

Sermon 35: Praise belongs to God, even though

...

Amir al-mu'minin said after Arbitration. [1](#)

(ومن خطبة له (عليه السلام

بعد التحكيم وما بلغه من أمر الحكمين

وفيها حمد الله على بلائه، ثم بيان سبب البلوى

All praise is due to Allah even though time has brought (for us) crushing calamity and great occurrence. And I stand witness that there is no god but Allah the One, there is no partner for Him nor is there with Him any god other than Himself, and that Muhammad is His slave and His Prophet (May Allah's blessing and greeting be upon him and his progeny).

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ وَإِنْ أَتَى الدَّهْرُ بِالْخَطْبِ الْفَادِحِ وَالْحَدَثِ الْجَلِيلِ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، لَيْسَ مَعَهُ إِلَهٌ غَيْرُهُ، وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ .

So now, certainly the disobedience of sympathetic counsellor who has knowledge as well as experience brings about disappointment and result in repentance. I had given you my orders about this arbitration and put before you my hidden view, if Qasir's² orders were fulfilled but you rejected it (my orders) like rough opponents and disobedient insurgents till the counsellor himself fell in doubt about his counsel and the flint (of his wit) ceased to give flame. Consequently, mine and your position became as the poet of Hawazin says:

I gave you my orders at Mun'araji'l-liwa but you did not see the good of my counsel till the noon of next day (when it was too late)³.

مَا بَعْدُ، فَإِنَّ مَعْصِيَةَ النَّاصِحِ الشَّفِيقِ الْعَالِمِ الْمَجْرَبِ تُورِثُ الْحَسْرَةَ، وَتُعْقِبُ النَّدَامَةَ، وَقَدْ كُنْتُ أَمَرْتُكُمْ فِي هَذِهِ
الْحُكُومَةِ أَمْرِي، وَنَخَلْتُ لَكُمْ مَخْزُونًا رَأَيْتُمْ لَوْ كَانَ يُطَاعُ لِقَصِيرٍ أَمْرًا! فَأَبَيْتُمْ عَلَيَّ إِبَاءَ الْمُخَالِفِينَ الْجُفَاءَ، وَالْمُنَابِذِينَ
الْعُصَاةَ، حَتَّى ارْتَابَ النَّاصِحُ بِنُصْحِهِ، وَضَنَّ الزُّنْدُ بِقُدْحِهِ، فَكُنْتُ وَإِيَّاكُمْ كَمَا قَالَ أَخُو

هُوَ الزِّن:

أَمَرْتُكُمْ أَمْرِي بِمُنْعَرَجِ اللَّوَى فَلَمْ تَسْتَبِينُوا النَّصِاحَ إِلَّا ضَحَى الْغَدِ

Alternative Sources for Sermon 35

- (1) al-Baladhuri, *Ansab*, 365;
- (2) al-Tabari, *Ta'rikh*, VI, 43;
- (3) Ibn Qutaybah, *al-Imamah*, I, 119, 141;
- (4) Nasr, *Siffin*, see Ibn Abi al-Hadid, I, 110;
- (5) Sibti, *Tadhkirah*, 103;
- (6) Abu al-Faraj, *al-Aghani*, IX, 5;
- (7) al-Mas'udi, *Muruj*, II, 412;
- (8) Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, II, 171;
- (9) Ibn Kathir, *al-Bidayah*, VII, 286.

¹ When the Syrians' spirit was broken by the bloody swords of the Iraqis, and the incessant attacks of the night of al-Harir lowered their morale and ended their aspirations `Amr ibn al-`As suggested to Mu`awiyah the trick that the Qur'an should be raised on spears and shouts urged forth to treat it as the arbitrator. Its effect would be that some people would try to stop the war and others would like to continue it. We would thus divide them and be able to get the war postponed for another occasion. Consequently, copies of the Qur'an were raised on spears. The result was that some brainless persons raised hue and cry and created division and disturbance in the army and the efforts of simple Muslims turned slow after having been near victory. Without understanding anything they began to shout that they should prefer the verdict of the Qur'an over war.

When Amir al-mu'minin saw the Qur'an being the instrument of their activities, he said:

"O people do not fall in this trap of deceit and trickery. They are putting up this device only to escape the ignominy of defeat. I know the character of each one of them. They are neither adherents of the Qur'an nor have they any connection

with the faith or religion. The very purpose of our fighting has been that they should follow the Qur'an and act on its injunctions. For Allah's sake do not fall in their deceitful device. Go ahead with determination and courage and stop only after vanquishing the dying foe." Nevertheless, the deceitful instrument of wrong had worked. The people took to disobedience and rebellion. Mis'ar ibn Fadaki at-Tamimi and Zayd ibn Husayn at-Ta'i each with twenty thousand men came forward and said to Amir al-mu'minin, 'O' 'Ali, if you do not respond to the call of the Qur'an we will deal with you in the same manner as we did with 'Uthman. You end the battle at once and bow before the verdict of the Qur'an. Amir al-mu'minin tried his best to make them understand but Satan was standing before them in the garb of the Qur'an. He did not allow them to do so, and they compelled Amir al-mu'minin that he should send someone to call Malik ibn al-Harith al-Ashtar from the battlefield. Being obliged, Amir al-mu'minin sent Yazid ibn Hani to call Malik back. When Malik heard this order he was bewildered and said, "Please tell him this is not the occasion to leave the position. He may wait a bit then I will come to his audience with the tidings of victory." Hani conveyed this message on return but people shouted that Amir al-mu'minin must have sent word to him secretly to continue. Amir al-mu'minin said he never got any occasion to send any secret message to him. Whatever he said was said before them. People said he should be sent again and that if Malik delayed his return Amir al-mu'minin should forsake his life. Amir al-mu'minin again sent Yazid ibn Hani and sent word that rebellion had occurred, he should return in whatever condition he was. So Hani went and told Malik "You hold victory dear or the life of Amir al-mu'minin. If his life is dear you should raise hands off the battle and go to him." Leaving the chances of victory Malik stood up and came to the audience of Amir al-mu'minin with grief and disappointment. Chaos raged there. He rebuked the people very much but matters had taken such a turn that could not be corrected.

It was then settled that either party should nominate an arbitrator so that they should settle the (matter of) Caliphate according to the Qur'an. From Mu'awiyah's side 'Amr ibn al-'As was decided upon and from Amir al-mu'minin's side people proposed the name of Abu Musa al-Ash'ari. Seeing this wrong selection Amir al-mu'minin said, "Since you have not accepted my order about arbitration at least now agree that do not make Abu Musa the arbitrator. He is not a man of trust. Here is 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas and here is Malik al-Ashtar. Select one of them." But they did not at all listen to him and stuck to his name. Amir al-mu'minin said, "All right, do whatever you want. The day is not far when you will cut your own hands through your misdeeds."

After the nomination of arbitrators when the deed of agreement was being written, then with 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (p.b.u.h.) the word Amir al-mu'minin was also written. 'Amr ibn al-'As said, "This should be rubbed off. If we regarded him Amir al-mu'minin why should this battle have been fought?" At first Amir al-mu'minin refused to rub it off but when they did not in any way agree, he rubbed it off and said, "This incident is just similar to the one at al-Hudaybiyah when the unbelievers stuck on the point that the words 'Prophet of Allah' with the name of the Prophet should be removed and the Prophet did remove it." On this 'Amr ibn al-'As got angry and said, "Do you treat us as unbelievers?" Amir al-mu'minin said, "On what day have you had anything to do with believers and when have you been their supporters?" However, after this settlement, the people dispersed, and after mutual consultation these two arbitrators decided that by removing both 'Ali and Mu'awiyah from the Caliphate the people should be accorded the power to choose whomever they desired. When time came to its announcement there was a meeting at Dumatul-Jandal, a place between Iraq and Syria, and then two arbitrators also reached there to announce the judgement on the fate of the Muslims. Acting cunningly 'Amr ibn al-'As said to Abu Musa, "I regard it ill manner to precede you. You are older in years and age so first you make the announcement." Abu Musa succumbed to his flattery and came out proudly and stood before the gathering. Addressing them he said, "O' Muslims we have jointly settled that 'Ali ibn Abi Talib and Mu'awiyah should be removed and the right to choose a Caliph be accorded to the Muslims. They should choose whomever they like." Saying this he sat down. Now the turn was for 'Amr ibn al-'As and he said, "O' Muslims you have heard that Abu Musa removed 'Ali ibn Abi Talib. I also agree with it. As for Mu'awiyah, there is no question of removing him. Therefore I place him in his position." No sooner that he said this there were cries all round. Abu Musa cried hoarse that it was a trick, a deceit and told 'Amr ibn al-'As that, "You have played a trick, and your example is that of a dog on which if you load something he would gasp, or leave him he would gasp." 'Amr ibn al-'As said, "Your example is like the ass on whom books are loaded." However 'Amr ibn al-'As's trick was effective and Mu'awiyah's shaking feet were again stabilised. This was the short sketch of the Arbitration whose basis was laid in the Qur'an and sunnah. But was it a verdict of the Qur'an or the result of those deceitful contrivances which people of this world employ to retain their authority? Could these pages of history be made a torch-guide for the future and the Qur'an and sunnah be not

used as a means of securing authority or as an instrument of worldly benefits.

When Amir al-mu'minin got the news of this lamentable result of arbitration, he climbed on the pulpit and delivered this sermon every word of which savours of his grief and sorrow and at the same time it throws light on soundness of his thinking, correctness of his opinion and foresighted sagacity.

2. This is a proverb which is used on an occasion where the advice of a counsellor is rejected and afterwards it is repented.

The fact of it was that the ruler of al-Hirah namely Jadhimah al-Abrash killed the ruler of al-Jazirah named `Amr ibn Zarib whereafter his daughter az-Zabba' was made the ruler of al-Jazirah. Soon after accession to the throne she thought out this plan to avenge her father's blood, that she sent a message to Jadhimah that she could not alone carry on the affairs of the state and that if he could become her patron by accepting her as his wife she would be grateful. Jadhimah was more than puffed up at this proposal, and prepared himself to set off for al-Jazirah with a thousand horsemen. His slave Qasir advised him much that this was just a deceit and trick and that he should not place himself in this danger; but his wit had been so blinded that he could not think over why az-Zabba' should select the Murderer of her father for her life companionship. Anyhow, he set off and when he reached the border of al-Jazirah although az-Zabba's army was present for his reception but she neither gave any special reception nor offered any warm welcome. Seeing this state Qasir was again suspicious and he advised Jadhimah to get back, but nearness to the goal had further fanned his passion. He paid no heed and stepping further entered the city. Soon on arrival there he was killed. When Qasir saw this he said, "Had the advice of Qasir been followed." From that time this proverb gained currency.

3. The poet of Hawazin implies Durayd ibn as-Simmah. He wrote this couplet after the death of his brother `Abdullah ibn as-Simmah. Its facts are that `Abdullah along with his brother led an attack of two groups of Banu Jusham and Bani Nasr who were both from Hawazin, and drove away many camels. On return when they intended to rest at Mun`araji'l-liwa, Durayd said it was not advisable to stay there lest the enemy attacks from behind, but `Abdullah did not agree and stayed there. The result was that as soon as dawn appeared the enemy attacked and killed `Abdullah on the spot. Durayd also received wounds but he slipped away alive, and after this he wrote a few couplets out of which one couplet is this wherein he has referred to the destruction resulting from his advice having been rejected.

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