

Sermon 173: The Prophet (S) is the trustee of Allah's revelation....

On eligibility for the Caliphate

(ومن خطبة له (عليه السلام

(في رسول الله (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم

ومن هو جدير بأن يكون للخلافة وفي هوان الدنيا

The Prophet (S) is the trustee of Allah's revelation, the Last of His Prophets. the giver of tidings of His mercy and the warner for His chastisement.

أَمِينٌ وَحِيٍّ، وَخَاتَمُ رُسُلِهِ، وَشِيرُ رَحْمَتِهِ، وَنَذِيرُ نِقْمَتِهِ.

O people! The most rightful of all persons for this matter (namely the caliphate) is he who is most competent among them to maintain it, and he who knows best Allah's commands about it. If any mischief is created by a mischief-monger, he will be called upon to repent. If he refuses, he will be fought.

By my life, ¹ if the question of Imamah was not to be decided unless all the people were present, then there would be no such case. But those who agreed about it imposed the decision on those who were absent, so much so that he who was present could not dissent and the one who was absent could not choose (any one else). Know that I shall fight two persons – one who claims what is not his and the other who ignores what is obligatory upon him.

أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ، إِنَّ أَحَقَّ النَّاسِ بِهَذَا الْأَمْرِ أَقْوَاهُمْ عَلَيْهِ، وَأَعْلَمُهُمْ بِأَمْرِ اللَّهِ فِيهِ، فَإِنْ شَغَبَ شَاغِبٌ اسْتُعْتَبَ، فَإِنْ أَبَى قُوتِلَ.

وَلَعَمْرِي، لَئِنْ كَانَتْ الْأَمَامَةُ لَا تَنْعَقِدُ حَتَّى يَحْضُرَهَا عَامَّةُ النَّاسِ، [ف] مَا إِلَى ذَلِكَ سَبِيلٌ، وَلَكِنْ أَهْلُهَا يَحْكُمُونَ عَلَى مَنْ غَابَ عَنْهَا، ثُمَّ لَيْسَ لِلشَّاهِدِ أَنْ يَرْجِعَ، وَلَا لِلْغَائِبِ أَنْ يَخْتَارَ. أَلَا وَإِنِّي أُقَاتِلُ رَجُلَيْنِ: رَجُلًا ادَّعَى مَا لَيْسَ لَهُ، وَآخَرَ مَنَعَ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِ.

The need for sagacity in fighting against Muslims

O creatures of Allah! I advise you to have fear of Allah because it is the best advice to be mutually given by persons, and the best of all things before Allah. The door of war has been opened between you and the other Muslims. And this banner will be borne only by him who is a man of sight, of endurance and of knowledge of the position of rightfulness. Therefore, you should go ahead with what you are ordered and desist from what you are refrained. Do not make haste in any matter till you have clarified it. For in the case of every matter which you dislike we have a right to change it.

أَوْصِيَكُمْ عِيَادَ اللَّهِ بِتَقْوَى اللَّهِ، فَإِنَّهُ [١] خَيْرُ مَا تَوَاصَى الْعِبَادُ بِهِ، وَخَيْرُ عَوَاقِبِ الْأُمُورِ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ، وَقَدْ فُتِحَ بَابُ الْحَرْبِ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَ أَهْلِ الْقِبْلَةِ، وَلَا يَحْمِلُ هَذَا الْعِلْمَ إِلَّا أَهْلُ الْبَصَرِ وَالصَّبْرِ وَالْعِلْمِ بِمَوَاضِعِ الْحَقِّ، فَاْمْضُوا لِمَا تُؤْمَرُونَ بِهِ، وَقِفُوا عِنْدَ مَا تُنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ، وَلَا تَعْجَلُوا فِي أَمْرٍ حَتَّى تَتَبَّعْتُمُوهُ، فَإِنْ لَنَا مَعَ كُلِّ أَمْرٍ تُنْكَرُونَهُ غَيْرًا

The behaviour of this world with its adherents

هوان الدنيا

Know that this world which you have started to covet and in which you are interested, and which sometimes enrages you and sometimes pleases you is not your (permanent) abode, nor the place of your stay for which you might have been created, nor one to which you have been invited. Know that it will not last for you nor will you live along with it. If anything out of this world deceives you (into attraction), its evils warn you too.

You should give up (the objects of) its deceits in favour of (the objects of) its warning and (the objects of) its attractions in favour of (the objects of) its terrors. And while here in it, advance towards that house to which you have been called, and turn away your hearts from the world. None of you should cry like a maid slave over anything which she has been deprived of. Seek the perfection of Allah's bounty over you by endurance in obedience to Allah and in guarding what He has asked you to guard, namely His Book.

أَلَا وَإِنَّ هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا الَّتِي أَصْبَحْتُمْ تَتَمَنُّونَهَا وَتَرْغَبُونَ فِيهَا، وَأَصْبَحَتْ تُغْضِبُكُمْ وَتُرْضِيكُمْ، لَيْسَتْ بِدَارِكُمْ، وَلَا مَنْزِلَكُمْ
الَّذِي خُلِقْتُمْ لَهُ وَلَا الَّذِي دُعِيتُمْ إِلَيْهِ، أَلَا وَإِنَّهَا لَيْسَتْ بِبَاقِيَةٍ لَكُمْ وَلَا تَبْقَوْنَ عَلَيْهَا، وَهِيَ وَإِنْ غَرَّتْكُمْ مِنْهَا فَقَدْ حَذَرْتَكُمْ
شَرَّهَا، فَدَعُوا غُرُورَهَا لِتَحْذِيرِهَا، وَأَطْمَاعَهَا لِتَخْوِيفِهَا، وَسَاقُوا فِيهَا إِلَى الدَّارِ الَّتِي دُعِيتُمْ إِلَيْهَا، وَانْصَرَفُوا بِقُلُوبِكُمْ
عَنْهَا، وَلَا يَخْنَنَّ أَحَدُكُمْ خَنِينَ الْأَمَةِ عَلَى مَا زُوِيَ عَنْهُ مِنْهَا، وَاسْتَتَمُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ بِالصَّبْرِ عَلَى طَاعَةِ اللَّهِ
وَالْمُحَافَظَةِ عَلَى مَا اسْتَحْفَظَكُمْ مِنْ كِتَابِهِ.

Know that the loss of anything of this world will not harm you, if you have guarded the principles of your religion. Know also that after the loss of your religion nothing of this world for which you have cared will benefit you. May Allah carry our hearts and your hearts towards the right and may He grant us and you endurance.

أَلَا وَإِنَّهُ لَا يَضُرُّكُمْ تَضْيِيعُ شَيْءٍ مِنْ دُنْيَاكُمْ بَعْدَ حِفْظِكُمْ قَائِمَةَ دِينِكُمْ، أَلَا وَإِنَّهُ لَا يَنْفَعُكُمْ بَعْدَ تَضْيِيعِ دِينِكُمْ شَيْءٌ
حَافِظْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَمْرِ دُنْيَاكُمْ، أَخَذَ اللَّهُ بِقُلُوبِنَا وَقُلُوبِكُمْ إِلَى الْحَقِّ، وَاللَّهُمَّ وَإِيَّاكُمْ الصَّبْرَ!

Alternative Sources for Sermon 173

(1) Al-Harrani, *Tuhaf*, 130;

(2) Abu Ja'far al-'Iskafi, *Naqd al-'Uthmaniyyah*, see Ibn Abi al-Hadid, II, 171–173.

1. When the people collected in the Saqifah of Banu Sa'idah in connection with the election, even those who were not present there were made to follow the decision taken there, and the principle was adopted that those present at the election had no right to reconsider the matter or to break the allegiance and those not present could do nothing but acquiesce in the agreed decision. But when the people of Medina swore allegiance at the hands of Amir al-mu'minin, the Governor of Syria (Mu'awiyah) refused to follow suit on the ground that since he was not present on the occasion he was not bound to abide by it, whereupon Amir al-mu'minin gave a reply in this sermon on the basis of these accepted and agreed principles and conditions which had been established among these people and had become incontrovertible namely that: "When the people of Medina and the ansar and the muhajirun have sworn allegiance on my hand, Mu'awiyah had no right to keep aloof from it on the ground that he was not present on the occasions nor were Talhah and az-Zubayr entitled to break the pledge after swearing allegiance."

On this occasion, Amir al-mu'minin did not argue on the strength of any saying of the Prophet which would serve as his final say about the caliphate, because the grounds for refusal in his case was in respect of the modus operandi of the principle of election. Therefore, in keeping with the requirements of the situation a reply based on the agreed principles of the adversary could alone quieten him. Even if he had argued on the strength of the Prophet's command it would have been subjected to various interpretations and the matter would have been prolonged instead of being settled. Again Amir al-mu'minin had seen that soon after the death of the Prophet all his sayings and commands had been set aside. Therefore, how after the lapse of a long time, could one be expected to accept it when habit had been established to follow one's free will against the Prophet's sayings.

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