

Section 8: Allah is Forgiving and the Lord of Mercy

Surah Al-Kahf – Verses 54 – 55

وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَا فِي هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ لِلنَّاسِ مِنْ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ وَكَانَ الْإِنْسَانُ أَكْثَرَ شَيْءٍ جَدَلًا

وَمَا مَنَعَ النَّاسَ أَنْ يُؤْمِنُوا إِذْ جَاءَهُمُ الْهُدَىٰ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّهُمْ إِلَّا أَنْ تَأْتِيَهُمْ سُنَّةٌ
الْأَوَّلِينَ أَوْ يَأْتِيَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ قُبُلًا

54. “And indeed We have explained in this Qur'an every kind of similitude for mankind, but man, of most things, is contentious.”

55. “And naught prevented men from believing when the guidance came unto them, and seeking their Lord's forgiveness, except that the wont of the ancients should come upon them, or that the chastisement should come face to face with them.”

The Qur'anic term /sarrafna/, in this verse, means that ‘We have spoken to them in different statements and through any style and logic which may affect on them’.

The Arabic word /jidal/ means ‘dispute’ in a form of conflict and demand of preference.

Beside the positive qualities the man has, like having a divine spirit, being superior to the angels with their prostration unto him, having the ability of penetration and subjecting the existence to himself, and the like of them, he has also many negative epithets, such as disputation, which have been referred to in the verses of the Qur'an.

Then, in this holy verse: the Qur'an deduces a kind of conclusion from the last discussions, and it also hints to the coming discussions.

At first, it says:

“And indeed We have explained in this Qur'an every kind of similitude for mankind...”

These explanations include the shaking history of the old nations and the painful events of their lives, and that what happened before. They were described for the people whether they were sweet or bitter. The affairs were so much detailed that those hearts which were receptive and eager to receive the truth, might grasp the truth, and there remained no room for obscurity.

Yet, some rebellious arrogant people never believed, because man, more than anything else, tends to dispute.

The verse says:

“...but man, of most things, is contentious.”

Then, in the next verse, it implies that with these many different examples and through some shaking statements and various logical reasoning, which must absorb any receptive person, again a great group of people did not believe.

Of course, nothing restrained them that when the Divine guidance came to them they would believe and seek forgiveness from their Lord, save that they acted obstinately as if they wanted the fate of the ancient to come for them, too, or the divine punishment should come in front of them and they see it by their own eyes.

The verse says:

“And naught prevented men from believing when the guidance came unto them, and seeking their Lord's forgiveness, except that the wont of the ancients should come upon them, or that the chastisement should come face to face with them.”

In fact, the abovementioned verse points to this fact that this arrogant and obstinate group will never believe with their willing and decision. They may believe only in two circumstances. The first is at the time when the painful punishments, which seized the ancient nations, surround them.

The second circumstance is that they do see the divine punishment with their own eyes. This constrained faith, of course, will be worthless.

Surah Al-Kahf – Verse 56

وَمَا نُرْسِلُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ إِلَّا مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنْذِرِينَ وَيُجَادِلُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِالْبَاطِلِ لِيُدْحِضُوا بِهِ الْحَقَّ وَاتَّخَذُوا آيَاتِي وَمَا أُنذِرُوا هُزُوًا

56. “And We do not send the messengers save as bearers of good tidings and warners, but those who disbelieve dispute with falsehood in order to refute the Truth thereby; and they have taken My signs, and what they are warned of, in mockery.”

The prophets’ mission is to give glad tidings to the believers and to warn the disobedient, but with no compulsion upon people to accept the Truth. It is by the prophets (as) that Allah completes the argument to humankind.

By the way, awareness of Allah’s way of treatment and the prophets’ messengership, the reaction of people, and the end of the arrogant nations, is a kind of consolation for the Prophet (S). Therefore, in order to comfort the Prophet (S) against the arrogance and obstinacy of the opponents, the Qur’an says that his duty is only to give good tidings and to warn.

The verse says:

“And We do not send the messengers save as bearers of good tidings and warners...”

Then the verse implies that this is not a new matter that such people oppose the Truth and mock it, but disbelievers always dispute with falsehood. They imagine that they can refute the Truth with it and, therefore, they take Allah’s revelations and His punishments, which they are promised to, in mockery.

The verse says:

“...but those who disbelieve dispute with falsehood in order to refute the Truth thereby; and they have taken My signs, and what they are warned of, in mockery.”

In fact, their dispute on the way of proving the falsehood was to force the Prophet (S) to bring some verses and miracles alongside their desires, so that if he did not do as they wished, they would take it as a proof and introduce his Book, the Qur’an, invalid. Thus, the disbelievers used to apply the Qur’an, the Resurrection, and the Fire of Hell as a means of mockery.

Surah Al-Kahf – Verse 57

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ ذُكِّرَ بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِ فَأَعْرَضَ عَنْهَا وَنَسِيَ مَا قَدَّمَتْ يَدَاهُ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا
عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ أَكِنَّةً أَنْ يَفْقَهُوهُ وَفِي آذَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا وَإِنْ تَدْعُهُمْ إِلَى الْهُدَى فَلَنْ يَهْتَدُوا
إِذَا أَبَدًا

57. “And who is more unjust than he who is reminded of the signs of his Lord, then he turns away from them and forgets what his hands have forwarded? Verily We have laid veils on their hearts lest they understand it, and a heaviness in their ears: and if you call them unto guidance, even then will they never get guided in that case at all.”

Being heedless to the divine revelations, and having no contemplation on them, is the greatest injustice.

So, in this holy verse, the Qur'an says:

“And who is more unjust than he who is reminded of the signs of his Lord, then he turns away from them and forgets what his hands have forwarded?...”

The application of the term /*ukkira*/ (is reminded) in the verse, perhaps, is an indication to this meaning that the prophets' teachings are of the remembrance of the facts which have existed naturally in the depths of man's soul. The mission of prophets is to make these facts manifest.

In this regard, Imam Ali-ibn-Abitalib (as), qualifying the divine prophets, says:

*“...Allah sent His prophets toward them (people) to get them fulfill the pledges of His creation, to recall to them His bounties...”*¹

It is interesting that, in this verse, the Qur'an teaches the lesson of awareness to these inwardly blind persons in three ways. The first is that these facts are quietly acquainted with their nature and conscience.

The second is that they have come from the side of their Lord. And the third is that they should not forget that they have committed some faults in their lives, and the mission of the divine prophets is to wash them out from them.

But these arrogant people, with all these indications and implications, will never believe, because the veil of sin has been laid on their hearts, and the veil of heaviness of crime has been laid on their ears and, therefore, they do not hear the sound of the Truth.

Similar to this meaning, Surah Luqman, No. 31, through verse 7 says:

“And when Our revelations are recited to him, he turns back proudly, as if he had not heard them...”

In other words, it is like that the veils of lust, imitation from their fathers, and the temptations of Satans and men, have fallen on their hearts and, consequently, they have lost their wisdom so that they never understand and they never regret from their indecent actions and, therefore, never they renounce them.

They show that, as a deaf person, they have not heard it. Such people have lost the eligibility of being guided and have plunged in aberration.

It is in this case that Allah informs His Messenger (S) that if he invites them to the guidance and felicity, they will never be guided and they will never believe that this information has been proved. So they finally passed away with infidelity.

The verse says:

“... Verily We have laid veils on their hearts lest they understand it, and a heaviness in their ears: and if you call them unto guidance, even then will they never get guided in that case at all.”

Surah Al-Kahf – Verses 58 – 59

وَرَبُّكَ الْغَفُورُ ذُو الرَّحْمَةِ لَوْ يُؤَاخِذُهُمْ بِمَا كَسَبُوا لَعَجَّلَ لَهُمُ الْعَذَابَ بَلْ لَهُمْ مَوْعِدٌ
لَنْ يَجِدُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ مَوْئِلًا

وَتِلْكَ الْقُرَى أَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ لَمَّا ظَلَمُوا وَجَعَلْنَا لِمَهْلِكِهِمْ مَوْعِدًا

58. “And your Lord is Forgiving, the Lord of Mercy. Were He to seize them (to task) for what they earn, surely He would hasten for them the chastisement; but for them is an appointed term, never shall they find, besides it, a refuge.”

59. “And (as for the people of) these towns, We destroyed them when they did wrong and We appointed a time for their destruction.

The Qur’anic term /mu’il/ means: ‘a refuge, and a means of safety’. Allah (s.w.t.) is both just and All-Forgiving. His justice requires that the sinners must be punished, but, because of His Forgiveness, He respites man to repent. Then if he does not repent, He will treat him with His justice.

Thus; the manner of Allah (s.w.t.) in training men is that He respites them up to the last stage and, unlike to the arrogant people of the world, He never punishes them promptly, but His All-embracing Mercy always requires that He gives the evil-doers the maximum respite.

In this verse, the Qur'an says:

“And your Lord is Forgiving, the Lord of Mercy. Were He to seize them (to task) for what they earn, surely He would hasten for them the chastisement...”

Allah's remission necessitates that He forgives the repentant, and His Mercy requires that He does not hasten in the punishment of other than them, maybe they may join the group of repentant ones, while His justice also requires that when their insolence and disobedience reached its last degree, He might clear their account.

The verse continues saying:

“...but for them is an appointed term, never shall they find, besides it, a refuge.”

Then, finally, in the next verse, for the last admonition and warning in these series of verses, the Qur'an has pointed to the bitter and painful fate of the former disobedient transgressors.

It implies that these are cities the ruins of which are before their eyes, and when they committed cruelty and inequity, Allah destroyed them, while He did not make haste in their punishment but He (s.w.t.) fixed an appointed time for their destruction.

The verse says:

“And (as for the people of) these towns, We destroyed them when they did wrong and We appointed a time for their destruction.”

However, the objective meaning of the words 'these towns', mentioned in the verse, is the people of the towns of 'Ad and Thamud, and the like of them, who were destroyed as the result of their rejecting the prophets and their denying the Divine revelations.

1. Nahjul-Balaqah, Sermon One, Allah chooses His Prophets

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