

Sermon 84: I am surprised at the son of al-Nabighah ...

About 'Amr ibn al-'As

(ومن كلام له (عليه السلام

في ذكر عمرو بن العاص

I am surprised at the son of an-Nabighah that he says about me among the people of Syria (ash-Sham) that I am a jester and that I am engaged in frolics and fun. He said wrong and spoke sinfully. Beware, the worst speech is what is untrue. He speaks and lies. He promises and breaks the promise. He begs and beseeches, but when someone begs from him he withholds miserly. He betrays the pledge and ignores kinship.

عَجَبًا لِابْنِ النَّابِغَةِ! يَزْعُمُ لِأَهْلِ الشَّامِ أَنَّ فِيَّ دُعَابَةً، وَأَنِّي امْرُؤٌ تَلْعَابَةٌ: أَعَافِسُ وَأُمَارِسُ! لَقَدْ قَالَ بَاطِلًا، وَنَطَقَ آثِمًا. أَمَّا
- وَشَرُّ الْقَوْلِ الْكَذِبُ - إِنَّهُ لَيَقُولُ فَيَكْذِبُ، وَيَعِدُ فَيُخْلِفُ، وَيَسْأَلُ فَيَبْخُلُ، وَيَسْأَلُ فَيُلْحِفُ، وَيَخُونُ الْعَهْدَ، وَيَقْطَعُ الْإِلَّ

When in a battle, he commands and admonishes but only until the swords do not come into action. When such a moment arrives his great trick is to turn naked¹ before his adversary. By Allah, surely the remembrance of death has kept me away from fun and play while obliviousness about the next world has prevented him from speaking truth. He has not sworn allegiance to Mu'awiyah without purpose; but has beforehand got him to agree that he will have to pay its price, and gave him an award for forsaking religion.

فَإِذَا كَانَ عِنْدَ الْحَرْبِ فَأَيُّ زَاجِرٍ وَأَمْرٍ هُوَ مَا لَمْ تَأْخُذِ السُّيُوفُ مَآخِذَهَا! فَإِذَا كَانَ ذَلِكَ كَانَ أَكْبَرُ مَكِيدَتِهِ أَنْ يَمْنَحَ

الْقَوْمَ سَبَّتهُ. أَمَا وَاللَّهِ إِنِّي لَيَمْنَعُنِي مِنَ اللَّعِبِ ذِكْرُ الْمَوْتِ، وَإِنَّهُ لَيَمْتَعُهُ مِنْ قَوْلِ الْحَقِّ نَسْيَانُ الْآخِرَةِ، إِنَّهُ لَمْ يُبَايِعْ مُعَاوِيَةَ حَتَّى شَرَطَ لَهُ أَنْ يُؤْتِيَهُ آتِيَةً، وَيَرْضَخَ لَهُ عَلَى تَرْكِ الدِّينِ رَضِيحَةً.

Alternative Sources for Sermon 84

- (1) Ibn Qutaybah, *‘Uyun*, III, 10, I, 164;
- (2) Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih, *al-‘Iqd*, II, 287;
- (3) al-Tawhidi, *al-‘Imta’*, III, 183;
- (4) al-Bayhaqi, *al-Mahasin*, 54;
- (5) al-Baladhuri, *Ansab*, II, 145, 151;
- (6) al-‘Tusi, *al-‘Amali*, I, 131;
- (7) Ibn al-‘Athir, *al-Nihayah*, I, 117, III, 59, 110, IV, 59, 89;
- (8) al-Thaqafi, *al-Gharat*, 513; al-Tusi narrates from Muhammad ibn ‘Imran al-Marzbani (d.384/994), Ibn ‘Uqdah (d.333/944) and al-Zubayr ibn Bakkar (d.255/869).

1. Amir al-mu'minin here refers to the incident when the 'Conqueror of Egypt' `Amr ibn al-`As exhibited the feat of his courage by displaying his private parts. What happened was that when in the battlefield of Siffin he and Amir al-mu'minin had an encounter, he rendered himself naked in order to ward off the blow of the sword. At this Amir al-mu'minin turned his face away and spared him his life. The famous Arab poet al-Farazdaq said about it:
There is no good in warding off trouble by ignominy as was done one day by `Amr ibn al-`As by display of his private parts. Even in this ignoble act `Amr ibn al-`As had not the credit of doing it himself, but had rather followed another one who had preceded him, because the man who first adopted this device was Talhah ibn Abi Talhah who had saved his life in the battle of Uhud by becoming naked before Amir al-mu'minin, and so he showed this way to the others. Thus, besides `Amr ibn al-`As this trick was played by Busr ibn Abi Artat also to save himself from the sword of Amir al-mu'minin. When after the performance of this notable deed Busr went to Mu`awiyah the latter recalled `Amr ibn al-`As's act as precedent in order to remove this man's shamefulness and said, "O' Busr, no matter. There is nothing to feel shameful about it in view of `Amr ibn al-`As's precedent before you."

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/nahjul-balagha-part-1-sermons/sermon-84-i-am-surprised-son-al-nabighah#comment-0>