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Lesson 7: Enjoining The Good And Forbidding The Evil

Importance of Enjoining Good and Forbidding Evil

وَلْتَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ

{وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ}

And there may spring from you a nation who invite to goodness, and enjoin right conduct and forbid indecency. Such are they who are successful. (Al Imran 3:104).

Enjoining right conduct means advice to do good and forbid indecency and to arrest or detain the doing of evil. The accomplishment of these two orders is not limited to a specific age group, and thus Luqman (pbuh) says to his son”

{يَا بُنَيَّ أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَانْهَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ}

O my dear son! Establish worship and enjoin kindness and forbid iniquity... (Luqman 31:17).

Enjoining good is a sign of love for the faith, love for the people, a desire for the wellbeing of society and a sign of freedom of expression, religious zeal, a friendly association with other people, a sign of an awakened natural instinct, general control and presence in the society.

Enjoining the good and forbidding the evil is the reason for encouragement of those who do good,

making aware those who were ignorant, being aware for the prevention of offenses and the formation of a form of societal control. The Holy Qur'an states

{كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ}

You are the best nation ever brought forth to men, bidding to honour, and forbidding dishonour (Al Imran 3: 110).

Imam Ali (pbuh) states that enjoining the good and forbidding the evil is in the interest of the public.^{[1](#)} Likewise in another narration, we read anyone who does not stand against evil is like someone who leaves an injured on the road until they pass away.^{[2](#)}

Prophets like David and Jesus peace upon them would curse upon those who do not stand against evil.

{لَعْنُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ عَلَى لِسَانِ دَاوُدَ وَعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ}

Cursed were the unbelievers of the Children of Israel by the tongue of David, and Jesus, Mary's son (Maida 5:78).

The revolution of Imam Hussein (pbuh) was for the enjoining the good and forbidding the evil, "I want to enjoin good and forbid evil".^{[3](#)}

Silence and indifference in the face of sin is the reason for the normalization of sinning, those who sin find courage, we become heavy hearted, Satan finds contentment and Allah ﷻ will be displeased with us.

The Holy Qur'an states that if you find yourself in the company of those who insult the Holy Qur'an, leave the company in protest until such time the conversation changes.

If one invites another to do good deed, a partnership in the reward is forged, but if in the face of corruption, deviation and sin we sit silently, step by step the corruption grows and corrupt and seditious individuals will end up governing society. One must at the onset of sin, not only show displeasure with the tongue and forbidding the evil, but also utilize all available legal avenues and abilities to end the continuation of evil.

Enjoining the good and forbidding the evil are two divinely ordained laws, and the imagination that *the sin that others do have nothing to do with me, and we should not take away the freedom of others, I am a shy and scared person, one change won't make any difference anyway, Jesus has his religion and Moses has his religion, we won't be buried in the same grave, there are others, why should I be the one forbidding evil?, by forbidding evil friends and customers will walk away*, and other examples like these, are not able to lift this responsibility from our shoulders.

Manners and Conditions

Enjoining the good and forbidding the evil must be done with knowledge, a soft heart, with wisdom, and even with a level of secrecy. Sometimes it is ourselves that must do the talking, but where we won't make any impression, the duty does not lapse, but rather we must seek the assistance of others so that they may speak up. Even if we can just for a small period of time forbid corruption, we must forbid it and if repetition can lead to a result, we must repeat.

Enjoining the good and forbidding the evil can be conducted in two ways:

1. Through general responsibility of everyone where all participate to the extent of their own abilities.
2. A responsibility of a group of organizations that are held responsible for and of the following up of such matters and are able to act upon such issues with power.

Such as the example of a driver that drives in the wrong direction, both the drivers of other vehicles object to the offending driver with their car horns and beam lights and also the police can issue punishments in line with the offence such infringement notices, impound the vehicle or withdraw the drivers license of the offender.

Enjoining The Good, Is A Sign Of The Best Nation

{كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ}

You are the best nation ever brought forth to men, bidding to honour, and forbidding dishonour, and believing in God. ... (Al Imran 3: 110).

This ayah points to the general requirement to enjoin good and forbid evil with conditions and points to consider including:

1. Being the best nation is not a slogan, enjoining good and forbidding evil with faith and belief: "You are the best nation... bidding".
2. A nation of silent and fearful people is not the best of nations: "You are the best nation... bidding.... forbidding".
3. Enjoining good and forbidding evil is of such importance it is a measure of distinction of the nation: "You are the best nation".
4. Enjoining good and forbidding evil is achieved once Muslims act as one nation, I.E. a sovereign nation: "You are the best nation".

5. Muslims are responsible for the reformation of all other communities: “brought forth to men”.
6. Advice to do good without the struggle to end evil comes to little fruition: “bidding to honor, and forbidding dishonor”.
7. Every member of the nation must contribute to enjoining good and forbidding evil (A nine-year-old girl has that entitlement over the president of the nation).
8. On the issue of enjoining good, age, location, race, literacy, economic or social status has no relevance: “You are the best nation... bidding.... forbidding”.
9. Muslims must be positioned to enjoin good and forbid evil with authority, not with weakness and entreaty: “Bidding”.
10. Enjoining good precedes forbidding evil: “Bidding... forbidding”.
11. Enjoining good and forbidding evil can be effective when its foundation is rooted in faith: “Bidding, forbidding... believing”.

Effects And Blessings

A hint at the effects and blessings of enjoining good and forbidding evil, even in the instance where it has no effect (on others), is indicated below:

1. Sometimes, the effect is not apparent immediately, but in history we see the nature and judgement of others have an effect. Such as the martyrdom of Imam Hussein^x in his mission to enjoin good and forbid evil, which has awakened the conscience of mankind throughout history.
2. Sometimes the bidding and forbidding is to protect the space for others. The call to prayers, the Adhan, is recommended even if there is no one to hear it. Stopping at a red traffic light is an obligation, even if there are no other cars. So the preservation of the law and space and the respect of the law, is an obligation.
3. Sometimes the sinner may not stop committing their sin, but successive reminders will leave a bitter taste in their mouth and at least would not be committing the sin with ease of mind, and one day, their conscience will awaken and be affected.
4. For the protection of freedom, it is necessary to enjoin good and forbid evil, for otherwise society will be turned into an environment of palpitation, fear, and silence.
5. Enjoining good and forbidding evil is for mankind a praiseworthy task, even if others do not listen. The Holy Qur'an states

{وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ قَوْلًا مِّمَّنْ دَعَا إِلَى اللَّهِ}

And who is better in speech than he who invites to Allah (Fusilat 41:33).

6. If we are not able to affect the actions of others, at least for our own sake it is a one form of nearness to Allahﷻ, inculcation, practicing bravery, facing pain and engagement.

7. Enjoining good will provide salvation from the wrath of Allahﷻ.

8. Enjoining and forbidding gives some form of contentment to consciousness, one would say to themselves that I have fulfilled my duty. This contentment is valuable, even if others do not listen.

Enjoining good and forbidding evil is the way of the Prophets, even if others did not listen. The Holy Qur'an states multiple times that people did not heed the warnings and right path of the Prophets and turned their backs against them. They fulfilled their religious duties and were martyred in the path of enjoining good and forbidding evil so that the Truth is not lost.

1. (Nahjul Balagha) Hikmah 252

2. (Kanz Ul Amal – كنز العمال) V3, P170

3. (Bihar Al Anwar بحار الأنوار) V44 p328

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