

Sermon 197: Those companions of Muhammad....

Amir al-mu'minin's attachment to the Holy Prophet. The performance of his funeral rites.

(ومن خطبة له (عليه السلام

ينبه فيها على فضيلته لقبول قوله وأمره ونهيه

Those companions of Muhammad – the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his descendants – who were the custodians (of divine messages) know that I never disobeyed Allah or His Messenger [1](#) – the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his descendants – at all, and by virtue of the courage [2](#) with which Allah honoured me I supported him with my life on occasions when even the brave turned away and feet remained behind (instead of proceeding forward).

وَلَقَدْ عَلِمَ الْمُسْتَحْفَظُونَ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ مُحَمَّدٍ (صلى الله عليه وآله) أَنِّي لَمْ أَرُدَّ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَلَا عَلَى رَسُولِهِ سَاعَةً قَطُّ،
وَلَقَدْ وَاسَيْتُهُ بِنَفْسِي فِي الْمَوَاطِنِ الَّتِي تَنْكُصُ فِيهَا الْأَبْطَالُ وَتَتَأَخَّرُ الْأَقْدَامُ، نَجْدَةً أَكْرَمَنِي اللَّهُ بِهَا

When the Prophet – the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his descendants – died his head was on my chest, and his (last) breath blew over my palms and I passed it over my face. I performed his (funeral) ablution, may Allah bless him and his descendants, and the angels helped me. The house and the courtyard were full of them. One party of them was descending and the other was ascending.

My ears continually caught their humming voice, as they invoked Allah's blessing on him, till we buried him in his grave. Thus, who can have greater rights with him than I during his life or after his death? Therefore depend on your intelligence and make your intentions pure in fighting your enemy, because I swear by Him who is such that there is no god but He, that I am on the path of truth and that they (the

enemy) are on the misleading path of wrong. You hear what I say; and I seek Allah's forgiveness for myself and for you.

وَلَقَدْ قَبِضَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ (صلى الله عليه وآله) وَإِنَّ رَأْسَهُ لَعَلَى صَدْرِي. وَلَقَدْ سَأَلْتُ نَفْسَهُ فِي كَفِّي، فَأَمَرْتُهَا عَلَى وَجْهِي. وَلَقَدْ وُلِّيتُ غُسْلَهُ (صلى الله عليه وآله) وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ أَعْوَانِي، فَضَجَّتِ الدَّارُ وَالْأَفْنِيَّةُ، مَلَأَ يَهْبِطُ، وَمَلَأَ يَعْرُجُ، وَمَا فَارَقْتُ سَمْعِي هَيْئَةً مِنْهُمْ، يُصَلُّونَ عَلَيْهِ حَتَّى وَارَيْنَاهُ فِي ضَرْبِهِ. فَمَنْ ذَا أَحَقُّ بِهِ مِنِّي حَيًّا وَمَيِّتًا؟ فَأَنْفُدُوا عَلَى بَصَائِرِكُمْ، وَلْتَصْدُقْ نِيَّاتِكُمْ فِي جِهَادِ عَدُوِّكُمْ، فَوَالَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ إِنِّي لَعَلَى جَادَةِ الْحَقِّ، وَإِنَّهُمْ لَعَلَى مَزَلَّةِ الْبَاطِلِ. أَقُولُ مَا تَسْمَعُونَ، وَأَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ لِي وَلَكُمْ!

Alternative Sources for Sermon 197

(1) Al-'Amidi, *Ghurar*, 243;

(2) al-Mufid, *al-'Amali*, see al-Majlisi, *Bihar*, vol. 17, 105.

1. Ibn Abi'l-Hadid has written (in *Sharh Nahjul Balaghah*, vol. 10, pp. 180–183) that Amir al-mu'minin's saying that he never disobeyed the commands of the Prophet is a sort of taunt to those who felt no hesitation in rejecting the Prophet's commands and sometimes even checked him. For example, when, at the time of the peace of al-Hudaybiyah, the Prophet was agreeable to negotiate peace with the unbelievers among the Quraysh, one of the companions became so enraged that he expressed doubts about the prophethood of the Prophet whereupon Abu Bakr had to say: Woe be to you! Keep clinging to him. He is certainly Allah's Messenger and He will not ruin him.

The introduction to the oath, 'inna', and the word of emphasis 'lam' which are used here to create conviction about the prophethood shows that the addressee had gone farther than mere doubt, because these words of emphasis are employed only when the stage of denial has been reached. However, if belief required absence of doubt, the presence of doubt must imply defect in the belief, as Allah says: The believers are only those who believe in Allah and His Messenger, they doubt not thereafter,... (Qur'an, 49:15)

Similarly, when the Prophet intended to say the funeral prayers of Ubayy ibn Salul the same companion said to him, "How do you intend to seek forgiveness for this Chief of hypocrites?" And he even drew away the Prophet by catching the skirt (of his shirt). Then the Prophet had to say, "No act of mine is beside the command of Allah". In the same way the Prophet's command to accompany the force of Usamah ibn Zayd was ignored. The greatest of all these insolences was displayed in connection with the Prophet's intention to write down his advice as to when such a blame was laid against the Prophet which proves an absence of belief in the commands of the shari`ah, and creates a doubt about each command as to whether it is based on divine revelation or (Allah may forbid) just the result of mental disorder.

2. Who can deny that the ever-successful lion of Allah, `Ali ibn Abi Talib (p.b.u.h.) shielded the Prophet on every critical occasion and performed the duty of protecting him by dint of the courage and valour gifted to him by Allah. The first occasion of risking his life was when the unbelievers from the Quraysh decided finally to kill the Prophet and `Ali slept on his bed surrounded by enemies and under the direct peril of swords, whereby the enemies were not able to succeed in their aims. Then, in those battles where the enemies used to attack the Prophet together and where the feet of even the reputed heroes could not stand firm, Amir al-mu'minin remained steadfast with the banner (of Islam) in his hand. `Abd al-Barr and al-Hakim writes about it:

Ibn `Abbas says that `Ali had four qualities which no one else possessed. Firstly, he was the first among Arabs and non-Arabs to have said prayers with the Messenger of Allah. Secondly, he always had the banner of Islam in his hand in every battle. Thirdly, when people ran away from the Prophet, `Ali remained with him; and fourthly it was he who gave the Prophet his funeral ablution and laid him in his grave. (al-Isti`ab, vol. 3, p. 1090; al-Mustadrak `ala as-sahihayn vol. 3, p. 111)

A study of the holy wars of Islam fought in the Prophet's days leaves no doubt that, except for the battle of Tabuk in which Amir al-mu'minin did not partake, all other battles bear testimony to his fine performance and all the successes are due to his valour. Thus, in the battle of Badr seventy unbelievers were killed, half of whom were killed by `Ali's sword. In the battle of Uhud, when victory changed into defeat as a result of the Muslims engaging themselves in the collection of booty, and they fled away under the sudden attack of the enemy, Amir al-mu'minin remained steadfast, taking jihad to be a religious obligation, and displayed such conspicuous performance in support and defence of the Prophet that the Prophet too acknowledged it and also the Angel. Again, in the battle of the Trench (al-Khandaq), the Prophet was accompanied by three thousand combatants, but none dared face `Amr ibn `Abdawadd. At last, Amir al-mu'minin killed him and saved the Muslims from ignominy. In the battle of Hunayn, the Muslims were proud of their number because they were ten thousand while the unbelievers were only four thousand, but here too they leapt onto the booty, as a consequence of which the unbelievers gained the opportunity, and pounced upon them. Bewildered with this sudden attack the Muslims fled away as the Holy Qur'an says:

Most certainly did Allah help you in many (battle) fields, and on the day of Hunayn, when made you vain your great number, but they availed you nothing, and was straitened the earth against you with all its extensiveness, then ye turned back in retreat. (9:25)

On this occasion also, Amir al-mu'minin was steady like a rock, and eventually, with Allah's support, victory was achieved.

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