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Sermon 121: This is the reward of one who breaks a pledge....

After Laylatu'l Harir (in Siffin)

A man from among the companions of Amir al-mu'minin stood up and said, "O Amir al-mu'minin, you first stopped us from Arbitration and thereafter gave order for it. We do not know which of these two was more appropriate." Amir al-mu'minin struck one hand over the other and said:

(ومن كلام له (عليه السلام

بعد ليلة الهير

وقد قام رجل من أصحابه فقال: نهيتنا عن الحكومة ثم أمرتنا بها، فما ندري أي الأمرين أرشد؟

فصفق (عليه السلام) إحدى يديه على الأخرى ثم قال

This is the reward of one who breaks a pledge. By Allah, when I gave you my orders (namely) to abide by arbitration I had led you to an undesirable thing (namely war) in which Allah had ordained good. If you had been steadfast I would have guided you, if you had been bent I would have straightened you and if you had refused I would have rectified you. This was the surest way. But with whom and to whom? I wanted my treatment from you but you proved to be my disease, like the extractor of thorn with the thorn when he knows that the thorn bends towards itself.

My God, the physicians have despaired of this fatal ailment and water-drawers have become tired with the rope of this well.

هَذَا جَزَاءُ مَنْ تَرَكَ الْعُقْدَةَ! أَمَّا وَاللَّهِ لَوْ أَنِّي حِينَ أَمَرْتُكُمْ بِمَا أَمَرْتُكُمْ بِهِ حَمَلْتُكُمْ عَلَى الْمَكْرُوهِ الَّذِي يَجْعَلُ اللَّهُ فِيهِ خَيْرًا، فَإِنْ اسْتَقَمْتُمْ هَدَيْتُكُمْ وَإِنْ اعْوَجَجْتُمْ قَوْمْتُكُمْ وَإِنْ أَبَيْتُمْ تَدَارَكْتُكُمْ، لَكَانَتْ الْوُثْقَى، وَلَكِنْ بِمَنْ وَإِلَى مَنْ؟ أُرِيدُ أَنْ أَدَاوِيَ بِكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ دَائِي، كَنَاقِشِ الشُّوْكَةِ بِالشُّوْكَةِ، وَهُوَ يَعْلَمُ أَنَّ ضَلْعَهَا مَعَهَا

اللَّهُمَّ قَدْ مَلَّتْ أَطْبَاءُ هَذَا الدَّاءِ الدَّوِي، وَكَلَّتِ النَّزْعَةُ بِأَشْطَانِ الرَّكِيِّ

Where [1](#) are those who were invited to Islam and they accepted it? They read the Qur'an and decided according to it. They were exhorted to fight and they leapt (towards it) as she-camels leap towards their young. They took their swords out of the sheaths and went out into the world in groups and rows. Some of them perished and some survived. The good news of survival does not please them nor do they get condoled about the dead. Their eyes have turned white with weeping. Their bellies are emaciated because of fasting. Their lips are dry because of (constant) praying. Their colour is pale because of wakefulness. Their faces bear the dust of God-fearing. These are my comrades who have departed. We should be justified if we feel eager for them and bite our hands in their separation.

أَيُّ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ دُعُوا إِلَى الْإِسْلَامِ فَقَبِلُوهُ؟ وَقَرَأُوا الْقُرْآنَ فَأَحْكَمُوهُ؟ وَهَيَّجُوا إِلَى الْجِهَادِ فَوَلَّوْهُا اللَّفَّاحَ أَوْلَادَهَا، وَسَلَبُوا السُّيُوفَ أَعْمَادَهَا، وَأَخَذُوا بِأَطْرَافِ الْأَرْضِ زَحْفًا زَحْفًا وَصَفًا صَفًّا؛! بَعْضُ هَٰلِكَ، وَبَعْضُ نَجَا

لَا يُبَشِّرُونَ بِالْأَحْيَاءِ، وَلَا يُعَزَّوْنَ عَنِ الْمَوْتَى، مُرُّهُ الْعُيُونِ مِنَ الْبُكَاءِ، خُمُصُ الْبُطُونِ مِنَ الصِّيَامِ، ذُبُلُ الشَّفَاهِ مِنَ الدُّعَاءِ، صُفْرُ الْأَلْوَانِ مِنَ السَّهْرِ، عَلَى وَجُوهِهِمْ غَيْرَةُ الْخَاشِعِينَ، أَوْلَيْكَ إِخْوَانِي الدَّاهِيُونَ، فَحَقٌّ لَنَا أَنْ نَنْظُمًا إِلَيْهِمْ! وَنَعَضُ الْأَيْدِيَ عَلَى فِرَاقِهِمْ

Certainly, Satan has made his ways easy for you and wants to unfasten the knots of religion one by one and to cause division among you in place of unity. Keep away from his evil ideas and enchantments and accept good advice of one who offers it to you and preserve it in your minds.

إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ يُسَنِّي لَكُمْ طُرُقَهُ، وَيُرِيدُ أَنْ يَحُلَّ دِينَكُمْ عُقْدَةً عُقْدَةً، وَيُعْطِيَكُمْ بِالْجَمَاعَةِ الْفُرْقَةَ، وَبِالْفُرْقَةِ الْفِتْنَةَ؛ فَاصْدِفُوا عَنْ نَزَغَاتِهِ وَتَفَنَّنَاتِهِ، وَاقْبَلُوا النَّصِيحَةَ مِمَّنْ أَهْدَاها إِلَيْكُمْ، وَاعْقِلُوهَا عَلَى أَنْفُسِكُمْ

Alternative Sources for Sermon 121

(1) Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, *al-'Iqd*, II, 165;

(2) Ibn Talhah, *Matalib*, I, 100;

(3) al-Mufid, *al-'Irshad*, 139;

(4) al-Mufid, *al-'Ikhtisas*, 153, quoted from Ibn Da'b's work;

(5) al-Tabarsi, *al-'Ihtijaj*, I, 273;

(6) al-Zamakhshari, *Rabi'*, I, 130;

(7) al-'Amidi, *Ghurar*;

(8) al-Tusi, *al-'Amali*, * 135.

1. Although all those who fought under the banner of Amir al-mu'minin were called Shi'ahs of `Ali, yet only those who had tears in their eyes, paleness on their faces, the Qur'anic verses on their tongues, zeal of religion in their hearts, steadfastness in their feet, determination and courage in their spirits, and patience and endurance in their minds could in true sense be called Shi'ahs of `Ali. These were the people in whose separation Amir al-mu'minin's feelings were coming out in the shape of sighs through the breath, while the flames of the fire of separation were consuming his heart and spirit. These were the people who leapt towards death like mad men and did not feel happy if they survived. Rather, their heart's slogan was as the Persian hemistich says: We are ashamed why we have remained alive.

He who has even a slight brilliance of these qualities can alone be called the follower of the Descendants of the Prophet or the Shi'ah of `Ali, otherwise it would be a word which has lost its meaning and been bereft of its dignity through misuse.

Thus tradition has it that Amir al-mu'minin saw a group of men at his door and enquired from Qanbar who they were and he answered they were his Shi'ahs. On hearing this Amir al-mu'minin had a frown on his forehead and said. "Why are they called Shi'ahs? They have no sign of Shi'ahs." Thereupon Qanbar enquired what were the signs of Shi'ahs and Amir al-mu'minin replied:

Their bellies are thin through hunger, their lips dry through thirst and their eyes bleared through weeping.

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