

Sermon 223: By Allah, I would rather pass a night....

About keeping aloof from oppression and misappropriation. 'Aqil's condition of poverty and destitution

(ومن كلام له (عليه السلام

يتبرأ من الظلم

By Allah, I would rather pass a night in wakefulness on the thorns of *as-sa'dan* (a plant having sharp prickles) or be driven in chains as a prisoner than meet Allah and His Messenger on the Day of Judgement as an oppressor over any person or a usurper of anything out of worldly wealth. And how can I oppress any one for (the sake of a life) that is fast moving towards destruction and is to remain under the earth for a long time?

وَاللَّهِ لَأَنْ أُبَيِّتَ عَلَى حَسَكِ السَّعْدَانِ مُسَهَّدًا، أَوْ أُجَرَّ فِي الْأَغْلَالِ مُصَفَّدًا، أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِنْ أَنْ أَلْقَى اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ظَالِمًا لِبَعْضِ الْعِبَادِ، وَغَاصِبًا لَشَيْءٍ مِنَ الْحُطَامِ، وَكَيْفَ أَظْلِمُ أَحَدًا لِنَفْسٍ يُسْرِعُ إِلَى الْبَلَى قَوْلُهَا، وَيَطُولُ فِي الثَّرَى حُلُولُهَا؟

By Allah, I certainly saw (my brother) 'Aqil fallen in destitution and he asked me a *sa'* (about three kilograms in weight) out of your (share of) wheat, and I also saw his children with dishevelled hair and a dusty countenance due to starvation, as though their faces had been blackened by indigo. He came to me several times and repeated his request to me again and again. I heard him, and he thought I would sell my faith to him and follow his tread leaving my own way.

Then I (just) heated a piece of iron and took it near his body so that he might take a lesson from it, then he cried as a person in protracted illness cries with pain and he was about to get burnt with its branding.

Then I said to him, "Moaning women may moan over you, O 'Aqil. Do you cry on account of this (heated) iron which has been made by a man for fun while you are driving me towards the fire which Allah, the Powerful, has prepared for (a manifestation of) His wrath? Should you cry from pain, but I should not cry from the flames?"

وَاللّٰهُ لَقَدْ رَأَيْتُ عَقِيلاً وَقَدْ أَمْلَقَ حَتَّى اسْتَمَاحَنِي مِنْ بُرْكَكُمْ صَاعاً، وَرَأَيْتُ صَبِيَّانَهُ شُعْتَ الشُّعُورِ، غُبَرَ الْأَلْوَانِ، مِنْ فَقْرِهِمْ، كَأَنَّمَا سُوِّدَتْ وُجُوهُهُمْ بِالْعِظْلَمِ، وَعَاوَدَنِي مُؤَكِّداً، وَكَرَّرَ عَلَيَّ الْقَوْلَ مُرَدِّداً، فَأَصْغَيْتُ إِلَيْهِ سَمْعِي، فَظَنُّ أُنِّي أُبِيعُهُ دِينِي، وَأَتَّبَعُ قِيَادَهُ، مُفَارِقاً طَرِيقِي، فَأَحْمَيْتُ لَهُ حَدِيدَةً، ثُمَّ أَدْنَيْتُهَا مِنْ جِسْمِهِ لِيَعْتَبَرَ بِهَا، فَضَجَّ ضَجِيجَ ذِي دَنَفٍ مِنْ أَلَمِهَا، وَكَادَ أَنْ يَحْتَرِقَ مِنْ مِيسَمِهَا، فَقُلْتُ لَهُ : نَكَلْتُكَ التَّوَاكِلُ، يَا عَقِيلُ ! أَتَنْتُنُّ مِنْ حَدِيدَةٍ أَحْمَاهَا إِنْسَانُهَا لِلْعَبِيهِ، وَتَجْرُنِي إِلَى نَارٍ سَجَرَهَا جَبَّارُهَا لِغَضَبِهِ! أَتَنْتُنُّ مِنَ الْإِدَى وَلَا أَتَنْتُنُّ مِنْ لَطْفِي؟

A stranger incident than this is that a man ¹ came to us in the night with a closed flask full of honey paste but I disliked it as though it was the saliva of a serpent or its vomit. I asked him whether it was a reward, or *zakat* (poor-tax) or charity, for these are forbidden to us members of the Prophet's family. He said it was neither this nor that but a present. Then I said, "Childless women may weep over you. Have you come to deviate me from the religion of Allah, or are you mad, or have you been overpowered by some jinn, or are you speaking without senses? "

وَأَعْجَبُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ طَارِقٌ طَرَقَنَا بِمَلْفُوفَةٍ فِي وَعَائِهَا، وَمَعْجُونَةٍ شَنِئْتُهَا، كَأَنَّمَا عُجِنَتْ بِرَيْقِ حَيَّةٍ أَوْ قَيْئِهَا، فَقُلْتُ: أَصِلَةٌ، أَمْ زَكَاةٌ، أَمْ صَدَقَةٌ؟ فَذَلِكَ مُحَرَّمٌ عَلَيْنَا أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ! فَقَالَ: لَا ذَا وَلَا ذَاكَ، وَلَكِنَّهَا هَدِيَّةٌ، فَقُلْتُ: هَبْلَتُكَ الْهَبُولُ! أَعَنْ دِينَ اللَّهِ أَتَيْتَنِي لِتُخَدَعَنِي؟ أَمْخَتَبْتُ أَنْتَ أَمْ ذُو جِنَّةٍ، أَمْ تَهْجُرُ؟

By Allah, even if I am given all the domains of the seven (stars) with all that exists under the skies in order that I may disobey Allah to the extent of snatching one grain of barley from an ant I would not do it. For me your world is lighter than the leaf in the mouth of a locust that is chewing it. What has 'Ali to do with bounties that will pass away and pleasures that will not last? We seek protection of Allah from the slip of wisdom and the evils of mistakes, and from Him we seek succour.

وَاللّٰهُ لَوْ أُعْطِيتُ الْأَقَالِيمَ السَّبْعَةَ بِمَا تَحْتَ أَفْلَاقِهَا، عَلَى أَنْ أَعْصِيَ اللَّهَ فِي نَمْلَةٍ أَسْلُبَهَا جِلْبَ شَعِيرَةٍ مَا فَعَلْتُهُ، وَإِنْ دُنْيَاكُمْ عِنْدِي لَأَهْوَنُ مِنْ وَرَقَةٍ فِي فَمٍ جَرَادَةٍ تَقْضُمُهَا، مَا لِعَلِيٍّ وَلِلْعَيْمِ يَفْنَى، وَلَذَّةٌ لَا تَبْقَى

نَعُوذُ بِاللّٰهِ مِنْ سُبَاتِ الْعَقْلِ، وَقُبْحِ الزَّلَلِ، وَبِهِ نَسْتَعِينُ

Alternative Sources for Sermon 223

(1) Al-Saduq, *al-'Amali*, 369;

(2) Sibt, *Tadhkirah*, 155;

(3) al-Zamakhshari, *Rabi'*, *bab al-khayr wa al-salah*;

(4) Ibn Shahr Ashub, *al-Manaqib*, II, 109.

1. It was al-Ash`ath ibn Qays.

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