issue of the Prophet's mission. Or in another verse God states about Noah (a.s.),

"...the People of Noah rejected (their apostle): they rejected Our servant, and stated, 'Here is one possessed!', and he was driven out." The Holy Quran: Al-Qamar 54:9.

We should note that referring to Noah (a.s.) as His servant in this verse is a form of honoring Noah's (a.s.) rank. God states this same description in relation to Abraham (a.s.) and his offspring,

"And commemorate Our Servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, possessors of Power and Vision" The Holy Quran: Suad 38:45.

and praises them for being God's servants.

God refers to Jacob (a.s.) and Solomon (a.s.) in a similar fashion as we read,

"...How excellent in Our service! ever did he turn (to Us)!" The Holy Quran: Suad 38:44.

And God states the following regarding the Divine Leaders (a.s.),

"And We made them leaders, guiding (men) by Our Command, and We sent them inspiration to do good deeds, to establish regular prayers, and to practise regular charity; and they constantly served Us (and Us only)." The Holy Quran: Al-Anbiya 21:73.

It is stressed that the important characteristic of the Divine Leaders who are appointed by God the Exalted, is their pure servitude of God.

In another verse God says the following about monotheists,

"And the servants of Allah Most Gracious are those who walk on the earth in humility, and when the ignorant address them, they say, 'Peace!' " The Holy Quran: Al-Furqan 25:63.

And He states in relation to the Dear Prophet (S),

"Glory to Allah Who did take His servant for a Journey by night from the Sacred Mosque to the farthest Mosque..." The Holy Quran: Al-Isra 17:1.

And again He states,

"Is not Allah enough for his Servant?..." The Holy Quran: Az-Zumar 39:36.

where God's servitude is stressed again. Thus, we see that everywhere the issue of servitude is set

ahead of all other issues.

Therefore, the issue of God's servitude is very important. Also the aim for the creation of this world is that the people worship God the Exalted after recognizing Him which is expressed in the following Quranic verse,

"I have only created Genies and men, that they may serve Me." The Holy Quran: Az-Zariyat 51:56.

The more man worships and serves God, the more noble and virtuous he is.

The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) stated the following in his supplications to God, "O My Nourisher! It is enough of an honor for me to be Your servant! It is enough of an honor for me that You be my Lord! You are that same God whom I want. Please let me be the way that you want me to be."83

Now that it has became evident that man has been created to serve God, he needs knowledge of the religion in order to realize how to perform this servitude properly. The knowledge of religious jurisprudence will teach him how to serve God in all deeds, how to pray, how to enjoin others to do good deeds and all other religious precepts from cleanliness to expiations. All these are issues which clarify how man should serve God.

And of course in all of these matters, if man's intention is for God, his deeds become acts of worship. Even if one's intention in doing deeds which are neither recommended nor prohibited is serving God the Exalted, these deeds will also be considered God's worship. If one sleeps or eats with the intention to gain ability to worship, these deeds will be considered to be worship.

He states in the continuation of the above narration, "... The one which is for you is that I will give the recompense of your work to you when you are very needy for it..."84 This is so because man's deeds – whether good or bad – do not get lost. There are many Quranic verses related to this.

From amongst the words of Logman (a.s.) to his son which God has stated are as follows,

"'O my son!' (stated Loqman), 'If there be (but) the weight of a mustard-seed and it were (hidden) in a rock, or (anywhere) in the heavens or on earth, Allah will bring it forth: for Allah understands the finest mysteries, (and) is well-acquainted (with them)." The Holy Quran: Luqman 31:16.

He states in another place,

"...They will find all that they did, placed before them..." The Holy Quran: Al-Kahf 18:49.

And He states.

"But it will be no more than the retribution of (the Evil) that ye have wrought;" The Holy Quran: As-Saffat 37:39.

Moreover, the Noble Prophet (S) has also stressed this point and said, "Indeed your deeds shall return to you." 85 The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) has also said the following in this respect, "These days are like the pages of a notebook in which your deeds are written. Thus write good deeds in this notebook so that they stay with you eternally and you benefit from them." 86

The narration goes on by saying, "...The one which is between you and Me is that you should supplicate to Me and I will answer. The one that is between you and the people is that you should accept for yourself whatever you accept for others."87

In the same way that you seek health, wealth, comfort and convenience for yourself; you should also want those things for your religious brothers. You should want for the people whatever satisfies you and makes you happy. You have attained fairness if you do so. If man reaches a state of real justice by worshipping God then all his actions will become Divine.

In a Prophetic narration it is stated, "My servant gets close to me by worshipping Me and he becomes closer to Me by doing the recommended deeds to such an extent that I become his eyes, ears and hands."88

The eyes, the ears and the hands of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) are similar to God's eyes, ears and hands. The Immaculate Imams really worshipped God and that is why they have attained such high ranks.

Discourse 9: On the nobility of the fitr festival and the virtues of piety

Introduction

We read the following in the hand-supplications of the Fitr and Azha Festivals, "I ask Thee by this day which You have established as a holiday for the Muslims, and by Muhammad – may God's Blessings be upon him and his household..."

Be The Fitr Festival has such nobility that we swear by this Festival and request our needs (from God) by the means of the nobility of that Festival. It is one of the greatest Muslim Festivals.

The reason why the Fitr Festival is so noble is that the Blessed month of Ramazan is the month which has the most Divine Favors and Benefits. This is so since God the Exalted has made fasting obligatory for His own servants during the month of Ramazan. Thereby, they have actually carried out the Major Holy War and have attained perfect benefits and favors by worshipping God and avoiding committing

sins.

The Prophet (S) stated, "O people! The gates of Paradise are open in this month. Then ask your Lord not to close them on you. And the gates of the Fire are closed. Then ask your Lord not to open them up to you.

Satan is chained down. Then ask your Lord not to let him overcome you."90

For this very reason, this month has especial nobility. The Noble Prophet (S) has also stated in a noble sermon entitled Sha'baniyyih, "O People! Indeed the doors of Paradise are opened in this month. Then ask your Lord not to close them on you. The doors of Hell are also closed in this month. Ask your Lord not to open them to you during this month and that you do not be overcome by Satan."91

Of course, the doors of Heaven are opened and the doors of Hell are closed as a result of man's deeds, his obeyance (of God) and his worshipping God. The Satans are in chains as a result of this struggle with the soul. However, the satans are let free for those who commit sins.

However, whatever is in the Hereafter must be obtained from what is in this world as we read, "This world is like a farm (preparing one) for the Hereafter."92

What becomes Heavenly saplings and fruits are the following words of God's Praise and Glorification: Subhanallah (Glory be to God); Al- Hamdulillah (Thanks God); La Ilaha Ilallah (There is no god but God; and Allahu Akbar (God is Great). These praises (of God) will turn into those heavenly fruits and saplings. When man says these praises truthfully and wholeheartedly, they turn into heavenly saplings and fruits in the Hereafter.

In the blessed month of Ramazan man is busy fighting with Satan and struggling with the soul which orders him to do bad deeds. Man is also trying to obey and serve God in this holy month. And when he gets through with this great trial, it is time to celebrate, since he has done his duty and has worshipped God. Thus, we state in the hand-prayer of the festival prayer, "O God! We ask you to send blessings and greetings upon the Immaculate soul of the Noble Prophet (S) and his household. Then make me obey them regarding doing good deeds and avoiding evil deeds."

The relationship of fasting and piety

Fasting leads man to piety as we read,

"O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that ye may (learn) self-restraint,-" The Holy Quran: Al-Baqara 2: 183.

Fasting is a preliminary step so that piety appears in all times of man's life and affairs.

Many Quranic verses have been stated in the Noble Quran about piety. Piety has also been strongly emphasized in the recommendations of the Immaculate Imams (a.s.). Especially in the recommendations of Ali (a.s.) in Nahjul Balaqah we see many instances of "I advise you about piety and fear of God."

The attributes of a Shiite

In a narration that has been quoted on the authority of Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir (a.s.) we read, "Is being called a Shiite enough for the people? I promise to God that we do not intercede on behalf of anyone, show kindness or take as companion anyone except for the pious ones – those who obey God."93

The pious people cannot be recognized except by their attributes, one of them being humble before God the Exalted, "God will give a high rank to the one who is humble. God will make base the one who is too haughty."

One of the most apparent attributes of a Shiite is humbleness which is attained by remembering God a lot both in mind and words. Other attributes are:

- 1- Remembering the Immaculateness and Greatness of God and saying 'Glory be to God (Subhan-Allah).'
- 2- Paying attention to God's Greatness and saying 'God is Great (Allahu Akbar).'
- 3- Recognizing the Majesty of God and saying 'There is no god but God (La Illaha Illalaho).'
- 4- Being thankful for God's blessings and saying 'Thanks be to God (Al-Hamdulilah).'

If all of these are uttered during prayer, the result would be humbleness before God the Exalted. Other signs of being a Shiite are saying one's prayers, fasting and doing good to one's parents. Another sign of one being a good Shiite is honesty. This involves honesty in one's beliefs, one's intentions and words, and in one's actions. A Shiite must be honest with God and the people. He must be trustworthy with the worst people and the best people, and not gossip about others, except for expressing their goodness. A Shiite must not reveal the deficiencies of anyone nor must he bother people with his bad words. This is

so since the one who is trustworthy amongst the people is never disloyal to them in financial and non-financial affairs.

Discourse 10: Purification of the soul and salvation of the Pure Ones

Introduction

There are several instances in the Holy Quran where we run into God swearing by some important issue such as.

"By the Sun and his (glorious) splendour;" The Holy Quran: Ash-Shams 91:1.

In the Holy Quran God the Sublime swears by important issues which He Expresses. God swears by those issues when he is addressing someone who denies something. Since the atheist people in the Quraysh tribe and the other Arab idolators denied God's many verses, God the Glorified swears by the important issues when He wants to express them. For example, after the beginning phrase

"In The Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful"

we read the following in the Quran,

"By the Sun and his (glorious) splendour; By the Moon as she follows him; " The Holy Quran: Ash-Shams 91:1-2.

The real meaning of the sun and the moon in the above verse

What can be read from the above verse only indicates an apparent meaning of it. However, the actual meaning of the sun is the Seal of the Prophets Muhammad Ibn Abdullah (S) and the actual meaning of the moon is the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.). Here the Noble Prophet (S) has been compared to the sun because before his appointment to the Prophethood, unbelief, ignorance, moral corruption, plotting and fighting were widespread all over the world. When Muhammad's (S) light of truthfulness arose from the East in the Great Mecca, all of this darkness and oppression disappeared. The world was lit up with the light of worshipping God, honesty and pleasing attributes.

The reason why the Commander of the Faithful Ali has been compared to the moon is that just as the moon seeks the rising of the sun, Ali (a.s.) is the unseperable Caliph or Successor of the Prophet (S). Ali (a.s.) is the protector of Islamic Laws after the Prophet (S). Just as the moon gets light from the sun, the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) got light, knowledge, and wisdom from the Seal of the Prophets – Prophet Muhammad (S). The Noble Prophet (S) stated about Ali (a.s.), "I am the city of knowledge and Ali is its portal."95

Then God swears by the day, the night, the sky and the Earth because the day and night are the Greatest Divine verses and the sky and the Earth are full of the strange verses of God. In another part of the Holy Quran we read,

"By the Day as it shows up (the Sun's) glory; By the Night as it conceals it; By the Firmament and its (wonderful) structure; By the Earth and its (wide) expanse: The Holy Quran: Ash-Shams 91:3-6.

After that He swears to man's speaking soul and states,

"By the Soul, and the proportion and order given to it;" The Holy Quran: Ash-Shams 91:7.

The Speaking Soul is the orderer which gives order to man's body and the humanhood of man is related to its existence. "A sword is called so because of its attribute of cutting existence with it, otherwise it is nothing more than a piece of iron." Also a man is called so because of his Speaking Soul existing within him. Otherwise, if the soul does not exist, this body is nothing more than a form. Thus, the thing which exists is the soul and man's truth is that same soul and it is this same manhood's truth which makes man more noble than all of the other creatures. For the same reason, he is comprehensive and includes all the various aspects.

Man is a very complicated creature. On the one hand, he possesses animal characteristics such as lust and anger. At times he may even be worse than the most voracious animals. On the other hand, he possesses angelic characteristics. Should he obey the intellect he becomes superior than the angels. It is for this comprehensive nature that he can attain a rank even higher than the angels and become God's vicegerent (Caliph).

Of course, this rank of being God's Caliph is specifically for the Prophets (a.s.) and the Immaculate Divine Leaders (Imams). They are the real representatives of the Wise God. However, any individual can become God's Caliph to the extent of his suitability to attain such divine attributes within himself. This implies that other people can also become the manifestation of God's attributes. The attributes of God the Sublime would appear in them to the extent of their capacity and trustworthiness. Thus, people other than the Prophets and the Divine Leaders (a.s.) can become the manifestation of God's attributes to an extent and become God's Caliph.

Thus, all of the attributes are included in man and he has a high rank. He is the master of all the creatures since he can be like a mirror and reflection of God's attributes and become more superior than all the angels.

The seventh oath which God the Sublime makes in this Blessed Chapter is that He swears by the soul and the proportion and the order given to it – that same Truth which rules over the body and all the limbs obey its orders. God states,

"By the Soul, and the proportion and order given to it;" The Holy Quran: Ash-Shams 91:7.

This means that God has given order to the soul and created man in the best form as we read in, "Man's form is God's most evident proof for all the creatures." 96 Moreover, God has given a balance to all of man's parts and organs. He has created them in the right size and in the right place.

To summarize, it is noteworthy to say that man is basically composed of both the body and the soul. God the Sublime has connected the soul from the Celestial World to the body which is from the Earthly World. Man's nobility and virtue is also by means of the soul. It is not by means of the body since the body is mortal and transient. When man dies, his body gets buried and deteriorated until the time comes when the soul is blown back into it and he is revived again. The soul, however, does not get deteriorated and is everlasting.

In the same way that man's body becomes healthy and sick, his soul becomes healthy and sick. The blessing of the body's health is one of the greatest Divine blessings and man must always take care of his health. Also in the Islamic Laws the body's health has been stressed a lot. For example, consider the following narration on the authority of the Holy Prophet (S), "Two blessings are taken for granted 97: security and health." When man becomes ill and his body is not in a state of moderation, he gets well by referring to a physician and using drugs. Likewise a man's soul may get ill.

The health and illness of the soul

One's soul is healthy so long as he obeys God and attains such good attributes like honesty, truthfulness, kindness, humbleness, etc. However, the state of the soul's illness comes when he disobeys God, commits sins and acquires such attributes as world-loving, self-admiration, haughtiness, jelousy, stinginess, enmity and other unpleasant moral traits.

There are doctors to refer to when our souls get ill just as there are doctors to refer to for the diseases of the body. The first of these doctors is the Holy Essence of God. Then the next ones are the Prophets (a.s.) and the Divine Leaders (a.s.) who cure the illnesses in a person's soul with God's permission. The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) states the following about the Noble Prophet (S), "He is a doctor who wanders amongst the people with his medicine, prepares and strenghtens his ointments and has heated his instruments to heal the wounds."99

Thus, the Prophets (a.s.) and the Divine Leaders (a.s.) – especially Muhammad, the Seal of the Prophets (a.s.) and the Immaculate Divine Leaders (a.s.) after him are the real doctors of the soul who diagnose the soul's diseases and prescribe the procedure for treatment.

The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) who is one of the greatests doctors of the soul states, "Beware that poverty is one of the worst calamities. Physical illness is even worse than poverty. Yet even illness of the heart (i.e. soul) is even worse." 100

The illness of the soul is of such an importance that man must plan to cure it immediately. If the illness of the soul is not treated, it will cause everlasting destruction. Therefore, the illness of the soul is even worse than the illness of the body. Altough health is better than wealth, piety is even better than health.

Piety implies protecting one's soul from doubt in beliefs and preserving the soul from unpleasant moral attributes. Once man keeps himself purified from sins and attends to God's worship, he will become a pious person.

The superiority of the blessing of piety to the blessing of health

We read the following in the Holy Quran,

"... And for those who fear Allah, He (ever) prepares a way out, And He provides for him from (sources) he never could imagine..." The Holy Quran: At-Talaq 65:2-3.

Moreover, piety has been recommended as the most important human attribute. In this regard the Holy Quran states,

"... Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you.

And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things)." The Holy Quran: Al
Hujurat 49: 13.

After swearing to the soul and all proportion and order given to it the Quran says,

"And its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right;"

The Holy Quran: Ash-Shams 91:8.

This means that God has inspired goodness and badness to the soul and by means of nature He has shown the way to each one as He states,

"We showed him the Way: whether he be grateful or ungrateful (rests on his will)." The Holy Quran: Al-Insan 76:3.

So far we have discussed the instances of swearing by God. The final conclusion of these instances of swearing by God is in the following, where God states,

"Truly he succeeds that purifies it," The Holy Quran: Ash-Shams 91:9.

God wants His servants to be pure and clean. The meaning of the Arabic word Zakkaha used in the verse is cleaning and purifying oneself. It includes both apparent cleanliness and inward cleanliness. Apparent cleanliness is the physical cleaning which is good and highly encouraged in Islam as we read in the following narrations: "Cleanliness is due to faith" 101; "Purity is half of faith" 102; "Islam is founded upon cleanliness" 103; "Cleanliness is a part of the ethics of the Prophets" 104 and "Be clean since Islam is cleanliness." 105

This means that Islam has invited us to be clean and pure to such an extent as if Islam itself is just being clean. This means that cleanliness is such an integral part of Islam that it is equal to Islam.

The first stage of cleanliness is physical cleanliness. Any Muslim person should clean his body, his room, his house, and everything that belongs to him. Inner cleanliness is true purity for which physical cleanliness is only a prelude. We read the following in the Holy Quran,

"... For Allah loves those who turn to Him constantly and He loves those who keep themselves pure and clean." The Holy Quran: Al-Bagara 2:222.

This form of inner purity is a higher rank of cleanliness. In this state man's limbs are free of committing sins or doing what God has admonished against doing.

The third rank of purity is the purity of man's soul from ignorance by enlightening it with knowledge and wisdom. In this state man's soul is cleansed of atheism, deviations, bad attributes and behaviour. Man should fend off all bad attributes from himself and acquire good attributes such as honesty, truthfulness, humbleness, reliance on God, submission to God, etc. The most important of these characteristics is honesty and truthfulness.

The fourth rank of cleanliness is for man to completely purify his soul from everything other than God. He should only have the love of God in his heart and not have any love for anything or anyone else. He should only attend to God and not attend to anyone else. However, saying that one should only love God does not mean that he should not love the Prophet (S) or the Holy Household of the Prophet (S) since they are also associated with God. The basis of love for the Prophet (S) is the love for God. We love them since God has ordered us to do so. One of the greatest nicknames of the Prophet Muhammad (S) is Habibullah which means loved by God. Love for the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) is also due to God's Love as we read, "The love for Ali equals faith, and despising him equals atheism." 106

The same holds true for the love for the Divine Leaders (a.s.) as we read in the following narration, ""Whoever loves you indeed loves God, and whoever despises you indeed despises God." 107 The same holds true for the love for Imam al-Husayn (a.s.) as we read, "There is a deep love for Al-Husayn (a.s.) in the hearts of the believers." 108 Therefore, loving these holy persons is the same as loving God. It is not at all in contradiction with loving God. Following them also equals following God the Exalted.

In the next verse of the same chapter we read,

"And he fails that corrupts it!" The Holy Quran: Ash-Shmas 91:10.

which refers to polluting the soul. The word used for corrupt in this verse in Arabic is Dassaha which means polluting and secretly mixing something in another thing. An example is when people add water to milk to dilute it and it becomes hard to tell. This is the opposite of purifying and implies acquiring bad moral attributes. That is why in the above–mentioned verse God has said that whoever corrupts his soul

fails.

Thus, our prosperity and perfection depends on how we train and educate our soul and how we tame ourselves by acquiring good attributes so that our soul and heart become the place for the manifestation of Divine Lights. Then God the Exalted may bless us. This means that our heart will then only have room for God's Love and it will not have any room for any other kinds of love for temporary things.

The Late Sheikh Baha-o-ddin Ameli has narrated the following poems on the authority of the late Sheikh Abulfath Bosti who says, "Greediness and wanting more of this world is a loss. What man gains from anything other than good deeds is a true loss. Whatever man gains from nature which is temporary is true loss and poverty. O you who try to build up this ruined world! I swear you by God! If the days of your life run up, is it possible to build them again? O you who are greedy in collecting worldly wealth! Have you forgotten that the happiness that comes from this worldly wealth is followed with bitter sadness? O you who are the servant of your body! Do you seek the very thing in which there is nothing but loss? Direct all your attention towards your own soul. Try to acquire virtues and moral perfection. Try to ornament your soul with all these admired attributes since you are considered to be human because of your soul not because of your body. Prevent your heart from attachment to this world and its ornaments. The feasting, drinking and pleasure that remains from this world leave nothing but trouble. Reaching what you desire in this world is coupled with loss and separation. Open your ears to the advice which I gave you since I have ordered them just as they order pearls and corals. Be kind to all the people so that you conquer their hearts. There have been many free people who became salves of others for their kind treatment. Try to help those who need you since this is a character of freedom lovers." And another poet says, "The sword is a sword because of its sharpness. A human is a human because of his soul (spirit) not for his body."

Finally, all human values and nobilities arise from the soul and one must strengthen his soul by worshipping God so that he may attain a high rank – even higher than that of the angels.

Discourse 11: On the six states of the body and the sprit

Introduction

The Commander of the Faithful Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) has stated, "There are six states for the body: health, ailment, life, death, sleep and being awake. The same six states hold true for the spirit. However, knowledge is life for the spirit, and ignorance is death for the spirit. Doubt is ailment for the spirit. Certitude is health for the spirit. Neglect is sleep for the spirit."109

There are six states which exist for the body and the soul, too. Man is a compound of body and soul. But the body is from the flesh world which is mortal and ephemeral since when man dies, his limbs fall apart from each other until again the soul is put back into it with God's permission. And the soul comes by the command of the Lord as God the Exalted states,

"They ask thee concerning the Spirit (of inspiration). Say: 'The Spirit (cometh) by command of my Lord: of knowledge it is only a little that is communicated to you, (O men!)" The Holy Quran: Allera 17:85.

The command of God mentioned here is that which God states in this holy verse,

"Verily, when He intends a thing, His Command is, 'be', and it is!" The Holy Quran: Ya-Sin 36:82.

Therefore, the soul is from the Celestial world and comes from the command of God, but the body is from the Flesh world which is the ephemeral world. Both are from God and both are created by God's command. It is this very compound of body and soul which results in the recognition of God the Exalted usually referred to in man arafa nafsehi faqad arafa rabeh which means 'Whoever recognizes himself has recognized his Lord.'

This is due to the fact that once man pays attention to his own existence and ponders over his own being he realizes that his spirit has control over his body. When man wills he sees, hears, walks and talks. Of course, all of these abilities are endowed to us by God. Likewise, the Holy Essence of God has total control over everything in the universe.

The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) has stated in the afore– mentioned narration, "There are six states for the body: health, ailment, life, death, sleep and being awake. The same six states hold true for the spirit. However, knowledge is life for the spirit, and ignorance is death for the spirit. Doubt is ailment for the spirit. Certitude is health for the spirit. Neglect is sleep for the spirit."110

Here certitude refers to the certain belief in the Origin, the Resurrection, the religious principles, the Prophethood, the Divine Leadership and the Divine Decrees. Doubt is said to constitue ailment for the spirit. The way to treat this ailment is to put religious decrees into practice so that his certitude is reinforced. There is a narration in this respect on the authority of Imam Al–Ridha (a.s.) in which we read, "Whenever one of the servants of God spends forty days in sincerity, springs of wisdom will flow from his tongue." 111

Physical health is also stressed in Islam as spiritual health and belief related issues are stressed. However, each have their own importance.

Islam guards one's material life as it guards his spiritual life. The life of this world is a prelude to the life of the Hereafter. Islam guards the apparent things and the inner things, the face value of things and their real meaning, the body and soul, this world and the Hereafter. All of these are attended to and guarded by the Holy Religion of Islam. When we precisely consider the Islamic laws, we see that the Holy Religion of Islam pays a lot of attention to health related issues such as cleanliness. Take, for example, the issue of the practice of making ablutions several times each day plus the ritual ablutions such as the recommendable ones or the obligatory ones like the ones we perform after intercourse.

This practice is clearly health related. Now if pouring water on the skin has some physical harm for someone, then he may perform dry ablutions (Tayamum) instead which is using some dried dirt to rub over his hands and face instead of performing the ablutions. Or the fact that when fasting may harm someone, he or she need not fast until he or she gets well. Therefore, you see that the central idea in all these decrees is health. This is stressed so much that the religious jurisprudents have said, "Anything which is harmful for man is forbidden."

In a narration it has been stated, "One day Ja'far Ibn Muhammad as– Sadiq (a.s.) went to see Mansoor when an Indian doctor who was reading medical books was there. The Imam (a.s.) was listening. When the Indian doctor finished reading he asked the Imam (a.s.), 'O Aba Abdullah! Do you want me to teach you medicine?' As–Sadiq (a.s.) replied, 'No, since what I know is better than what you know.'

The Indian doctor stated, 'What do you know?' The Imam (a.s.) stated, 'I treat heat with cold, cold with heat, moisture with dryness and dryness with moisture. I leave the rest of the affairs to the Honorable God the Exalted and rely on the Prophet's saying 'that the stomach is the center of all ailments and abstinence is the best treatment for all ailments. The body should be left to get used to things." The doctor stated, 'Medicine is nothing else but this." 112

حضر أبو عبد الله جعفر بن محمد الصادق عليهم السلام مجلس المنصور يوما وعنده رجل من الهند يقرأ كتب الطب ، فجعل أبو عبد الله الصادق جعفر بن محمد بن محمد عليهما السلام ينصت لقراءته فلما فرغ الهندي قال له: يا أبا عبد الله: أتريد مما معي شيئا؟ قال: لا ، فإن ما معي خير مما معك ، قال وما هو؟ قال: أداوي الحار بالبارد ، والبارد بالحار ، والرطب باليابس ، واليابس بالرطب ، وأراد الأمر كله إلى الله عز وجل ، وأستعمل ما قاله رسوله صلى الله عليه وأله وأعلم أن المعدة بيت الداء والحمية هي الدواء ، وأعود البدن ما اعتاد ، فقال الهندي: وهل الطب إلا هذا؟

In another narration that is quoted on the authority of the Noble Prophet (S) and another similar one on the authority of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) we read, "There are two forms of knowledge: knowledge of the body and knowledge of the religion." 113

There is another narration on the authority of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) in which we read, "Knowledge is of three kinds: Knowledge of jurisprudence, knowledge of medicine for physical health, and knowledge of speech." 114

In a narration from Imam Sadiq (a.s.) it has been narrated that, "The people of each city need three

things. There will be no prosperity for that city if these three do not exist there: The first thing that a city needs is a pious knowledgeable jurisprudent. The second thing is a wise professional and trustworthy doctor. And the third is a just ruler to act in the benefit of the people and to rule justly."115

The jurisprudents also say that when there are no doctors in a society it is necessary for some people to go and study medicine. Once enough people attend to this important issue, then the rest of the people are not obliged to do the same. The same thing holds true for other issues that are needed by the public.

A narration has been quoted on the authority of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.), "Amongst the calamities of this world is poverty. Illness is even harder than poverty. Yet even worse is the illness of the heart. Amongst the blessings of this world is wealth. Physical health is even better than wealth. Yet even better is the piety of the heart."116

What is meant by the heart here is not that heart-shaped organ in the body. However, the intention concerning the heart is the spirit which is mentioned on many occasions in the Quran and the various narrations. A question that may be asked now is "Why has the spirit been referred to as the heart?" The answer to this question would be: "The reason that the spirit has been referred to as the heart is that in the Arabic word Qalb which is translated into heart also means change. And our spirit is always changing from one state to another state. Thus various states such as happiness, sadness, anger, eagerness, or lethargy, etc. occur for the spirit." The Quran also states,

"Verily in this is a Message for any that has a heart and understanding or who gives ear and earnestly witnesses (the truth)." The Holy Quran: Qaf 50:37.

Thus, illness of the spirit is worse than physical illness. Illness of the soul is for man to have doubts in his beliefs and have bad morals and attributes. Then the narration goes on to say, "...Amongst the blessings of this world is wealth. Physical health is even better than wealth..."117

Man must recognize the worth of his physical health as Imam Sadiq (a.s.) narrated the following on the authority of God's Prophet (S), "Two blessings are taken for granted 118: security and health." 119

Yet even better is the piety of the heart. The Holy Quran also states,

"...And take a provision (with you) for the journey, but the best of provisions is right conduct. So fear Me, o ye that are wise.' The Holy Quran: Al-Baqara 2:197.

Piety is defined as protecting oneself. When people want to explain the meaning of piety, they cite the case where one guards himself when he wants to cross a path covered with thorns. Likewise, a pious man should guard himself from committing sins and doing whatever is against God's Commands.

There are two forms of piety: the piety of the soul and the piety of the body. The piety of the soul implies keeping the soul away from doubt in beliefs, associating partners with God, denial of God, belief in superstitions and false ideas. The piety of the body implies keeping and protecting the body, the organs and the limbs from committing sins. For example, keeping one's eyes from the sins related to the eyes, keeping the ears from committing sins related to hearing, etc.

The next point mentioned is that neglect is the sleep for the spirit.

ونومها غفلتها

Sleep of the soul is to ignore and not to pay attention to God and its alertness is thinking about God. In the same way that man is ignorant of everything around him and does not pay attention to things while he is asleep, the sleeping of the soul also takes place when he is ignorant of God. Thus awakening of the spirit would happen when man is aware and thoughtful of God and pays attention to His Glorified Essence.

Discourse 12: On the Lord's recommendations to the Noble Prophet (S)

Introduction

God's Noble Prophet (S) stated, "My Lord recommended me to do nine things and I recommend you to do these nine things.

- Being sincere both in private and in public.
- Being fair both at times of anger and happiness. Frugality both at times of poverty and being wealthy. Bestowing things on those who have deprived you. Forgiving those who have oppressed you.
- Establishing ties of kinship with those who have broken such ties. Thinking while silent.
- Mentioning God when talking.
- Taking moral lessons when you look at things.

The above nine issues are very important virtues and moral traits.

Being sincere both in private and public

One should be sincere in every deed which he does whether it be in public or private. Every act which man does such as praying, fasting, enjoining others to do good, admonishing others against evil, etc.

should be done sincerely for God's sake with pure intentions, since God has commanded us to do them. The same holds true for acquiring knowledge. Man must attain knowledge for God's sake and act accordingly. He should have a similar intention when trying to guide others.

The next point mentioned is "being fair both at times of anger and happiness." This implies that we should remain fair even when we are angry. The same holds true for when we get lustful. Controlling lust and remaining just is a real struggle and one must try hard not to do any unfair acts.

Waging a Holy War against the soul is the best waged war

The greatest form of holy war is that with one's own self. Imam Musa ibn Ja'far Al-Kazim (a.s.) said, "The greatest form of holy war is fighting with one's own selfish desires." 120 Of course, it takes a lot of heroism to be able to control ourselves. Therefore, forcing ourselves to act justly at the time when we become lustful or angry is a very hard task. If one acts justly at such times, does not violate any Divine Decrees, and does not say something which is against God's pleasure, then he has acted like what God the Sublime has recommended His Prophet (S) to do.

Someone went to see the Noble Prophet (S) and asked, "O Prophet of God! Please advise me." The Prophet (S) stated, "I advise you not to get angry." Then the man asked that the Prophet (S) to give him another piece of advice. The Prophet (S) repeated the following thrice, "I advise you not to get angry." 121 Thus, one of the things which we must consider at the time of anger is acting justly.

Considering truth and Justice at the time of satisfaction and Happiness

One should not forget about justice at times when he is pleased with someone. It has been said in the Holy Quran,

"O ye who believe! Let not your riches or your children divert you from the remembrance of Allah. If any act thus, the loss is their own." The Holy Quran: Al-Munafigun 63:9.

The next point mentioned is "frugality both at times of poverty and wealth." Thus, I must consider acting both economically and moderately at times of being wealthy and being poor.

The next point mentioned is "bestowing things on those who have deprived you." In other words, I should do good to the one who has not done so to me.

The next point mentioned is "forgiving those who have oppressed you." Therefore, if someone has oppressed me, I should not take revenge from him. On the contrary, I should forgive him as the Noble Quran says,

"Those who spend (freely), whether in prosperity, or in adversity; who restrain anger, and pardon (all) men;- for Allah loves those who do good" The Holy Quran: Al-i-Imran 3:134.

The next point mentioned is "establishing ties of kinship with those who have broken off such ties." Therefore, I should make bonds of relationship with the ones who have cut off the bonds of relationship with me.

And the next one is "thinking while silent." When man thinks about the extent of this world and its many wonders, he will realize the Glory of the Nourisher and the endless Divine Power. This is one form of parise– worthy thought. Another form of parise–worthy thought is to think about this world, its unloyality, and its temporary nature. Then man realizes nothing will last forever. Neither youth will remain nor happiness. Neither comfort will last nor health. Rather everything is temporary and will soon pass away. Because of this we must not let this world cheat us and we must not be satisfied and happy with it. Rather we must treat it as an intermediate step in our journey to the Hereafter.

Therefore, if we attain knowledge or we do other things, our intention must be only for God's sake and for the intention to send something ahead of us for the Hereafter. Other parise–worthy forms of thinking are thinking about scientific issues. That means that we should be very attentive to our teachers and try to learn our lessons well. We should think over them until we deeply understand them.

It has been quoted on the authority of Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Babooyeh al-Qumi who was one of the great Shite scholars that he used to say the following after he enjoyed studying hard and understood what he had studied, "Where are the kings and their offspring to enjoy the experience which I have attained?" This means that this joy is superior to and higher than the joy which is gained from rulership and kingdom.

The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) stated, "Pondering over the wonders of creation is like a bright mirror for us, and taking moral lessons is a warning well-wisher for man..." 122 We may conclude from this that one should always fend off bad thoughts from himself and he should always think about pariseworthy and admirable things.

The next point mentioned is "mentioning God when talking." This means that one should always include God's remembrance in what he says.

He may recite the Quran, say supplications, enjoin others to do good deeds, admonish others against evil deeds, teach or study. We should be careful to do all these for the sake of God.

Another form of God's remembrance is to say God's praises and glorifications by saying La illaha illalah when he thinks about the Majesty of God, or say Alhamdu lillah rabil Alameen when he thinks about God's blessings. He should say Astaqfirallh Rabbi va atubo elayhe when he remembers his mistakes. Thus whatever he says should be related to God the Glorified and be for His Sake.

It has been narrated that one day the Prophet (S) stated to his companions, "When you say 'Subhanallah, Valhamdulillah, Va La Ilaha illallah, Allaho Akbar', the angels will plant a sapling for you in Paradise." Then one person asked, "O Prophet of God! Then we will have lots of trees in Paradise if that

is so." The Prophet (S) replied, "Yes. That will be the case if you do not send any fires ahead of you to burn them down." Then they asked the Prophet (S), "What would be that fire?" The Prophet (S) replied, "The fire would be the sins that you commit."

We also read the following in the Holy Quran,

"O ye who believe! Celebrate the praises of Allah, and do this often; And glorify Him morning and evening." The Holy Quran: Al-Ahzab 33:41-42.

The "praises of Allah" mentioned here have been reported to be saying, "Subhanallah, Walhamdulillah, Wa La Ilaha illallah, Allahu Akbar Wa La Quwata Illa Billah al-Alial Azeem." 123 The expression of such words of remembrance of God are only effective if said sincerely.

However, others have said that what is meant here by "praises of Allah" mentioned here is just a general state of remembering God under all circumstances. This means that whenever we say something or do something, we should check and see whether that is done for the sake of God or not. One should also be careful that what he listens to, thinks about, writes about or where he goes should all be for the sake of God. In short, all your actions and thoughts should be directed towards God and you should always be "taking moral lessons when you look at things."

Discourse 13: On social worhship

Introduction

God the Blessed the Sublime asked Moses (a.s.), "O Moses! Have you done a sincere act for me up until now?" Moses (a.s.) replied, "Yes. I have prayed. I have fasted and I have praised you also." God the Blessed the Exalted replied, "But the benefits of praying are for you yourself. It will enable you to cross over the Bridge. Fasting is an armor against the Fire and praising Me will bring you certain ranks in Paradsie." Moses (a.s.) cried and said, "O Lord! Please guide me to a sincere act for you." God the Blessed the Exalted states, "Have you ever clothed a naked one? Have you ever given a thirsty person something to drink? Have you ever honored and respected a knowledgeable person? Any of these acts would be considered sincere acts for Me." 124

There are two forms of worship namely individual worship and social worship. Individual worship is that form of worship which benefits the individual who performs that act of worship like praying, fasting, praising God, reading the Quran and the like. However, social worship is that form of worship which the society benefits from. The following narration on the authority of God's Prophets (a.s.) is in this regard, "The following two attributes are the best of attributes, Belief in God, and being beneficial to the people. And the worst two attributes are associating partners with God, and harming and offending the servants of God."125

Therefore, of the two types of worship being individual worship and social worship, the second one is

important in many respects since man needs others to live. That is why it is very important to be beneficial for the people and try to fulfill their needs.

It has also been narrated on the authority of the Holy Master of the Martyrs Imam Al-Husayn (a.s.), "Be aware that the need of the people for you is one of the greatest Divine Blessings. So, never become tired of this blessing because this blessing will be taken away from you (and will be granted to someone else) and the blessing will be changed to misery for you." 126

The Holy Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) also says, "God the Blessed the Exalted has servants to whom He has allocated some of His Blessings from which other people are to benefit. They will have these blessings for as long as others benefit from them. Once they fail and do not let others benefit from these blessings, they will be taken away from them by God and turned over to others." 127

Thus, now that it has became clear that there are two forms of worship, it is noteworthy that social worship is also in two forms as follows:

- 1–The first form of social worship is that with a temporary effect such as clothing the naked, giving water to the thirsty ones, feeding the hungry people or helping others in any way we can. These are all types of worship with a temporary effect. Once the possessor of wealth does not help others, it might be taken away from him.
- 2. The second form of social worship is that which has a permanent effect like guiding the people and the society. Guiding someone is the highest form of social worship. This is entrusted to the scholars. Therefore, students should study hard to learn and guide the people after they graduate. This issue is of such an importance that in a narration the Seal of the Prophets Muhammad (S) said to the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.), "O Ali! If God guides one man with your help it is better than all which the sun shines upon."128

The issue of guiding the people and enjoining them to good and admonishing them against evil, and guiding the stray ones has been stressed so much in Islam that we read the following in the Holy Quran,

"Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong: They are the ones to attain felicity.' The Holy Quran: Al-Imran 3: 104.

God also says,

"Ye are the best of peoples, evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah. If only the People of the Book had faith, it were best for them: among them are some who have faith, but most of them are perverted transgressors." The Holy Quran: Al-Imran 3:110.

There has also been a narration on the authority of Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) who said, "Whoever opens the

doors leading others to guidance and guides someone will receive the same rewards given to the doers of those good deeds. Whoever misguides others to deviation, will receive the same type of chastisement which the misguided ones receive." 129 Thus, we may conclude than man must first attend to improve himself and then try to guide others.

Discourse 14: Four important pieces of advice from the Prophet (S)

Introduction

It has been narrated on the authority of God's Prophet (S) to say, "Four things are meant for doing four acts. They are not meant for doing four other acts. Wealth is meant for giving charity. It is not meant to be hoarded up. Knowledge is meant to be acted on accordingly. It is not meant for arguing about. Man is made to worship God, not to engage himself in lustful acts. The world is meant to learn from. It is not meant for us to build." 130

Therefore, man should try to acquire knowledge and oblige himself to act accordingly. This means that he must act according to what he understands from religious laws. Once he is perfected in acquiring knowledge and acted accordingly, then he may try to help educate others so that they make progress. Therefore, there are two actions related to knowledge. The first one is acquiring it, and the second one is teaching it to others.

The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) said the following in this respect, "One who places himself in the rank of the leader of the people must first teach himself before he teaches others. He must first teach others through his own good morals before he tries to teach them using his tongue. One who first teaches himself and acquires good morals himself deserves to be respected more than one who tries to teach others and educate them before having taught himself." 131 Therefore one should first try to acquire knowledge and act accordingly before he tries to guide others.

It has been narrated on the authority of the Noble Prophet (S) who stated, "Nothing is a better gift to be bestowed by a Muslim upon his brother than giving him a piece of advice and wisdom which guides him or saves him from going astray." 132

It has also been narrated on the authority of the Holy Prophet (S), "If a man only guides one person, it is better than all the things upon which the sun shines." 133

In another narration on the authority of Imam Al-Baqir (a.s.) we read, "God the Blessed the Exalted would grant anyone who guides the people the recompense of all the people who act accordingly to the person who taught them without reducing their reward. Likewise, all the sins committed as a result of someone's bad teachings will be recorded for the one who deviates the people without reducing the sins of the wrongdoers themselves." 134

Thus we read in the afore–mentioned narration that knowledge is meant for acting on accordingly, and not for arguing about. There are two forms of arguing. The first form which is very detestable is when you try to force your own opinion on others, although you may not be right! Should one have a right position, he need not insist a lot. It may even be proper for him to remain silent. There is another narration in this regard on the authority of Imam Hassan Al–Askari (a.s.) in which we read, "Do not dispute (with others) lest you will lose splendor and do not joke (with everyone) lest you will be disrespected." 135 In another narration on the authority of Imam Hassan Al–Askari (a.s.) we read, "Modesty is to accept to sit in a place other than in the first row of a meeting, to greet whoever you meet, and to avoid disputing even if you are right." 136

However, there is another form of arguing which is parise–worthy. This is holding debates about religious issues with people who oppose Islam in order to attract them to the religion, as we read in the following verse of the Holy Quran,

"Invite (all) to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: for thy Lord knoweth best, who have strayed from His Path, and who receive quidance." The Holy Quran: Al-Nahl 16: 125.

One can cite the debates and discussions held by great scholars such as Sheikh Mofid, Sheikh Toosi, Sheikh Sadooq held with the Sunni scholars or Jews such as the debates held by Imam Al-Ridha (a.s.) with the learned men from different nations as reported in Uyun Akhbar Al-Ridha in which the Imam (a.s.) proved the truthfulness of Islam for them.

Of course, it is not only necessary to avoid arguing regarding religious matters and scientific discussions. It also holds true in our day to day affairs, since arguing or disputing is generally one of the unpariseworthy attributes.

The next issues that we read in the afore–mentioned narration on the authority of God's Prophet (S) is, "...Man is made to worship God, not to engage himself in lustful acts. The world is meant to learn from. It is not meant for us to build up." 137 Thus, this world is to take moral lessons from and it is not meant for man to build it up. This means that man must take moral lessons from all this world including the earth, the animals, the creatures, the plants and all things which he sees within it. To take moral lessons means that man in whatever he looks at, thinks about and concentrates his thought on makes him delve deeper and recognize God through it. When a monotheist looks at things, he notices the effects of God's Knowledge and Power in them.

It has been stated in Nahjul Balaqah, "Pondering over the wonders of creation is like a bright mirror for us, and taking moral lessons is a warning well-wisher for man. The best criteria for having behaved yourself is not to like for others whatever you dislike for yourself." 138

Therefore, taking moral lessons from what we see is a means of advice for man, since by observing the creatures and thinking about them man's knowledge about God will be completed. And as a result of

watching these creatures and deeply pondering over them and noticing their changes, permutations and different states, we find out the decline, transience and lack of credibility of this world.

Another conclusion we can make by thinking about the creatures is the temporary nature of this world. Moreover, it makes no difference whether we think about the things of our own time, or of the past and take moral lessons. An example of taking moral lessons from thinking about the things in our own time is expressed in the following narration which expresses the questions that comes into our mind whenever we pass by a ruined house, "Where have those who built you gone? And where have those who lived in you gone? Why don't you talk?" 139 It has been also narrated that, "One day Harun told Bohlul, 'Please advise me!' Bohlul stated, 'Look at these palaces and the past Kings' mansions besides which their graves are located." Thus, whether man thinks about the changes taking place during his own lifetime or about the history of the past, he notices that this world is ephemeral. The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) says, "Offer your soul the news of the past and see who they were, what they did, what happened to them, and where have they gone?"

Also it is said in the Holy Qur'an,

"How many were the gardens and springs they left behind, And corn-fields and noble buildings, And wealth (and conveniences of life), wherein they had taken such delight! Thus (was their end)! And We made other people inherit (those things)!" The Holy Quran: Ad-Dukhan 44:25-28.

One of the wise sayings of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) is, "There are many things to learn moral lessons from, but few who take moral lessons." 140

Masoodi and a group of historians have reported the following, "They slandered the Holy Imam Ali Al-Hadi (a.s.) in the presence of Mutevakil and told him that a lot of weapons and letters from the Shiites from Qum were in the Imam's house and that the Imam (a.s.) is planning to rebel against him. Thus, Mutevakil sent a group of his agents to search the Imam's house at night but they found nothing there.

They saw that the Imam (a.s.) was sitting on the ground in his room. He (a.s.) was wearing a woolen cloak and had closed the door. He (a.s.) was reciting the Quran and reciting supplications of God the Blessed the Exalted. They arrested the Imam (a.s.) and took him into the court near Mutevakil and reported as follows, 'We rushed into his house. We found nothing and found him sitting down, facing the Qibla (prayer direction) and reciting the Quran.' Mutevakil who was drinking wine and had a cup of wine in his hand had the Imam (a.s.) sit beside him and offered him (a.s.) to drink wine. Imam Al–Hadi (a.s.) stated, 'I swear by God that not even a sip of wine has ever entered my flesh and blood. Please excuse me from doing this.' Then Mutevakil agreed but told the Imam (a.s.) to recite a poem for him. Then the Imam said, 'I do not read much poetry.' Mutevakil said,

There is no way out and you must recite a poem for me.' Then the Imam (a.s.) recited some poems about the temporary nature of this world and the death of the kings and their baseness after their deaths. Upon hearing these poems Mutevakil cried so much that his tears ran down his cheeks and the people

present there also cried. Then Mutevakil dropped his glass of wine and his party ended."

Thus, man can take moral lessons from the history of the past ones and he can see what the ending of the good ones and the ending of the wicked ones has been, and use this to correct himself. Because of this fact they say, "History is the Messenger of the Past ones for the Future ones." History is like a letter which the past ones have written for the people of the future. Of course, we must note that the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) stated, "Take moral lessons from the past ones." This has also been expressed by other Divine Leaders (a.s.). They have all advised us to take moral lessons from the historical accounts of the previous nations which have been expressed in the Holy Quran since these accounts differ from other accounts and are perfectly true.

The Quran says,

"This is the true account: There is no god except Allah. and Allah. He is indeed the Exalted in Power, the Wise." The Holy Quran: Al-Imran 3:62.

The Quran also says,

"There is, in their stories, instruction for men endued with understanding. It is not a tale invented, but a confirmation of what went before it, – a detailed exposition of all things, and a guide and a mercy to any such as believe." The Holy Quran: Yusuf 12:111.

Thus we must be very careful in the field of commentary of the Quran, especially regarding the stories expressed therein, since they contain amazing facts from which we may draw a lot of great conclusions.

Discourse 15: On four precious jewels

Introduction

God's Prophet (S) said, "There are four precious jewels each of which is the basis of nobility if found in man. These precious jewels are the intellect, belief in religion, modesty and good deeds. What destroys the intellect is anger. What destroys the belief in religion is jealousy. What destroys modesty is greed. What destroys good deeds is gossiping." 141

The Intellect

The Intellect is the first precious jewel which is very valuable if it exists in a man, since man's nobility and virtue are due to it and man can attain angelic ranks by means of it. In other words, the Intellect is the ruler of man's being if it fends off whims, lust and anger, guides him to good deeds, and prevents him from doing bad deeds. Although many Prophets have been sent to guide man, the Intellect is the Prophet within us. Therefore, the intellect from within should be coupled with the religious laws and instructions brought to us by the Prophets from the outside. It has been narrated that God's Prophet (S)

said, "The first thing which God created is the intellect." 142

However, there are things which destroy other things. What destroys the intellect is anger. Should anger ever rule over man, darkness will overtake him. He will not be able to see the truth since then his intellect is overpowered. Man may then commit many sins, tell lies, do acts of oppression, gossip or make false accusations. Although anger is the worst enemy of the intellect, man is also empowered by the good attribute of patience with which he can block his wrath and selfishness.

The characteristic of patience is one of the most parise–worthy attributes and good morals which may appear within us. There is a narration in this respect on the authority of Imam Al– Baqir (a.s.) who said, "Nothing has ever been mixed with other things with as much grace and beauty that knowledge is mixed with patience." 143 God the Sublime has also praised the Prophets for their patience and has described them this way as we read,

"For Abraham was, without doubt, forbearing (of faults), compassionate, and given to look to Allah." The Holy Quran: Hud 11:75.

Religion and Belief

The second precious jewel is belief in religion. This means that if man has a strong belief in the beginning and the final ending, Resurrection and Divine Justice and absolutely believes in them he will reach the state of having certitude. However, jealousy regarding religious brothers destroys one's belief in the religion. This jealousy might reach such a state that it may jeopardize one's faith. An example of this can be found in the account of Abel and Cane which has been described in detail in the Quran and the narrations. The true root of this crime was jealousy.

Modesty

The third preciouse jewel is the attribute of modesty which prevents man from committing sins and doing bad deeds. However, modesty will be destroyed by greediness. Whoever is entrapped by greediness will lose his modesty.

Good deeds

The fourth preciouse jewel which can be found in man's being is good deeds. This jewel is very precious. There are many examples of good deeds. For example, if one says his prayers with all its due rituals and rites, fasts, gives some of his property in charity for the sake of God, he has done a good deed which shall be rewarded by God the Blessed. However, good deeds are destroyed by gossiping. There are several narrations which indicate that, "If one gossips about his Muslim brother then his deeds will not be accepted until forty days." 144 Are there any more dangerous things than this one? Gossiping is one of the major sins that has been admonished against in the the Holy Quran,

"... And spy not on each other behind their backs. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Nay, ye would abhor it... But fear Allah. For Allah is Oft- Returning, Most Merciful." The Holy Quran: Al-Hujurat 49:12.

Of course, it is clear that man hates to do this.

Like other bad attributes, gossiping has the quality that it has a bad effect on man's soul and is the cause of the debasement of the soul. It will push us away from the truth. This by itself is a very dangerous effect of gossiping. There are also very bad social consequences of gossiping. If the people get used to gossiping about each other and destroying each other's respect and honor in the society, then they will become each other's enemies. The feelings of friendship and love will be lost. Then they will lose unity and the feeling of cooperation. Such a nation will easily get defeated by its enemies. Therefore, gossiping is a danger which threatens the whole society and the nation.

Discourse 16: On gratitude and submisson

Introduction

The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) stated, "Life consists of two days. One day life is in your favor, and on another day it is not in your favor. So do not become too proud on the day when life is in your favor. And be patient on the day life is not in your favor." 145

What is meant by day? What is meant here by saying that life consists of two days? Is its intention of two days two ususal days as we know of? Or does it refer to two periods of times which do not have a limit? It seems that the second meaning is what is meant here as it is usual in Arab literature, the traditions and the Quran. For example, we read the following verse in the Quran,

"He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in Six Days..." The Holy Quran: Al-Hadid 57:4.

The intention of the Quran from "Days" in this verse is a period, although it comes to mind that it refers to only six days, but one may ask himself how the heavens and the Earth were created in only six days when it has taken a very long time. Thus the word day here refers to a period of time, not just a simple day as we also read in the Holy Quran,

"... Verily a Day in the sight of thy Lord is like a thousand years of your reckoning." The Holy Quran: Al-Hajj 22:47.

And we read in another verse,

"... in a Day the measure whereof is (as) fifty thousand years:" The Holy Quran: Al-Ma'arig 70:4.

Thus day or the Arabic word Yoam here means a period of time which does not have a definite time and the above narration means that there are two periods in our life. In one period we are lucky and attain a high rank and wealth, while in another period we may lose everything and be in a distressful situation. We can neither prevent the lucky day from coming nor can we prevent the unlucky things from happening to us.

In relation to the lucky day of life, the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) says, "On the day which is a man's lucky day when everything is in his favor, they even ascribe other people's good attributes to him. However, on his unlucky day, they will even take away all of his good credits from him." 146

It has been recorded in books on history, "Before the Abbasid Harun Ar-Rashid Abbasi destroyed the Baramakites and during the time of their good luck and apparent power when they were very close to Harun ar-Rashid, Harun used to say the following about Ja'far ibn Yahya Barmakee, 'Ja'far has the totality of all good attributes. He has the generosity of Abdullah ibn Ja'far. He has the bravery of Amer ibn Tufayl. He has the patience of Ahnaf ibn Qays. He has the eloquency and clearness of speech of Subhan ibn Va'el.' He considered him to possess all the good attributes that everyone else had. However, during their unlucky times, Harun denied all their good attributes, destroyed them all and made everyone forget them." 147

It has been reported that someone said, "The following was written in Harun's expense book: The price of the pleasant scent which Harun had bestowed to Ja'far was one hundred thousand dirhams while the cost of the black oil with which Harun burnt Ja'far was only seven dirhams." 148 We read in a verse from the Quran.

"...take warning, then, O ye with eyes (to see)!" The Holy Quran: Al-Hashr 59:2.

We read in the commands of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) to Imam al-Hassan Mujtaba (a.s.), "O my dear offspring! Know and beware that the One who is the Owner of death is the same is the Owner of life. And the One who creates also deadens. And the One who made them also resurrects them. And the One who tests the people with calamities and hardships is the One who blesses them. And this world only lasts due to the will of God the Sublime, and the Hereafter is where there shall be rewards and chastisements." 149 This implies that everything which exists whether good or bad is from God. All good and bad things are from God and end in God. Everything is decreed and destined. Whatever happens to us is from God whether it looks good to us or it looks bad to us.

The people of Iran believed that there are two creators during the Era of Ignorance. They believed in Yazdan and Ahreman. They considered Yazdan to be the god of all goodness who has created all good things including property and wealth, life, blessings and happinesses. And they believed that Ahreman was the god of all badness and calamities who has created all bad things such as: darkness, snakes, crocodiles, illnesses and sadness.

In short, they believed that this world has two creators: one who is the creator of light and the other one who is the creator of darkness; They considered all goodness to be rooted in light and all badness to originate in darkness.

The intention of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) and the verses and narrations is that everything that exists is all due to Divine Destiny and originate from God whether they things are considered to be good or bad by us. That is why the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) said, "Life consists of two days. One day life is in your favor, and on another day life is not in your favor." Of course, the period of time life is in our favor may be more or less than the period of life that life is not in our favor. We also may experience different things during either of these two periods.

It has been narrated on the authority of Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir (a.s.), "One is caught in between three things: calamities, destiny and blessings. It is incumbent upon him to be patient in the face of calamities sent from God. It is incumbent upon him to submit to the destiny determined for him by God. It is also incumbent upon him to be grateful for the blessings sent to him by the Honorable God the Exalted." 150

ثلاث خصال العبد بينهن

حدثنا أبي رضي الله عنه قال: حدثنا سعد بن عبد الله ، عن أحمد بن أبي عبد الله عن أبي القاسم عبد الرحمن بن حماد ، عن أبي عمران عمرو بن مصعب العرزمي ، عن أبي حمزة الثمالي قال: سمعت أبا جعفر عليه السلام يقول: العبد بين ثلاثة: بلاء وقضاء ونعمة. فعليه في البلاء من الله الصبر فريضة ، وعليه في القضاء من الله التسليم فريضة ، وعليه في النعمة من الله عز وجل الشكر فريضة

It has also been narrated on the authority of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.), "One's true nature is manifested during the vicissitudes of life." 151

It is in these states that if a man does his duties well one may conclude that he is a good man. And if he fails to do his duties right then it becomes clear that he is not good. The duties are gratitude which are not fulfilled unless one really knows God the Blessed and recognizes that all the blessings are sent from God. He must properly use the blessings. For example, one should use his tongue to say prayers, recite the Quran, say supplications, enjoin others to do good and admonish them against doing evil, etc. One's tongue should not be used to make sins. One should tell the truth using his tongue and not lie. One should speak well about the people with his tongue and not put the people down with it.

Therefore, gratitude regarding the tongue is to use it as God has decreed, and not use it to do what God has forbidden to do. The same holds true for the ear. One should only listen to what God has allowed, and not listen to what God has forbidden. The same holds true for the hand which God the Sublime has granted us. One should not use it to oppress others. He should use it to do good deeds. The same holds true for the legs. One should use them to go to places of worship and acquiring knowledge. One should not use them to go to places where he may commit sins. Therefore, every blessing must be used in its proper place. Moreover, God's blessings are unlimited as we read in the Holy Quran,

"...But if ye count the favours of Allah, never will ye be able to number them..." The Holy Quran: Ibrahim 14:34.

If man wishes to use the unlimited Divine blessings in their proper place, he will surely need to acquire religious knowledge. He should also be patient at times of hardships and calamities. He should be patient whether he is angry or is at war. Being patient and not committing sins is referred to as piety. There is no escape from Divine destiny. One must totally submit to it.

Discourse 17: On humbleness, forgiveness and benevolence

Introduction

God's Prophet (S) said, "The best deeds are three: being humble towards people when you have a high rank, forgiving when you are in power, and bestowing without mentioning." 152

Being humble is a very good characteristic about which God the Blessed the Exalted has stated the following in the Holy Quran,

"And the servants of Allah Most Gracious are those who walk on the earth in humility, and when the ignorant address them, they say, "Peace!" The Holy Quran: Al-Furqan 25:63.

One meaning of "they say Peace" is that they do not offend them. Another meaning is that they greet them. Another probable meaning is that they say farewell to them. This means that they tell them goodbye and pass them by without bothering with them.

Several accounts have been reported about the humbleness of God's Prophet (S) and the Immaculate Imams (a.s.) in the literature. It was not only they themselves who were the best of God's creatures and were this way, but their companions, followers and students were very humble too.

The opposite of humbleness is haughtiness. If a person is humble before God, God will raise his rank. Likewise, God will decrease the rank of the haughty ones.

Abu Abdullah As-Sadiq (a.s.) said, "God would raise the rank of whoever is humble, and would decrease the rank of whoever is haughty." 153

This sentence makes us understand that all the attributes must be for God's sake and if one acts humbly towards God, God will raise his rank, and God will decrease the rank of the haughty ones.

It has been stated in a narration, "Those who are proud towards the God-worshippers, the Prophet (S) and the Immaculate Imams (a.s.), will enter the Resurrection Desert like ants on the Resurrection Day and the people will walk over and smash them." Likewise, we read the following in the Quran regarding the advice given by Logman to his son,

"And swell not thy cheek (for pride) at men, nor walk in insolence through the earth; for Allah loveth not any arrogant boaster.' The Holy Quran: Lugman 31:18.

The next point we read in the above is "forgiving when you are in power." This means that the one who has been insulted by someone else should forgive the one who has insulted him. It is not important for the weak person to forgive. Rather the forgiveness of the one who has power is important. Much has been reported about the attributes of perseverence, patience and forgiving of the Companions of the Imams (a.s.). The case for the Holy God's Prophet (S) and the Immaculate Imams (a.s.) is clear.

Malik Ashtar Nakhaee was one of the companions of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.). The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) said the following about him "The position of Malik near me is similar to the position of me near the Prophet of God (S)."155

Malik was very brave. That is why he was appointed as the Chief of the Army in the Battle of Siffin by the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.). Malik lived a very simple life, and wore simple clothes. The following has been reported about him, "One day Malik was passing through the bazzar. One who did not know him threw some dirty vegetables at him so as to mock him. Malik looked down and left there without saying a word. The ones who were there told that person, 'Do you know what you have done? This person whom you have insulted is Malik Ashtar Nakhaee who is the Chief of the Army of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.).'

The man's body started shivering. He followed Malik until he found him praying in a mosque. He waited until he finished saying his prayers. Then the man fell to Malik's feet begging for being forgiven, started to cry and said, 'Please forgive me. I did not recognize you.' Malik Ashtar told him, 'I swear by God that I only came to this mosque to pray to God to forgive you since I have already forgiven you." 156

When we think it over, we realize that forgiveness is the ultimate form of bravery. It is even superior to Malik's bravery at the battlefield. The Prophet (S) and the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) have stated, "The bravest of the people is the one who rules over himself." 157

The next pont in the above is "bestowing without mentioning it." We also read about this in the following verse of the Holy Quran,

"O ye who believe! cancel not your charity by reminders of your generosity or by injury..."

The highest rank of bestowing is the form of bestowing without mentioning it. Such a form of bestowing and sacrifice is one of the attributes of God's Prophet (S) and the members of his Holy Household about whom the Quran says,

"..., but give them preference over themselves, even though poverty was their (own lot)..."
The Holy Quran: Al-Hashr 59:9.

Discourse 18: On fountains of Eloquence

Introduction

The sayings of Ali (a.s.) are superior to the sayings of the people and are inferior to God's sayings. This does not contradict with the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (S) since Ali's sayings are the same as Muhammad's sayings since the Prophet Muhammad (S) himself has taught him. There is a narration in which we read that the Commader of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) said, "God's Prophet (S) taught me one—thousand gates of knowledge each of which opens up to one—thousand other gates." 158 There is another one in which we read, "I heard God's Prophet (S) say, 'I am the city of knowledge, and Ali is its portal. Whoever wishes to gain knowledge should go through that portal.'159

For example, one may refer to the following narration regarding the eloquency of the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.). We read in Al-Khisal Tradition No. 9–15:

Abu Muhammad al-Hassan ibn Hamzih al-Alavi – may God be pleased with him – narrated that Yusuf ibn Muhammad al-Tabary quoted Sahl abi Umar, on the authority of Vaki'a, on the authority of Zakariya ibn Abi Za'edeh, on the authority of Amer al-Sha'abi, "The Commander of the Faithful Imam Ali (a.s.) said nine sayings which amazed many eloquent ones. You wonder what jewels of wisdom are include in these pearls which none of the masters of eloquence could not even say some thing similar to them. Three of these are in the form of supplications; three are words of wisdom and the other three are about culture. The three words of wisdom are as follows: 'The value of each person is based on what he has learned. Whoever recognizes himself shall not be destroyed. Man is known by what he says.' The three sayings which are about culture are: 'Whoever treats someone well will become his master. You become a slave of whoever who you ask to fulfill your needs. You are equal to whoever you are not needy of.' And the three which are in the form of supplications are as follows: 'O My God! It is enough of an honor for me to worship Thee. It is enough of a source of pride for me to be nourished by You. You are just as I wish. Thus, make me just as perfect as you wish." 160 161

تسع كلمات تكلم بهن أمير المؤمنين عليه السلام

حدثنا أبو محمد الحسن بن حمزة العلوي رضي الله عنه قال: حدثني يوسف ابن محمد الطبري ، عن سهل 14-9 أبي عمر قال: حدثنا وكيع ، عن زكريا بن أبي زائدة عن عامر الشعبي قال: تكلم أمير المؤمنين عليه السلام بتسع كلمات ارتجلهن ارتجالا ، فقأن عيون البلاغة وأيتمن جواهر الحكمة ، وقطعن جميع الأنام عن اللحاق بواحدة منهن ، ثلاث منها في المناجاة ، وثلاث منها في الحكمة ، وثرث منها في الأدب ، وأما اللاتي في الحكمة فقال: "قيمة كل امرئ ما يحسنه" ، وما هلك امرء عرف قدره ، والمرء مخبوء تحت لسانه". وأما اللاتي في الأدب فقال: "امنن على من شئت تكن أميره ، واحتج إلى من شئت تكن أسيره ، واستغن عمن شئت تكن نظيره". فأما اللاتي في المناجاة . "فقال: "إلهى كفى لى عزا أن أكون لك عبدا وكفى بى فخرا أن تكون لى ربا أنت كما أحب فاجعلنى كما تحب ."فقال: "إلهى كفى لى عزا أن أكون لك عبدا وكفى بى فخرا أن تكون لى ربا أنت كما أحب فاجعلنى كما تحب

Khalil ibn Ahmad Nahvi who was one of the learned men said, "What the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) said, "The value of each person is based on what he has learned is the highest motivation for man to become inclined to knowledge and perfection.."

We work hard to earn knowledge only when we recognize its worth. All the high-ranking scholars from the time of the Divine Leaders until now have only reached a high rank after suffering hardships and poverty and struggling towards their goal. The Late Aqa Husayn Khansary who was referred to as the master of all masters in his own time and was in the first rank and to whom everybody referred was very poor when he started his studies in Isfahan. But he suffered and worked very hard in spite of poverty until he attained the highest rank of knowledge in the country.

It is due to the amount of attempt, knowledge and tolerance in hardships that men reach excellent ranks. It has been narrated in a narration from God's Holy Prophet (S), "O 'Abuzar! You should benefit from five things before five things happen: use your youth before you get old; use your health before you get ill; use your wealth before you get poor; use your spare time before you get too busy; and use your life before your death."162

These blessings of health, free time, youth, needlessness and life are all the resources that God the Sublime has granted us. Man may attain knowledge and perfection by these means. Thus we should try to make good use of these blessings to attain high ranks.

The most valuable saying which encourages man and makes him eager to learn knowledge and attain perfection is this very same statement of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) who said, "Whoever recognizes himself shall not be destroyed."

The meaning of the sentence may be that when man knows his true worth since God the Blessed has sent his soul from the Divine world, he will decide to attain perfection and promotion and nearness to God's Threshold. Thus, he tries to reach excellent positions. The Prophet (S) said, "The one who knows himself, has known his Lord." 163 Also the Quran states,

"As also in your own selves: Will ye not then see?" The Holy Quran: Az-Zariyat 51:21.

The other meaning of this narration is that when man thinks about himself and the soul and he realizes that his physical existence and mobility depend on the existence of his soul, and that all these physical powers which God has placed in the body from the apparent and inner abilities, all are wonderful blessings which show the wisdom and power of their Creator. For example, the fact that everything which man sees, hears or talks about all are amazing issues which indicate the certain Divine Wisdom.

Also, the existence of the inner abilities of thought, memory, imagination and the utmost blessing of the Intellect which distinguishes man from other animals are all reasons for having a Wise Creator. So, when man recognizes his soul, body, physical powers and organs, he recognizes his Creator who is God – the Wise Creator.

The third meaning of the narration is as follows, "The physical well– being and existence of our body depends on the soul which we cannot see. Likewise, the existence of everything depends on God which we cannot see."

Discourse 19: On honesty and the really honest ones

Introduction

Let's start the discussion with the following verse of the Holy Quran,

"O ye who believe! Fear Allah and be with those who are true (in word and deed)." The Holy Quran: At-Tauba 9:119.

One of the biggest parise-worthy attributes and admired good morals is the graceful characteristic of honesty. This characteristic is the chief of all good morals and good attributes as some of the scholars of ethics say. Moreover, it is a sign of man's manliness since it is due to the power and strength of man's soul. Dishonesty, on the other hand, is a result of man's weakness.

Many good human attributes are rooted in honesty. It is truthfulness as a result of which many good attributes appear in man and guide him towards good deeds and parise–worthy works.

In the Holy Quran God the Blessed the Sublime states,

"O ye who believe! Fear Allah and be with those who are true (in word and deed). "1 The Holy Quran: At-Tauba 9:119.

Also He states in another verse,

"O ye who believe! Fear Allah, and (always) say a word directed to the Right: "The Holy Quran: Al-Ahzab 33:70.

There are also many narrations which have been stated about the virtues of truthfulness including this one on the authority of the Holy Imam Ja'far as–Sadiq (a.s.) who states, "Indeed the Honorable God the Exalted has brought no Prophet save to preech his nation to truthfulness, honesty and righteousness." 164

Also it has been stated in another narration that Imam as–Sadiq (a.s.) stated to one of his companions, "Do you know why God's Noble Prophet (S) was so kind to the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.)?"

They replied, "O the son of God's Prophet (S)! Will you tell me?" The Imam (a.s.) stated, "Due to two attributes. one of which was truthfulness and the other was righteousness." 165

There is another narration on the authority of Imam Ja'far as–Sadiq (a.s.), "Righteousness and truthfulness guide man to all goodness and goodness lead man to Paradise." 166 Therefore, we may conclude that the characteristic of truthfulness includes all good attributes and its conclusion is that it leads man to Heaven.

There is another narration on the authority of Imam Muhammad Al– Baqir (a.s.), "The one who is truthful, his acts will become pure. God will increase the share of the daily bread of the one whose heart, insight and intentions are good. Anyone who is good to his family and who makes bonds of relationship with them will have a long life." 167

On the basis of this narration, righteousness includes all good and admired attributes and when man gets used to it, then he is righteous with his Lord, it means when He says,

"Thee do we worship, and Thine aid we seek." The Holy Quran: Al-Fatiha 1:5.

he says the truth and he truly worships God. It is at this state that one would worship God in all circumstances and say, "O God! I beseech you to help me".

When man's intention is right, there will be sincerity in it. He would then do all his deeds and acts of worship only for the sake of God. This means that good intention becomes apparent when it is accompanied by truthfulness with God, the Prophet and the Divine Leaders. And consequently one shows obedience due to his honesty. Moreover, it has been written in a narration on the authority of Imam as–Sadiq (a.s.), "Do not trust the one who elongates the period of bowing down and prostration in prayers? Do not trust him because he may do it out of habit and if he puts it aside, he becomes frightened. Trust those who are honest in speech and return what they are entrusted with." 168

Now, we must see how the prayer which is so important and is called the ascension of the believer by means of which man reaches the state of Divine Nearness should be. This prayer is the pillar of the religion upon which all religious affairs are based as God says in the Quran,

"...for Prayer restrains from shameful and unjust deeds; and remembrance of Allah is the greatest (thing in life) without doubt. And Allah knows the (deeds) that ye do." The Holy Quran: Al-Ankabut 29:45.

The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) states, Prayer is the means of nearness to God for every pious one." 169 It has also been narrated on the authority of Abi Basir, "I heard Aba Ja'far Al-Baqir (a.s.) say, 'The first thing which one is questioned about on the Resurrection Day is his prayers." 170 Why then does the Holy Imam Al-Baqir (a.s.) says, "Do not trust the one who elongates the period of bowing down and prostration in prayers"? The answer to this is as follows. This refers to prayers which have become the

habit of the one who say it. This implies that one may say the prayer without having a right intention and without wholehearted attention. This does not refer to a prayer said with a right intention and wholehearted attention which contains everything including honesty and truthfulness. Therefore, the Imam (a.s.) says that we should not trust the people with such prayers is due to the fact that thiese prayers may be not sincerely done.

Telling lies is contrary to truthfulness and is extremely bad to do. There are various degrees of telling lies. The worst form of telling lies is ascribing lies to the Prophet (S) or telling lies about God which are considered to be major sins and will void one's fasting. There is a narration on the authority of Imam Al–Hadi (a.s.), "Telling lies will ruin one's faith." 171

It has been also stated in a narration from Imam Al–Hadi (a.s.), "They have put all badness in a house and locked its door. The key to that door is drinking wine. However, telling lies is even worse than drinking wine." 172

Telling lies is a bad characteristic. Should it become common in a society, the people cannot trust each other any more. When the people in the society cannot trust each other, kindness, friendliness and unity decreases amongst them and they will separate from each other. However, if honesty and truthfulness is common in a society and no wrong acts are done within it, kindness, friendliness and unity increases amongst them and consequently it becomes a powerful nation who is never defeated by the enemy.

All which we stated (meaning these good ethical virtues) are important when attracting the people's attention and encouraging them and of course when all deeds are done sincerely for God's sake and belief in God becomes firm among them. This society and nation unites and becomes strong and it is in such a condition that the enemy can no longer defeat them as God says in the Holy Quran,

"So lose not heart, nor fall into despair: For ye must gain mastery if ye are true in Faith." The Holy Quran: Al-Imran 3: 139.

God the Blessed the Sublime states in the Holy verse which came in the beginning of this discourse,

"O ye who believe! Fear Allah and be with those who are true (in word and deed)." The Holy Quran: At-Tauba 9:119.

And of course, there must be "those who are true" so that God the Sublime asks the believers to be with them. This is based on what is found in the narrations. What is certainly found from all the written texts is that the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.), the Holy Fatima Zahra (a.s.) and the Immaculate Imams (a.s.) are the real and the true examples of the truthful ones since they are chastise. Moreover, there is a narration in which we read, "Be with Ali (a.s.) and his companions." 173

And the wish of God the Sublime is to be along with them. This means following and obeying them and believing in their kindness and accepting their Trusteeship and considering their influene in our affairs.

Discourse 20: On spreading Justice as a goal of the appointment of Prophets

Introduction

The act of spreading justice all around the world is one of the goals of the appointment of the Prophets (a.s.) to the Prophethood rank. God the Blessed the Sublime has stated in the Quranic verse,

"We sent aforetime our apostles with Clear Signs and sent down with them the Book and the Balance (of Right and Wrong), that men may stand forth in justice;..." The Holy Quran: Al-Hadid 57:25.

What is uprising for justice like? It may be stated that the meaning of justice in this Noble verse is the very same Divine Laws. It refers to the Divine Laws which in religion are like the system of the Just world. It has expressed all the goodness and all the badness; and it has commanded mankind to do all the good deeds and to avoid all the bad acts. And it has been enjoyed for man to do good to others as well as the good ones; and also to punish the bad ones. Religious laws are Divinely ordained and everyone must obey them. Of course, the rulers have a higher responsibility. They shoud not only bu just themselves, they should also attempt to establish justice in the society in which they rule.

Amongst the statements of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) is this one in which he (a.s.) states, "Justice is a very good attribute which every one must have. However, this justice is much more suitable than the rulers' orders; and piety is excellent and of much more importance than the learned ones." 174

God the Blessed and the Sublime has stated in the Zul-Qarnayn story in the Holy Quran,

"They ask thee concerning Zul-qarnain. Say, 'I will rehearse to you something of his story.' Verily We established his power on earth, and We gave him the ways and the means to all ends." The Holy Quran: Al-Kahf 18:83-84.

And goes on to say,

"Until, when he reached the setting of the sun,..." The Holy Quran: Al-Kahf 18:86.

Zul-Qarnayn entered a city where some people resided. Then God the Blessed the Sublime addressed him asking, "O Zul-Qarnayn! How would you treat these people?" He replied as we read,

"He stated: 'Whoever doth wrong, him shall we punish; then shall he be sent back to his Lord; and He will punish him with a punishment unheard-of (before). But whoever believes, and works righteousness, he shall have a goodly reward, and easy will be his task as We order it by our Command. Until, when he came to the rising of the sun, he found it rising on a people for whom We had provided no covering protection against the sun." The Holy Quran: Al-Kahf 18:87-90.

In that city he observed some poor and helpless people who complained that in that part of the city there resided some Bedouin people who committed acts of aggression and corruption. They asked him to set up a barrier between them and the oppressors so as to protect them from being bothered and harmed. Zul-Qarnayn agreed and decided to fulfill their request. The people wanted to prepare the means for doing this themselves, but he told them that there was no need for them to do so. He stated that he would use the wealth and blessings that God had granted to him and would pay for all expenses.

He only asked them to help him with their bodily strength in doing this task. Then Zul– Qarnayn built a barrier and thereby blocked the transgressors from attacking them. The aggressors could no longer continue their acts of aggression and corruption against the people. One of the benefits of telling the Quranic story of Zul–Qarnayn is that this would be a good moral lesson for all the kings and commanders up until the Resurrection Day. So, all those responsible for managing the affairs of the people should be just – that is the same thing as doing good to the good ones and punishing the bad ones.

- 1. Nahjul Balaghah, Letter No. 31.
- 2. Nahjul Balaghah, Letter No. 31.
- 3. Unlike most of the people who struggle to do the recommended acts, but forget about the obligatory acts.
- 4. Bihar ul-Anwar, 78/373.
- 5. Bihar ul-Anwar, 2/221.
- 6. Bihar ul-Anwar, 78/121.
- 7. Nahjul Balaghah, Words of Wisdom 425.
- 8. Bihar ul-Anwar, 21/135.
- 9. Al-Jamal by Sheikh Mofid, 415.
- 10. It is recorded in other narrations that the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) himself got control over the river.
- 11. Ansab ul-Ashraf, 2/298.
- 12. Tuhuf al-Ugool.
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- 80. Al-Khial, Narration No. 4-98.
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- هو صهل بن زنجلة بن أبي الصغدي الرازي أبو عمر الخياط قال في التقريب صدوق وذكره في تهذيب من جملة رواة وكيعبن الجراح الرواي عن <u>.160</u> ذكريا بن أبى زائدة. ومافى النسخ من "سهل بن نحرة" أو "سهل بن بحرة" تصحيف
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