

Sermon 32: O people, we have been born in ...

About the disparagement of the world and categories of its people

(ومن خطبة له (عليه السلام

وفيها يصف زمانه بالجور، ويقسم الناس فيه خمسة أصناف، ثم يزهد في الدنيا

معنى جور الزمان

O people! We have been born in such a wrongful and thankless period wherein the virtuous is deemed vicious and the oppressor goes on advancing in his excess. We do not make use of what we know and do not discover what we do not know. We do not fear calamity till it befalls.

أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ، إِنَّا قَدْ أَصْبَحْنَا فِي دَهْرٍ عَنُودٍ وَزَمَنٍ كَنُودٍ يُعَدُّ فِيهِ الْمُحْسِنُ مُسِيئًا، وَيَزْدَادُ الظَّالِمُ فِيهِ عُتُورًا، لَا نَنْتَفِعُ بِمَا عَلَّمْنَا، وَلَا نَسْأَلُ عَمَّا جَهِلْنَا، وَلَا نَتَخَوَّفُ قَارِعَةً حَتَّى تَحُلَّ بِنَا.

People are of four categories. Among them is one who is prevented from mischief only by his low position, lack of means and paucity of wealth.

فَالنَّاسُ عَلَى أَرْبَعَةِ أَصْنَافٍ: مِنْهُمْ مَنْ لَا يَمْنَعُهُ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا مَهَانَةُ نَفْسِهِ، وَكَالَالَةُ حَدِّهِ وَتَضْيِيقُ وَفَرِهِ

Then there is he who has drawn his sword, openly commits mischief, has collected his horsemen and foot-men and has devoted himself to securing wealth, leading troops, rising on the pulpit and has allowed his faith to perish. How bad is the transaction that you allow (enjoyment of) this world to be a price for yourself as an alternative for what there is with Allah for you.

وَمِنْهُمْ الْمُصَلِّتُ لِسَيْفِهِ، وَالْمُعَلِّنُ بِشَرِّهِ، وَالْمَجْلِبُ بِخَيْلِهِ وَرَجْلِهِ قَدْ أَشْرَطَ نَفْسَهُ وَأَوْيَقَ دِينَهُ لِحُطَامٍ يَنْتَهِزُهُ أَوْ مِقْنَبٍ يَقُودُهُ، أَوْ مِنْبَرٍ يَفْرَعُهُ وَلِبِئْسَ الْمَنْجَرُ أَنْ تَرَى الدُّنْيَا لِنَفْسِكَ تَمَنَّا، وَمِمَّا لَكَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَوْضًا

And among them is he who seeks (benefits of) this world through actions meant for the next world, but does not seek (good of) the next world through actions of this world. He keeps his body calm (in dignity), raises small steps, holds up his clothes, embellishes his body for appearance of trust-worthiness and uses the position of Allah's connivance as a means of committing sins.

وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَطْلُبُ الدُّنْيَا بِعَمَلِ الْآخِرَةِ، وَلَا يَطْلُبُ الْآخِرَةَ بِعَمَلِ الدُّنْيَا، قَدْ طَامَنَ مِنْ شَخْصِهِ، وَقَارَبَ مِنْ خَطْوِهِ، وَشَمَّرَ مِنْ تَوْبِهِ، وَزَخَرَفَ مِنْ نَفْسِهِ لِلْأَمَانَةِ، وَاتَّخَذَ سِتْرَ اللَّهِ ذَرِيعَةً إِلَى الْمَعْصِيَةِ

Then there is one whose weakness and lack of means have held him back from conquest of lands. This keeps down his position and he has named it contentment and he clothes himself with the robe of renunciation although he has never had any connection with these qualities.

وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ أَعَدَّهُ عَنْ طَلَبِ الْمُلْكِ ضُؤُولُهُ نَفْسِهِ وَانْقِطَاعُ سَبَبِهِ، فَقَصَرَتْهُ الْحَالُ عَلَى حَالِهِ، فَتَحَلَّى بِاسْمِ الْقَنَاعَةِ، وَتَزَيَّنَ بِلِبَاسِ أَهْلِ الزَّهَادَةِ، وَلَيْسَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ فِي مَرَّاحٍ وَلَا مَعْدَى.

Then there remain a few people in whose case the remembrance of their return (to Allah on Doomsday) keeps their eyes bent, and the fear of Resurrection moves their tears. Some of them are scared away (from the world) and dispersed; some are frightened and subdued; some are quiet as if muzzled; some are praying sincerely, some are grief-stricken and pain-ridden whom fear has confined to namelessness and disgrace has shrouded them, so they are in (the sea of) bitter water, their mouths are closed and their hearts are bruised. They preached till they were tired, they were oppressed till they were disgraced and they were killed till they remained few in number.

وَبَقِيَ رِجَالٌ غَضُّ أَبْصَارِهِمْ ذِكْرُ الْمَرْجِعِ، وَأَرَاقَ دُمُوعِهِمْ خَوْفُ الْمَحْشَرِ، فَهُمْ بَيْنَ شَرِيدٍ نَادٍ وَخَائِفٍ مَقْمُوعٍ وَسَاكِتٍ مَكْعُومٍ وَدَاعٍ مُخْلِصٍ، وَتَكَالَانَ مُوجِعٍ قَدْ أَحْمَلَتْهُمْ التَّقْيَةُ وَشَمَلَتْهُمْ الدَّلَّةُ، فَهُمْ فِي بَحْرِ أَجَاجٍ أَفْوَاهُهُمْ ضَامِرَةٌ وَقُلُوبُهُمْ قَرِحَةٌ قَدْ وَعَظُوا حَتَّى مَلُّوا وَقَهَرُوا حَتَّى ذُلُّوا، وَقَتَلُوا حَتَّى قَلُّوا.

The world in your eyes should be smaller than the bark of acacia and the clippings of wool. Seek instruction from those who preceded you before those who follow you take instruction from you, and keep aloof from it realising its evil because it cuts off even from those who were more attached to it than you.

فَلَتَكُنِ الدُّنْيَا أَصْغَرَ فِي أَعْيُنِكُمْ مِنْ حُثَالَةِ الْقَرْطِ وَقُرَاضَةِ الْجَلَمِ وَاتَّعِظُوا بِمَنْ كَانَ قَبْلَكُمْ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَتَّعِظَ بِكُمْ مَنْ بَعْدَكُمْ؛ وَارْقُضُوهَا دَمِيمَةً، فَإِنَّهَا قَدْ رَفَضَتْ مَنْ كَانَ أَشْغَفَ بِهَا مِنْكُمْ.

As-Sayyid ar-Radi says: Some ignorant persons attributed this sermon to Mu'awiyah but it is the speech of Amir al-mu'minin. There should be no doubt about it. What comparison is there between gold and clay or sweet and bitter water. This has been pointed out by the skilful guide and the expert critic 'Amr ibn Bahr al-Jahiz as he has mentioned this sermon in his book, *al-Bayan wa't-tabyin* (vol. 2, pp. 59-61).

He has also mentioned who attributed it to Mu'awiyah and then states that it is most akin to be the speech of 'Ali and most in accord with his way of categorising people and information about their oppression, disgrace, apprehension and fear. (On the other hand) we never found Mu'awiyah speaking on the lives of renunciates or worshippers.

قال السيد الشريف : أقول: وهذه الخطبة ربما نسبها من لا علم له بها إلى معاوية، وهي من كلام أمير المؤمنين (عليه السلام) الذي لا يشك فيه، وأين الذهب من الرّغام! والعذب من الاجاج! وقد دلّ على ذلك الدليل الخريّت ونقده الناقد البصير عمرو بن بحر الجاحظ؛ فإنه ذكر هذه الخطبة في كتابه «البيان والتبيين» وذكر من نسبها إلى معاوية، ثم تكلم من بعدها بكلام في معناها، جملمته أنه قال: وهذا الكلام بكلام علي (عليه السلام) أشبه، وبمذهبه في تصنيف الناس وفي الاخبار عما هم عليه من القهر والاذلال ومن التقية والخوف أليق. قال: ومتى وجدنا معاوية في حال من الاحوال يسلك في كلامه مسلك الزهاد، ومذاهب العباد

Alternative Sources for Sermon 32

- (1) Ibn Talhah, *Matalib*, I, 90;
- (2) al-Jahiz, *al-Bayan*, I, 175;
- (3) al-Dhahabi, *Mizan*, II, 276;
- (4) Ibn Qutaybah, *Uyun*, II, 237;
- (5) Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, *al-'Iqd*, * II, 173;
- (6) al-Baqillani, *I'jaz*, I, 197.

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