

Sermon 97: Although Allah gives time to the oppressor...

Admonishing his own companions [about his companions and the companions of the Prophet] [1](#)

(ومن كلام له (عليه السلام

(في أصحابه وأصحاب رسول الله (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم

Although Allah gives time to the oppressor, His catch would not spare him. Allah watches him on the passage of his way and the position of that which suffocates the throats.

By Allah in Whose power my life lies, these people (Mu'awiyah and his men) will overcome you not because they have a better right than you but because of their hastening towards the wrong with their leader and your slowness about my right (to be followed).

وَلَيْنُ أَمَهَلَ اللَّهُ الظَّالِمَ فَلَنْ يَفُوتَ أَخْذُهُ، وَهُوَ لَهُ بِالْمِرْصَادِ عَلَى مَجَازِ طَرِيقِهِ، وَيَمَوْضِعِ الشَّجَا مِنْ مَسَاغِ رِيقِهِ. أَمَّا
وَالَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ، لَيُظْهِرَنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ الْقَوْمَ عَلَيْكُمْ، لَيْسَ لَانْتَهُمُ أَوْلَى بِالْحَقِّ مِنْكُمْ، وَلَكِنْ لِاسْرَاعِهِمْ إِلَى بَاطِلِ صَاحِبِهِمْ،
وَوَيْبَاتِكُمْ عَنْ حَقِّي.

People are afraid of the oppression of their rulers while I fear the oppression of my subjects. I called you for war but you did not come. I warned you but you did not listen. I called you secretly as well as openly, but you did not respond. I gave you sincere counsel, but you did not accept it. Are you present like the absent, and slaves like masters?

I recite before you points of wisdom but you turn away from them, and I advise you with far reaching advice but you disperse away from it. I rouse you for *jihad* against the people of revolt but before I come

to the end of my speech, I see you disperse like the sons of Saba.² You return to your places and deceive one another by your counsel. I straighten you in the morning but you are back to me in the evening as curved as the back of a bow. The straightener has become weary while those to be straightened have become incorrigible.

وَلَقَدْ أَصْبَحْتَ الْأُمَّمُ تَخَافُ ظُلْمَ رُعَاتِيهَا، وَأَصْبَحْتَ أَخَافُ ظُلْمَ رَعِيَّتِي. اسْتَنْفَرْتُكُمْ لِلْجِهَادِ فَلَمْ تَنْفَرُوا، وَأَسْمَعْتُكُمْ فَلَمْ تَسْمَعُوا، وَدَعَوْتُكُمْ سِرًّا وَجَهْرًا فَلَمْ تَسْتَجِيبُوا، وَنَصَحْتُ لَكُمْ فَلَمْ تَقْبَلُوا. شُهُودٌ كَغُيَابٍ، وَعَبِيدٌ كَأَرْبَابٍ! أَتَلُوا عَلَيْكُمْ الْحِكْمَ فَتَنْفَرُونَ مِنْهَا، وَأَعْظَمُكُمْ بِالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْبَالِغَةِ فَتَنْفَرُونَ عَنْهَا، وَأَحْتَكُمُ عَلَى جِهَادِ أَهْلِ الْبَغْيِ فَمَا آتَى عَلَى آخِرِ قَوْلِي حَتَّى أَرَاكُمْ مُنْفَرِّقِينَ أَيَادِي سَبَا، تَرْجِعُونَ إِلَى مَجَالِسِكُمْ، وَتَتَخَادَعُونَ عَنْ مَوَاعِظِكُمْ، أَفَوَيْكُمْ غُدُوَّةً، وَتَرْجِعُونَ إِلَى عَشِيَّةٍ، كَظَهَرِ الْحَنِيَّةِ، عَجَزَ الْمُقَوْمُ، وَأَعْضَلَ الْمُقَوْمُ.

O those whose bodies are present but whose wits are absent, whose wishes are scattered, and whose rulers are afflicted by them. Your leader obeys Allah but you disobey him while the leader of the people of Syria (ash-Sham) disobeys Allah but they obey him. By Allah, I wish Mu'awiyah exchanges with me like Dinars with Dirhams, so that he takes from me ten of you and gives me one from them.

أَيُّهَا الشَّاهِدَةُ أَبْدَانُهُمْ، الْغَائِبَةُ عَنْهُمْ عُقُولُهُمْ، الْمُخْتَلِفَةُ أَهْوَاؤُهُمْ، الْمُبْتَلَى بِهِمْ أَمْرَاؤُهُمْ، صَاحِبُكُمْ يُطِيعُ اللَّهَ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْصُونَ، وَصَاحِبُ أَهْلِ الشَّامِ يَعْصِي اللَّهَ وَهُمْ يُطِيعُونَهُ، لَوَدِدْتُ وَاللَّهِ أَنْ مَعَاوِيَةَ صَارَ فَنِي بِكُمْ صَرْفَ الدِّينَارِ بِالدِّرْهِمِ، فَأَخَذَ مِنِّي عَشْرَةَ مِنْكُمْ وَأَعْطَانِي رَجُلًا مِنْهُمْ!

O people of Kufah, I have experienced in you three things and two others: you are deaf in spite of having ears, dumb in spite of speaking, and blind in spite of having eyes. You are neither true supporters in combat nor dependable brothers in distress. Your hands may be soiled with earth. O examples of those camels whose herdsman has disappeared, if they are collected together from one side they disperse from the other. By Allah, I see you in my imagination that if war becomes intense and action is in full swing you would run away from the son of Abi Talib like the woman who becomes naked in the front. I am certainly on clear guidance from my Lord (Allah) and on the path of my Prophet and I am on the right path which I adhere to regularly.

يَا أَهْلَ الْكُوفَةِ، مُبَيَّتٌ مِنْكُمْ بِنِثْلٍ وَاثْنَتَيْنِ: صُمٌّ نُوُؤُ أَسْمَاعٍ، وَبُكْمٌ نُوُؤُ كَلَامٍ، وَعُمِّيٌّ نُوُؤُ أَبْصَارٍ، لَا أَحْرَارٌ صِدْقٍ عِنْدَ الْإِقَاءِ، وَلَا إِخْوَانٌ ثِقَةٍ عِنْدَ الْبَلَاءِ! تَرَبَّتْ أَيْدِيكُمْ! يَا أَشْبَاهَ الْإِبِلِ الْإِبِلِ غَابَ عَنْهَا رُعَاتُهَا! كَلَّمَا جُمِعَتْ مِنْ جَانِبٍ تَفَرَّقَتْ مِنْ آخَرَ، وَاللَّهِ لَكَأَنَّيْ بِكُمْ فِيمَا إِخَالُ: لَوْ حَمَسَ الْوَعْيُ، وَحَمِيَ الضَّرَابُ، قَدْ انْفَرَجْتُمْ عَنْ ابْنِ أَبِي طَالِبٍ انْفِرَاجَ الْمَرْأَةِ عَنْ قُبْلِهَا، وَإِنِّي لَعَلَى بَيْتَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّي، وَمِنْهَاجٍ مِنْ نَبِيِّي، وَإِنِّي لَعَلَى الطَّرِيقِ الْوَاضِحِ الْقَطْعُ لِقَطَا.

[About the Household of the Holy Prophet](#)

أهل البيت وأصحاب رسول الله

Look at the people of the Prophet's family. Adhere to their direction. Follow their footsteps because they would never let you out of guidance, and never throw you into destruction. If they sit down, you sit down, and if they rise up you rise up. Do not go ahead of them, as you would thereby go astray and go not lag behind of them as you would thereby be ruined.

انظروا أهل بيت نبيكم فالزموا سمتهم، واتبعوا أثرهم فلن يخرجوكم من هدى، ولن يعيدوكم في ردى، فإن لبدوا فالبدوا، وإن نهضوا فانهضوا، ولا تسبقوهم فتضلوا، ولا تتأخروا عنهم فتهلكوا.

I have seen the companions of the Prophet but I do not find anyone resembling them. They began the day with dust on the hair and face (in hardship of life) and passed the night in prostration and standing in prayers. Sometimes they put down their foreheads and sometimes their cheeks. With the recollection of their resurrection it seemed as though they stood on live coal. It seemed that in between their eyes there were signs like knees of goats, resulting from long prostrations. When Allah was mentioned their eyes flowed freely till their shirt collars were drenched. They trembled for fear of punishment and hope of reward as the tree trembles on the day of stormy wind.

لقد رأيت أصحاب محمد (صلى الله عليه وآله)، فما أرى أحداً يشبههم منكم! لقد كانوا يصبحون شعناً غبراً، قد باتوا سجداً وقياماً، يراوحن بين جباههم وخذودهم، ويقفون على مثل الجمر من ذكر معادهم! كأن بين أعينهم ركب المعزى من طول سجودهم! إذا ذكر الله هملت أعينهم حتى تبل جيوبهم، ومادوا كما يميد الشجر يوم الريح العاصف، خوفاً من العقاب، ورجاءاً للتواب!

Alternative Sources for Sermon 97

- (1) *Kitab Sulaym ibn Qays*, 110;
- (2) al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, II, 236;
- (3) Ibn Qutaybah, *Uyun*, II, 301;
- (4) Abu Nu'aym, *Hilyah*, I, 76;
- (5) al-Mufid, *al-Irshad*, 161;
- (6) al-Mufid, *al-Majalis*, 105;
- (7) Sibte, *Tadhkirah*, 137;
- (8) Ibn 'Asakir, *Tarikh*, biographical account of 'Ali (A);

(9) al-Jahiz, *al-Bayan*, II, 68;

(10) al-Baladhuri, *Ansab*, II, 142;

(11) al-Tusi, *al-'Amali*, * 62.

1. In the atmosphere that had been created soon after the Prophet the Ahlul Bayt (members of his family) had no course except to remain secluded as a result of which world has remained ignorant of their real qualities and unacquainted with their teachings and attainments, and to belittle them and keeping them away from authority has been considered as the greatest service to Islam. If `Uthman's open misdeeds had not given a chance to the Muslims to wake up and open their eyes there would have been no question of allegiance to Amir al-mu'minin and temporal authority would have retained the same course as it had so far followed. But all those who could be named for the purpose had no courage to come forward because of their own shortcomings while Mu`awiyah was sitting in his capital away from the centre. In these circumstances there was none except Amir al-mu'minin who could be looked at. Consequently people's eyes hovered around him and the same common people who, following the direction of the wind, had been swearing allegiance to others jumped at him for swearing allegiance. Nevertheless, this allegiance was not on the count that they regarded his Caliphate as from Allah and him as an Imam (Divine Leader) to obey whom was obligatory. It was rather under their own principles which were known as democratic or consultative. However, there was one group who was swearing allegiance to him as a religious obligation regarding his Caliphate as determined by Allah. Otherwise, the majority regarded him a ruler like the other Caliphs, and as regards precedence, on the fourth position, or at the level of the common men after the three caliphs. Since the people, the army, and the civil servants had been impressed by the beliefs and actions of the previous rulers and immersed in their ways whenever they found anything against their liking they fretted and frowned, evaded war and were ready to rise in disobedience and revolt. Further, just as among those who fought in jihad with the Prophet there were some seekers of this world and others of the next world, in the same way here too there was no dearth of worldly men who were, in appearance, with Amir al-mu'minin but actually they had connections with Mu`awiyah who has promised some of them positions and had extended to others temptation of wealth. To hold them as Shi`ahs of Amir al-mu'minin and to blame Shi`ism for this reason is closing the eyes to facts, because the beliefs of these people would be the same as of those who regarded Amir al-mu'minin fourth in the series. Ibn Abi'l-Hadid throws light on the beliefs of these persons in clear words:

Whoever observes minutely the events during the period of Caliphate of Amir al-mu'minin would know that Amir al-mu'minin had been brought to bay because those who knew his real position were very few, and the swarming majority did not bear that belief about him which was obligatory to have. They gave precedence to the previous Caliphs over him and held that the criterion of precedence was Caliphate, and in this matter those coming later followed the predecessors, and argued that if the predecessors had not the knowledge that the previous Caliphs had precedence over Amir al-mu'minin they would not have preferred them to him. Rather, these people knew and took Amir al-mu'minin as a citizen and subject. Most of those who fought in his company did so on grounds of prestige or Arab partisanship, not on the ground of religion or belief. (Sharh Nahjul Balaghah, vol.7, p.72)

2. The progeny of Saba' ibn Yashjub ibn Ya`rub ibn Qahtan is known as the tribe of Saba'. When these people began to falsify prophets then to shake them Allah sent to them a flood of water by which their gardens were submerged and they left their houses and property to settle down in different cities. This proverb arose out of this event and it is now applied wherever people so disperse that there can be no hope of their joining together again.

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