

Sermon 216: So now, Allah, the Glorified, has....

Delivered at the battle of Siffin. About mutual rights of the ruler and the ruled

ومن خطبة له عليه السلام

خطبها بصفين

So now, Allah, the Glorified, has, by placing me over your affairs, created my right over you, and you too have a right over me like mine over you. A right is very vast in description but very narrow in equitability of action. It does not accrue to any person unless it accrues against him also, and right does not accrue against a person unless it also accrues in his favour. If there is any right which is only in favour of a person with no (corresponding) right accruing against him it is solely for Allah, the Glorified, and not for His creatures by virtue of His might over His creatures and by virtue of the justice permeating all His decrees. Of course, He the Glorified, has created His right over creatures that they should worship Him, and has laid upon Himself (the obligation of) their reward equal to several times the recompense as a mark of His bounty and the generosity that He is capable of.

أَمَّا بَعْدُ، فَقَدْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لِي عَلَيْكُمْ حَقًّا بِوِلَايَةِ أَمْرِكُمْ، وَلَكُمْ عَلَيَّ مِنَ الْحَقِّ مِثْلُ الَّذِي لِي عَلَيْكُمْ، فَالْحَقُّ أَوْسَعُ الْأَشْيَاءِ فِي التَّوَاصُفِ، وَأَضْيَقُهَا فِي التَّنَاصُفِ، لَا يَجْرِي لِاحِدٍ إِلَّا جَرَى عَلَيْهِ، وَلَا يَجْرِي عَلَيْهِ إِلَّا جَرَى لَهُ وَلَوْ كَانَ لِاحِدٍ أَنْ يَجْرِيَ لَهُ وَلَا يَجْرِيَ عَلَيْهِ، لَكَانَ ذَلِكَ خَالِصًا لِلَّهِ سُبْحَانَهُ دُونَ خَلْقِهِ، لِقُدْرَتِهِ عَلَى عِبَادِهِ، وَلِعَدْلِهِ فِي كُلِّ مَا جَرَتْ عَلَيْهِ صُرُوفٌ قَضَائِهِ، وَلَكِنَّهُ جَعَلَ حَقَّهُ عَلَى الْعِبَادِ أَنْ يُطِيعُوهُ، وَجَعَلَ جَزَاءَهُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِضَاعَفَةَ التَّوَابِ تَفَضُّلاً مِنْهُ، وَتَوَسُّعاً بِمَا هُوَ مِنَ الْمَزِيدِ أَهْلُهُ.

حق الوالي وحق الرعية

Then, from His rights, He, the Glorified, created certain rights for certain people against others. He made

them so as to equate with one another. Some of these rights produce other rights. Some rights are such that they do not accrue except with others. The greatest of these rights that Allah, the Glorified, has made obligatory is the right of the ruler over the ruled and the right of the ruled over the ruler. This is an obligation which Allah, the Glorified, has placed on each other. He has made it the basis of their (mutual) affection, and an honour for their religion. Consequently, the ruled cannot prosper unless the rulers are sound, while the rulers cannot be sound unless the ruled are steadfast. If the ruled fulfil the rights of the ruler and the ruler fulfils their rights, then right attains the position of honour among them, the ways of religion become established, signs of justice become fixed and the *sunnah* gains currency.

ثُمَّ جَعَلَ - سُبْحَانَهُ - مِنْ حُقُوقِهِ حُقُوقًا افْتَرَضَهَا لِبَعْضِ النَّاسِ عَلَى بَعْضٍ، فَجَعَلَهَا تَتَكَافَأُ فِي وُجُوهِهَا، وَيُوجِبُ بَعْضُهَا بَعْضًا، وَلَا يُسْتَوْجَبُ بَعْضُهَا إِلَّا بِبَعْضٍ. وَأَعْظَمُ مَا افْتَرَضَ - سُبْحَانَهُ - مِنْ تِلْكَ الْحُقُوقِ حَقُّ الْوَالِي عَلَى الرَّعِيَّةِ، وَحَقُّ الرَّعِيَّةِ عَلَى الْوَالِي، فَرِيضَةٌ فَرَضَهَا اللَّهُ - سُبْحَانَهُ - لِكُلِّ عَلَى كُلِّ، فَجَعَلَهَا نِظَامًا لِأَلْفَتِهِمْ، وَعِزًّا لِدِينِهِمْ، فَلَيْسَتْ تَصْلُحُ الرَّعِيَّةُ إِلَّا بِصَلَاحِ الْوَلَاةِ، وَلَا تَصْلُحُ الْوَلَاةُ إِلَّا بِاسْتِقَامَةِ الرَّعِيَّةِ. فَإِذَا أَدَّتِ الرَّعِيَّةُ إِلَى الْوَالِي حَقَّهُ، وَأَدَّى الْوَالِي إِلَيْهَا حَقَّهَا، عَزَّ الْحَقُّ بَيْنَهُمْ، وَقَامَتِ مَنَاهِجُ الدِّينِ، وَاعْتَدَلَتْ مَعَالِمُ الْعَدْلِ، وَجَرَتْ عَلَى أَذْلَالِهَا السُّنَنُ

In this way time will improve, the continuance of government will be expected, and the aims of the enemies will be frustrated. But if the ruled gain sway over the ruler, or the ruler oppresses the ruled, then difference crops up in every word, signs of oppression appear, mischief enters religion and the ways of the *sunnah* are forsaken. Then desires are acted upon, the commands (of religion) are discarded, diseases of the spirit become numerous and there is no hesitation in disregarding even great rights, nor in committing big wrongs. In such circumstances, the virtuous are humiliated while the vicious are honoured, and there are serious chastisements from Allah, the Glorified, onto the people.

فَصَلَحَ بِذَلِكَ الزَّمَانُ، وَطُمِعَ فِي بَقَاءِ الدَّوْلَةِ، وَيَسَّسَتْ مَطَامِعُ الْأَعْدَاءِ. وَإِذَا غَلَبَتِ الرَّعِيَّةُ وَالْيَهْيَا، أَوْ أَجْحَفَ الْوَالِي بِرِعِيَّتِهِ اخْتَلَفَتْ هُنَاكَ الْكَلِمَةُ، وَظَهَرَتْ مَعَالِمُ الْجَوْرِ، وَكَثُرَ الْأَدْعَالُ فِي الدِّينِ، وَتُرِكَتْ مَحَاجُ السُّنَنِ، فَعُمِلَ بِالْهَوَى، وَعُطِلَتْ الْأَحْكَامُ، وَكَثُرَتْ عِلَلُ النُّفُوسِ، فَلَا يُسْتَوْحَشُ لِعَظِيمِ حَقِّ عَطِلٍ، وَلَا لِعَظِيمِ بَاطِلٍ فَعِلٍ! فَهُنَاكَ تَذَلُّ الْأَبْرَارِ، وَتَعِزُّ الْأَشْرَارِ، وَتَعْظُمُ تَبِعَاتُ اللَّهِ عِنْدَ الْعِبَادِ

You should therefore counsel each other (for the fulfilment of your obligations) and co-operate with each other. However extremely eager a person may be to secure the pleasure of Allah, and however fully he strives for it, he cannot discharge (his obligation for) obedience to Allah, the Glorified, as is really due to Him, and it is an obligatory right of Allah over the people that they should advise each other to the best of their ability and co-operate with each other for the establishment of truth among them.

No person, however great his position in the matter of truth, and however advanced his distinction in religion may be, is above co-operation in connection with the obligations placed on him by Allah. Again, no man, however small he may be regarded by others, and however humble he may appear before eyes, is too low to co-operate or to be afforded co-operation in this matter.

فَعَلَيْكُمْ بِالتَّوَّاصِحِ فِي ذَلِكَ، وَحُسْنِ التَّعَاوُنِ عَلَيْهِ، فَلَيْسَ أَحَدٌ - وَإِنْ اشْتَدَّ عَلَى رِضَى اللَّهِ حِرْصُهُ، وَطَالَ فِي الْعَمَلِ اجْتِهَادُهُ - بِبَالِغِ حَقِيقَةِ مَا اللَّهُ سُبْحَانَهُ أَهْلُهُ مِنَ الطَّاعَةِ لَهُ، وَلَكِنْ مِنْ وَاجِبِ حُقُوقِ اللَّهِ عَلَى الْعِبَادِ النَّصِيحَةَ بِمَبْلَغِ جُهْدِهِمْ، وَالتَّعَاوُنَ عَلَى إِقَامَةِ الْحَقِّ بَيْنَهُمْ. وَلَيْسَ أَمْرٌ - وَإِنْ عَظُمَتْ فِي الْحَقِّ مَنْزِلَتُهُ، وَتَقَدَّمَتْ فِي الدِّينِ فَضِيلَتُهُ - بِفَوْقِ أَنْ يُعَانَ عَلَى مَا حَمَلَهُ اللَّهُ مِنْ حَقِّهِ. وَلَا أَمْرٌ - وَإِنْ صَغُرَتْهُ النُّفُوسُ، وَاقْتَحَمَتْهُ الْعُيُونُ - بِدُونِ أَنْ يُعِينَ عَلَى ذَلِكَ أَوْ يُعَانَ عَلَيْهِ.

One of Amir al-mu'minin's companions replied to him by a long speech wherein he praised him much and mentioned his own listening to him and obeying him, whereupon Amir al-mu'minin said:

فَأَجَابَهُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ رَجُلٌ مِنْ أَصْحَابِهِ بِكَلَامٍ طَوِيلٍ، يَكْثُرُ فِيهِ الثَّنَاءُ عَلَيْهِ، وَيَذْكَرُ سَمْعَهُ وَطَاعَتَهُ فَقَالَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ:

If a man in his mind regards Allah's glory as being high and believes in his heart that Allah's position is sublime, then it is his right that on account of the greatness of these things he should regard all other things small. Among such persons, he on whom Allah's bounty is great and Allah's favours are kind has a greater obligation, because Allah's bounty over any person does not increase without an increase in Allah's right over him.

إِنَّ مِنْ حَقِّ مَنْ عَظُمَ جَلَالُ اللَّهِ فِي نَفْسِهِ، وَجَلَّ مَوْضِعُهُ مِنْ قَلْبِهِ، أَنْ يَصْغُرَ عِنْدَهُ - لِعِظَمِ ذَلِكَ - كُلُّ مَا سِوَاهُ، وَإِنْ أَحَقَّ مَنْ كَانَ كَذَلِكَ لِمَنْ عَظُمَتْ نِعْمَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ، وَلَطْفَ إِحْسَانِهِ إِلَيْهِ، فَإِنَّهُ لَمْ تَعْظُمْ نِعْمَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى أَحَدٍ إِلَّا أَزْدَادَ حَقِّ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ عِظْمًا،

In the view of virtuous people, the worst position of rulers is that it may be thought about them that they love glory, and their affairs may be taken to be based on pride. I would really hate that it may occur to your mind that I love high praises or to hear eulogies. By the grace of Allah, I am not like this. Even If I had loved to be mentioned like this, I would have given it up in submissiveness before Allah, the Glorified, rather than accept greatness and sublimity to which He is more entitled.

Generally, people feel pleased at praise after good performances; but do not mention for me handsome praise for the obligations I have discharged towards Allah and towards you, because of (my) fear about those obligations which I have not discharged and for issuing injunctions which could not be avoided, and do not address me in the manner despots are addressed.

Do not evade me as the people of passion are (to be) evaded, do not meet me with flattery and do not think that I shall take it ill if a true thing is said to me, because the person who feels disgusted when truth is said to him or a just matter is placed before him would find it more difficult to act upon them.

Therefore, do not abstain from saying a truth or pointing out a matter of justice because I do not regard myself above erring [1](#).

I do not escape erring in my actions but that Allah helps me (in avoiding errors) in matters in which He is

more powerful than I. Certainly, I and you are slaves owned by Allah, other than Whom there is no Lord except Him. He owns our selves which we do not own. He took us from where we were towards what means prosperity to us. He altered our straying into guidance and gave us intelligence after blindness.

وَأَنَّ مِنْ أَسْخَفِ حَالَاتِ الْوُلَاةِ عِنْدَ صَالِحِ النَّاسِ، أَنْ يُظَنَّ بِهِمْ حُبُّ الْفَخْرِ، وَيُوضَعَ أَمْرُهُمْ عَلَى الْكِبَرِ، وَقَدْ كَرِهَتْ أَنْ يَكُونَ جَالَ فِي ظَنِّكُمْ أَنِّي أُحِبُّ الْأَطْرَاءَ، وَاسْتِمَاعَ الثَّنَاءِ، وَلَسْتُ - بِحَمْدِ اللَّهِ - كَذَلِكَ، وَلَوْ كُنْتُ أُحِبُّ أَنْ يُقَالَ ذَلِكَ لَتَرَكْتُهُ انْحِطَاطًا لِلَّهِ سُبْحَانَهُ عَنْ تَنَاوُلِ مَا هُوَ أَحَقُّ بِهِ مِنَ الْعِظَمَةِ وَالْكَبَرِيَاءِ. وَرُبَّمَا اسْتَحَلَّى النَّاسُ الثَّنَاءَ بَعْدَ الْبِلَاءِ فَلَا تُتَنَوُّوا عَلَيَّ بِجَمِيلِ ثَنَاءٍ، لِإِخْرَاجِي نَفْسِي إِلَى اللَّهِ وَإِلَيْكُمْ مِنَ التَّقِيَّةِ فِي حُقُوقِ لَمْ أَفْرُغْ مِنْ أَدَائِهَا، وَفَرَائِضَ لَا بُدَّ مِنْ إِمْضَائِهَا فَلَا تُكَلِّمُونِي بِمَا تَكَلَّمُ بِهِ الْجَبَابِرَةُ، وَلَا تَتَحَقَّقُوا مِنِّي بِمَا يَتَحَقَّقُ بِهِ عِنْدَ أَهْلِ الْبَادِرَةِ وَلَا تَخَالِطُونِي بِالْمُصَانَعَةِ وَلَا تَظُنُّوا بِي اسْتِنْفَالًا فِي حَقِّ قِيلَ لِي، وَلَا التَّمَّاسَ إِعْظَامَ لِنَفْسِي، فَإِنَّهُ مَنْ اسْتَنْقَلَ الْحَقَّ أَنْ يُقَالَ لَهُ أَوْ الْعَدْلَ أَنْ يُعْرَضَ عَلَيْهِ، كَانَ الْعَمَلُ بِهِمَا أَثْقَلَ عَلَيْهِ. فَلَا تَكْفُؤَا عَنْ مَقَالَةِ بَحَقِّ، أَوْ مَشُورَةِ بَعْدَلٍ، فَإِنِّي لَسْتُ فِي نَفْسِي بِفَوْقَ أَنْ أُخْطِئَ، وَلَا أَمِنَ ذَلِكَ مِنْ فِعْلِي، إِلَّا أَنْ يَكْفِيَ اللَّهُ مِنْ نَفْسِي مَا هُوَ أَمْلَكُ بِهِ مِنِّي فَإِنَّمَا أَنَا وَأَنْتُمْ عَبِيدٌ مَمْلُوكُونَ لِرَبِّ لَا رَبَّ غَيْرُهُ، يَمْلِكُ مِنَّا مَا لَا نَمْلِكُ مِنْ أَنْفُسِنَا، وَأَخْرَجْنَا مِمَّا كُنَّا فِيهِ إِلَى مَا صَلَحْنَا عَلَيْهِ، فَأَبْدَلْنَا بَعْدَ الضَّلَالَةِ بِالهُدَى، وَأَعْطَانَا الْبَصِيرَةَ بَعْدَ الْعَمَى.

Alternative Sources for Sermon 216

(1) Al-Kulayni, *Rawdah*, 352.

1. That the innocence of angels is different from the innocence of man needs no detailed discussion. The innocence of angels means that they do not possess the impulse to sin, but the innocence of man means that, although he has human frailties and passions, yet he possesses a peculiar power to resist them and he is not over-powered by them so as to commit sins. This very ability is called innocence and it prevents the rising up of personal passions and impulses. Amir al-mu'minin's saying that "I do not regard myself above erring" refers to those human dictates and passions, and his saying that "Allah helps me in avoiding 'errors'" refers to innocence. The same tone is found in the Qur'an in the words of Prophet Yusuf that:

I exculpate not myself, verily (one's) self is wont to bid (him to) evil, except such as my Lord hath had mercy on; verily my Lord is Oft-forgiving, All-merciful. (12:53)

Just as in this verse, because of the existence of exception, its firstpart cannot be used to argue against his innocence, similarly, due to the existence of the exception "but that Allah helps me in avoiding errors" in Amir al-mu'minin's saying, its first part cannot be used to argue against his innocence, otherwise the Prophet's innocence too will have to be rejected. In the same way, the last sentence of this sermon should not be taken to mean that before the proclamation of prophethood he had been under the influence of pre-Islamic beliefs, and that just as others had been unbelievers he too might have been in darkness and misguidance, because from his very birth Amir al-mu'minin was brought-up by the Prophet and the effect of his training and up-bringing permeated him. It cannot therefore be imagined that he who had from infancy trod in the foot-prints of the Prophet would deviate from guidance even for a moment. Thus, al-Mas`udi has written:

Amir al-mu'minin never believed in any other god than Allah so that there could be the question of his accepting Islam. He rather followed the Prophet in all his actions and (virtually) initiated him, and in this very state he attained majority. (Muruj adh-dhahab, vol. 2, p. 3).

Here, by those whom Allah led from darkness into guidance, the reference is to the persons whom Amir al-mu'minin was addressing. Ibn Abiil-Hadid writes in this connection:

The reference here is not to his own self because he had never been an unbeliever so as to have accepted Islam after that, but in these words he is referring to those group of people whom he was addressing. (Sharh Nahjul Balaghah, vol. 11, p.

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