

Sermon 17: Among all the people the most detested before Allah are two persons...

About those who sit for dispensation of justice among people but are not fit for it.

(ومن كلام له) عليه السلام

في صفة من يتصدّى للحكم بين الأمة وليس لذلك بأهل

Among¹ all the people the most detested before Allah are two persons. One is he who is devoted to his self. So he is deviated from the true path and loves speaking about (foul) innovations and inviting towards wrong path. He is therefore a nuisance for those who are enamoured of him, is himself misled from the guidance of those preceding him, misleads those who follow him in his life or after his death, carries the weight of others' sins and is entangled in his own misdeeds.

انَّ أَبْغَضَ الْخَلَائِقِ إِلَى اللَّهِ تَعَالَى رَجُلٌ وَكَلَّهُ اللَّهُ إِلَى نَفْسِهِ فَهُوَ جَائِرٌ عَنْ قَصْدِ السَّبِيلِ مَشْغُوفٌ بِكَلَامِ بِدْعَةٍ
وَدُعَاءِ ضَلَالٍ، فَهُوَ فِتْنَةٌ لِمَنِ افْتَنَ بِهِ، ضَالٌّ عَنْ هَدِيٍّ مِنْ كَانَ قَبْلَهُ، مُضِلٌّ لِمَنِ افْتَنَ بِهِ فِي حَيَاةٍ وَيَدْعُ وَفَاتَهُ،
حَمَالٌ خَطَايَا غَيْرِهِ، رَهْنٌ بِخَطَايَتِهِ

The other man is he who has picked up ignorance. He moves among the ignorant, is senseless in the thick of mischief and is blind to the advantages of peace. Those resembling like men have named him scholar but he is not so. He goes out early morning to collect things whose deficiency is better than plenty, till when he has quenched his thirst from polluted water and acquired meaningless things, he sits among the people as a judge responsible for solving whatever is confusing to the others.

If an ambiguous problem is presented before him he manages shabby argument about it of his own accord and passes judgement on its basis. In this way he is entangled in the confusion of doubts as in

the spider's web, not knowing whether he was right or wrong. If he is right he fears lest he erred, while if he is wrong he hopes he is right. He is ignorant, wandering astray in ignorance and riding on carriages aimlessly moving in darkness. He did not try to find reality of knowledge. He scatters the traditions as the wind scatters the dry leaves.

وَرَجُلٌ قَمَشَ جَهْلًا مُوضِعٌ فِي جُهَالِ الْأَمَةِ غَادِرٌ فِي أَغْبَاشِ الْفِتْنَةِ، عِمِّيْمَا فِي عَقْدِ الْهُدْنَةِ قَدْ سَمَاهُ أَشْبَاهُ النَّاسِ عَالِمًا وَلَيْسَ بِهِ، بَكَرَ فَاسْتَكْثَرَ مِنْ جَمْعٍ، مَا قَلَّ مِنْهُ خَيْرٌ مِمَّا كَثُرَ، حَتَّى إِذَا ارْتَوَى مِنْ مَاءِ آجِنَكِ، وَأَكْثَرُ مِنْ غَيْرِ طَائِلٍ جَلَسَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ قَاضِيًّا ضَامِنًا لِتَحْلِيقِ مَا التَّبَسَ عَلَى غَيْرِهِ. فَإِنْ نَزَّلَتْ بِهِ إِحْدَى الْمُبْهَمَاتِ هَيَّاً لَهَا حَشُورًا رَثًا مِنْ رَأْيِهِ، ثُمَّ قَطَعَ بِهِ، فَهُوَ مِنْ لَبْسِ الشُّبُهَاتِ فِي مِثْلِ نَسْجِ الْعَنْكُبُوتِ: لَا يَدْرِي أَصَابَ أَمْ أَخْطَأَ. إِنْ أَصَابَ خَافَ أَنْ يَكُونَ قَدْ أَخْطَأَ، وَإِنْ أَخْطَأَ رَجَأَ أَنْ يَكُونَ قَدْ أَصَابَ. جَاهِلٌ خَبَاطُجَهَلَاتِ، عَاشِرَكَابُ عَشَوَاتِ لَمْ يَعْضَ عَلَى الْعِلْمِ بِضِرْسِ قَاطِعٍ، يُدْرِي الرِّوَايَاتِ إِذْرَاءَ الرِّيْحِ الْهَشِيمِ

By Allah, he is not capable of solving the problems that come to him nor is fit for the position assigned to him. Whatever he does not know he does not regard it worth knowing. He does not realise that what is beyond his reach is within the reach of others. If anything is not clear to him he keeps quiet over it because he knows his own ignorance. Lost lives are crying against his unjust verdicts, and properties (that have been wrongly disposed of) are grumbling against him.

لَا مَلِيْ وَاللهِ - بِإِاصْدَارِ مَا وَرَدَ عَلَيْهِ، وَلَا هُوَ أَهْلٌ لِمَا فُوَضَّنَ إِلَيْهِ، لَا يَحْسَبُ الْعِلْمَ فِي شَيْءٍ مِمَّا أَنْكَرَهُ، وَلَا يَرَى أَنَّ مِنْ وَرَاءِ مَا بَكَعَ مِنْهُ مَذْهَبًا لِغَيْرِهِ، وَإِنْ أَظْلَمَ عَنْهِ أَمْرًا اكْتَنَمَ بِهِ لِمَا يَعْلَمُ مِنْ جَهْلِ نَفْسِهِ، تَصْرُخُ مِنْ جُورِ قَضَائِهِ الدِّمَاءُ، وَتَعَجُّ مِنْهُ الْمَوَارِيثُ.

I complain to Allah about persons who live ignorant and die misguided. For them nothing is more worthless than the Qur'an if it is recited as it should be recited, nor anything more valuable than the Qur'an if its verses are removed from their places, nor anything more vicious than virtue nor more virtuous than vice.

إِلَى اللهِ أَشْكُو مِنْ مَعْشَرِ يَعِيشُونَ جَهَالًا، وَيَمْوُلُونَ ضُلَالًا، لَيْسَ فِيهِمْ سِلْعَةٌ أَبْوَرُ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ إِذَا تُلِيَ حَقُّ تِلَاقِهِ، وَلَا سِلْعَةٌ أَنْفَقُبُّعاً وَلَا أَغْلَى ثَمَنًا مِنَ الْكِتَابِ إِذَا حُرِفَ عَنْ مَوَاضِعِهِ، وَلَا عِنْدَهُمْ أَنْكَرُ مِنَ الْمَعْرُوفِ، وَلَا أَعْرُفُ مِنَ الْمُنْكَرِ.

Alternative Sources for Sermon 17

(1) al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi*, I, 55;

(2) Abu Talib al-Makki, *Qut*, I, 290;

(3) al-Harawi, *al-Jam'*, see (4)

- (4) Ibn al-'Athir, *al-Nihayah* (*under kh-b-t*);
- (5) al-Qadi al-Nu'man, *Usul al-madhahib*, 135;
- (6) al-Tusi, *al-'Amali*, I, 240;
- (7) al-Tabarsi, *al-'Ihtijaj*, I, 390;
- (8) al-Mufid, *al-'Irshad*, 109;
- (9) Ibn Qutaybah, *'Uyun*, I, 61;
- (10) Ibn Qutaybah, *Gharib al-hadith*, see Ibn Abi al-Hadid, *Sharh*, I, 90.

1. Amir al-mu'minin has held two categories of persons as the most detestable by Allah and the worst among people.

Firstly, those who are misguided even in basic tenets and are busy in the spreading of evil. Secondly, those who abandon the Qur'an and sunnah and pronounce injunctions through their imagination. They create a circle of their devotees and popularise the religious code of law concocted by themselves. The misguidance and wrongfulness of such persons does not remain confined to their own selves but the seed of misguidance sown by them bears fruit and growing into the form of a big tree provides asylum to the misguided and this misguidance goes on multiplying. And since these very people are the real originators the weight of other's sins is also on their shoulders as the Qur'an says:

And certainly they shall bear their own burdens, and (other) burdens with their own burdens... (29:13)

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