

Sermon 201: O people! Do not be desolate at the small number....

One should not be afraid of the scarcity of those who tread on the right path (a counsel to tread the clear path of guidance)

(ومن كلام له (عليه السلام

يعظ بسلوك الطريق الواضح

O people! Do not be desolate at the small number of those who follow the right path, because people throng only round the table (of this world) where the duration of satiety is short and its hunger is prolonged.

أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ، لَا تَسْتَوْحِشُوا فِي طَرِيقِ الْهُدَى لِقَلَّةِ أَهْلِهِ، فَإِنَّ النَّاسَ قَدْ اجْتَمَعُوا عَلَى مَائِدَةٍ شَبَعُهَا قَصِيرٌ، وَجُوعُهَا طَوِيلٌ.

O people, certainly, what gathers people together (in categories) is (their) agreement (to good or bad) and (their) disagreement, for only one individual killed the camel of Thamud [1](#) but Allah held all of them in punishment because all of them consented to it. Thus, Allah, the Glorified. has said:

Then they hamstrung her, and turned (themselves) regretful. (Qur'an, 26: 157).

Then their land declined by sinking (into the earth) as the spike of a plough pierces unploughed weak land. O people, he who treads the clear path (of guidance) reaches the spring of water, and whoever abandons it strays into waterless desert.

أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ، إِنَّمَا يَجْمَعُ النَّاسَ الرَّضَىٰ وَالسُّخْطُ، وَإِنَّمَا عَقَرَ نَائِقَةً تَمُودَ رَجُلٌ وَاحِدٌ فَعَمَّهُمُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَىٰ بِالْعَذَابِ لَمَّا عَمَّوهُ
بِالرِّضَىٰ، فَقَالَ سُبْحَانَهُ: (فَعَقَرُوهَا فَأَصْبَحُوا نَادِمِينَ)، فَمَا كَانَ إِلَّا أَنْ خَارَتْ أَرْضُهُمْ بِالْخَسْفَةِ خُورَالسِّكَّةِ الْمُحْمَاةِ
فِي الْأَرْضِ الْخُورَاةِ. أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ، مَنْ سَلَكَ الطَّرِيقَ الْوَاضِحَ وَرَدَّ الْمَاءَ، وَمَنْ خَالَفَ وَقَعَ فِي التِّيهِ

Alternative Sources for Sermon 201

- (1) Al-Barqi, *al-Mahasin*, 208;
- (2) al-Nu'mani, *al-Ghaybah*, 9;
- (3) al-Mufid, *al-'Irshad*, 300;
- (4) al-Tabari, *al-Mustarshid*, 76;
- (5) al-Bahrani, *al-Burhan*, IV, 260;
- (6) al-Majlisi, *Bihar*, II, 266.

1. Thamud, in ancient Arabia, a tribe or group of tribes, seems to have been prominent from about the 4th Century B.C. to the first half of the 7th Century A.D. Their place of stay and homeland was at a place lying on the way between the Hijaz and Syria called the Valley of al-Qura and bore this name because it consisted of several townships. Allah deputed for their guidance and directions the Prophet Salih who preached to them as Allah relates in his story:

And unto (the people of) Thamud (We did send) their brother Salih, he said: "O' my people! Worship ye Allah (alone). Ye have no god other than Him; indeed came unto you a clear proof from your Lord; this is the She-camel of Allah (which) unto you is a sign, so leave it (free) to pasture in Allah's earth and touch her not with any harm, or ye shall be seized with a painful chastisement. And remember when He made you successors after the (people) `Ad and settled you in the earth, ye build mansions on its plain and hew the mountains into dwellings. So remember ye the bounties of Allah, and see ye not evil in the earth, making mischief." Said the chiefs of those who were puffed up with pride among his people to those who were reckoned weak, to those who believed from among them; "Know ye that Salih is sent by his Lord?" Said they: "Verily, in what he hath been sent with, we are believers." Said those who were puffed up with pride; "Verily we, in that which ye believe are disbelievers." They hamstrung the She-camel and rebelled against the command of their Lord, and they said: "O' Salih! bring us what thou didst, threaten us with, if thou art of the apostles." Then seized them (unawares) the earthquake, so became they in their dwellings, motionless (dead). Then he turned away from them and said: "O' my people! Indeed I did deliver unto you the message of my Lord, and did admonish you, but ye love not the admonishers." (Qur'an, 7:73-79).

(The people of) Thamud belied the warners, and said they: "What! a single man, from among us! and we to follow him? Verily then we shall be astray and in distress. It is that (the duty of) reminding hath been bestowed on him (alone), of all the (people) among us? Nay! he is a great liar, an insolent one!" "Soon they shall know on the morrow, (as to) who is the liar, the insolent one! (O' Our Apostle Salih!) verily We are going to send the She-camel as a trial for them; so watch them and be patient. And (thou O' Salih!) make them aware (beforehand) that the water is (to be) divided between them; and every drinking share shall be witnessed (on it)." But they called their companions, then he pursued (her) and hamstrung (her). How (great) was My chastisement and My warning? Verily sent We upon them a single (violent) blast, and they were (all) like the dry stubble used by a fencer in a fence. (Qur'an, 54:23-31).

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