

Letter 69: To al-Harith (ibn `Abdillah, al-A`war) al-Hamdani

ومن كتاب له (عليه السلام)

إلى الحارث الهمداني

Adhere to the rope of the Qur'an and seek instructions from it. Regard its lawful as lawful and its unlawful as unlawful. Testify the right that has been in the past. Take lessons for the present condition of this world from the past (condition), because its one phase resembles the other, its end is to meet its beginning, and the whole of it is to change and depart. Regard the name of Allah as too great to mention Him, save in the matter of right. Remember death frequently and (what is to come) after death. Do not long for death except on a reliable condition.

وَتَمَسَّكَ بِحَبْلِ الْقُرْآنِ، وَانْتَصَحَهُ، وَأَجَلَ حَالَهُ، وَحَرَّمَ حَرَامَهُ، وَصَدَّقَ بِمَا سَلَفَ
مِنَ الْحَقِّ، وَاعْتَبَرَ بِمَا مَضَى مِنَ الدُّنْيَا لِـ مَا بَقِيَ مِنْهَا، فَإِنَّ بَعْضَهَا يُشَبِّهُ بَعْضًا،
وَأَخَرَهَا لِأَحَقِّ بِأَوَّلِهَا! وَكُلُّهَا حَائِلٌ مُفَارِقٌ.

وَعَظَّمَ اسْمَ اللَّهِ أَنْ تَذْكُرَهُ إِلَّا عَلَى حَقٍّ . وَأَكْثَرَ ذِكْرَ الْمَوْتِ وَمَا بَعْدَ الْمَوْتِ، وَلَا
تَتَمَنَّ الْمَوْتَ إِلَّا بِشَرِّطٍ وَثِيقٍ.

Avoid every action which the doer likes for his own self but dislikes for the Muslims in general. Avoid every such action which is performed in secret and from which shame is felt in the open. Also avoid that action about which if the doer is questioned he himself regards it bad or offers excuses for it. Do not expose your honour to be treated as the subject of people's discussions. Do not relate to the people all that you hear, for that would amount to falsehood.

Do not contest all that the people relate to you for that would mean ignorance. Kill your anger and forgive when you have power (to punish). Show forbearance in the moment of rage, and pardon in spite of authority; the eventual end will then be in your favour. Seek good out of every favour that Allah has bestowed on you, and do not waste any favour of Allah over you. The effect of Allah's favours over you should be visible on you.

وَاحْذَرُ كُلَّ عَمَلٍ يَرْضَاهُ صَاحِبُهُ لِنَفْسِهِ، وَيُكْرَهُ لِعَامَّةِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ، وَاحْذَرُ كُلَّ عَمَلٍ يُعْمَلُ بِهِ فِي السِّرِّ، وَيُسْتَحَى مِنْهُ فِي الْعَلَانِيَةِ، وَاحْذَرُ كُلَّ عَمَلٍ إِذَا سُئِلَ عَنْهُ صَاحِبُهُ أَنْكَرَهُ أَوْ اعْتَذَرَ مِنْهُ. وَلَا تَجْعَلْ عَرْضَكَ غَرَضًا لِنَبَالِ الْقَوْلِ، وَلَا تُحَدِّثِ النَّاسَ بِكُلِّ مَا سَمِعْتَ بِهِ، فَكَفَى بِذَلِكَ كَذِبًا، وَلَا تَرُدَّ عَلَى النَّاسِ كُلِّ مَا حَدَّثُوكَ بِهِ، فَكَفَى بِذَلِكَ جَهْلًا. وَاكْظِمِ الْغَيْظَ، وَاحْلُمْ عِنْدَ الْغَضَبِ، وَتَجَاوَزْ عِنْدَ الْمَقْدَرَةِ، وَاصْفَحْ مَعَ الدَّوْلَةِ، تَكُنْ لَكَ الْعَاقِبَةُ. وَاسْتَصْلِحْ كُلَّ نِعْمَةٍ أَنْعَمَهَا اللَّهُ عَلَيْكَ، وَلَا تُضَيِّعَنَّ نِعْمَةً مِنْ نِعَمِ اللَّهِ عِنْدَكَ، وَلْيُرَ عَلَيْكَ أَثَرُ مَا أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ بِهِ عَلَيْكَ.

Know that the most distinguished among the believers is he who is the most forward of them in spending from himself, his family and his property, because whatever good you send forward Will remain in store for you and the benefit of whatever you keep behind will be derived by others. Avoid the company of the person whose opinion is unsound and whose action is detestable, because a man is judged after his companion.

وَأَعْلَمْ أَنَّ أَفْضَلَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَفْضَلُهُمْ تَقْدِمَةً مِنْ نَفْسِهِ وَأَهْلِهِ وَمَالِهِ، فَإِنَّكَ مَا تَقَدَّمْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ يَبْقَى لَكَ ذَخْرُهُ، وَمَا تُؤَخِّرُهُ يَكُنْ لِغَيْرِكَ خَيْرُهُ. وَاحْذَرُ صَحَابَةَ مَنْ يَفِيلُ رَأْيُهُ، وَيُنْكَرُ عَمَلُهُ، فَإِنَّ الصَّاحِبَ عَتَبَرُ صَاحِبِهِ.

Live in big cities because they are collective centres of the Muslims. Avoid places of neglectfulness and wickedness and places where there are paucity of supporters for the obedience of Allah. Confine your thinking to matters which are helpful to you. Do not sit in the marketing centres because they are the meeting-places of Satan, and targets of mischiefs. Frequently look at those over whom you enjoy

superiority because this is a way of giving thanks.

وَأَسْكُنِ الْأَمْصَارَ فَإِنَّهَا جَمَاعُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ، وَاحْذَرْ مَنَازِلَ الْغَفْلَةِ وَالْجَفَاءِ
وَقَلَّةِ الْأَعْوَانِ عَلَى طَاعَةِ اللَّهِ، وَأَقْصِرْ رَأْيَكَ عَلَى مَا يَعْينُكَ، وَإِيَّاكَ وَمَقَاعِدَ
الْأَسْوَاقِ، فَإِنَّهَا مَحَاضِرُ الشَّيْطَانِ وَمَعَارِضُ الْفِتَنِ. وَأَكْثِرْ أَنْ تَنْظُرَ إِلَى مَنْ
فُضِّلَتْ عَلَيْهِ، فَإِنَّ ذَلِكَ مِنْ أَبْوَابِ الشُّكْرِ.

Do not undertake a journey on Friday until you have attended the prayers, except when you are going in the way of Allah, or in an excusable matter. Obey Allah in all your affairs because Allah's obedience has precedence over all other things. Deceive your heart into worshipping, persuade it and do not force it. Engage it (in worshipping) when it is free and merry, except as regards the obligations enjoined upon you, for they should not be neglected and must be performed at the five times. Be on guard lest death comes down upon you while you have fled away from your Lord in search of worldly pleasure. Avoid the company of the wicked because vice adjoins vice. Regard Allah as great, and love His lovers. Keep off anger because it is one large army from Satan's armies; and that is an end to the matter.

وَلَا تُسَافِرْ فِي يَوْمِ جُمُعَةٍ حَتَّى تَشْهَدَ الصَّلَاةَ إِلَّا فَاصِلًا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ، أَوْ فِي أَمْرٍ
تُعْذَرُ بِهِ. وَأَطِعِ اللَّهَ فِي جَمَلِ أُمُورِكَ، فَإِنَّ طَاعَةَ اللَّهِ فَاضِلَةٌ عَلَى مَا سِوَاهَا.
وَخَادِعِ نَفْسَكَ فِي الْعِبَادَةِ، وَارْفُقْ بِهَا وَلَا تَقْهَرْهَا، وَخُذْ عَفْوَهَا وَنَشَاطَهَا، إِلَّا مَا
كَانَ مَكْتُوبًا عَلَيْكَ مِنَ الْفَرِيضَةِ، فَإِنَّهُ لَا بُدَّ مِنْ قَضَائِهَا وَتَعَاهُدهَا عِنْدَ مَحَلِّهَا.
وَإِيَّاكَ أَنْ يَنْزِلَ بِكَ الْمَوْتُ وَأَنْتَ أَبْقٍ (1) مِنْ رَبِّكَ فِي طَلَبِ الدُّنْيَا، وَإِيَّاكَ
وَمُصَاحَبَةَ الْفُسَّاقِ، فَإِنَّ الشَّرَّ بِالشَّرِّ مُلْحَقٌ. وَوَقِّرِ اللَّهَ، وَأَحْبِبْ أَحِبَّاءَهُ، وَاحْذَرْ
الْغَضَبَ، فَإِنَّهُ جُنْدٌ عَظِيمٌ مِنْ جُنُودِ إِبْلِيسَ، وَالسَّلَامُ.