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Jesus on Ethics – Forty Pieces of Advice from the ‘Word of God’

The Wealthiest of People

“I entered into the morning among you while my stew has been hunger, my food has been something that grows from the earth for the wild animals and beasts, my lamp has been the moon, my carpet has been the earth, and my pillow has been stone. There is no house for me that may be ruined, no property which may be destroyed, no child who may die, and no wife who may become sad. I enter into the morning while there is nothing for me and enter into the night while there is nothing for me, and I am the wealthiest person among the children of Adam.”

The Greatest of Trials

Jesus once asked a person, “What trial remains which has not been visited upon you?” The person replied, “He protected me from a trial which is the greatest of trials, and that is disbelief.” Then Jesus touched the man, and God cured him from his illnesses and beautified his face. Then he became a companion of Jesus and worshipped with him.

The Praise of God

It is reported that Jesus passed by a man who was blind, leprous and paralytic, and Jesus heard him giving thanks and saying, “Praise be to God who has protected me from the trials with which He afflicts the majority of men.”

The Pitfall of Hypocrisy

“I saw a stone upon which was written, ‘Turn me over,’ then I turned it over, then I saw written on it, ‘He who does not act according to what he knows will not be blessed in his search for what he does not

know and what he knows will come back against him.”

Kindness to all Creations

Verily, when Jesus the son of Mary, passed along the shore of a sea, he threw a piece of his bread into the water. Then some of the disciples said: “O Spirit of God and His Word! Why did you do this when that was your food?” He said, “I did this in order that some animal among the animals of the sea may eat it, and the reward of God for this is great.”

Humility to Others

Jesus served a meal to the Apostles, and when they had eaten it, he himself washed them. They said, “O Spirit of God! It would have been more proper for us to wash you!” He said, “I did this only that you would do this for those whom you teach.”



“O assembly of Apostles! I have a request of you. Fulfill it for me.” They said, “Your request is fulfilled, O Spirit of God!” Then he stood up and washed their feet. They said, “It would have been more proper for us to have done this, O Spirit of God!” Then he said, “Verily, it is more fitting for one with knowledge to serve the people. Indeed, I humbled myself only so that you may humble yourselves among the people after me, even as I have humbled myself among you.” Then Jesus said, “Wisdom is developed by humility, not by pride, and likewise plants only grow in soft soil, not in stone.”

The Trial of the Believer

The disciples complained to Jesus, the son of Mary about the disrespect of the people for them and their hating them. He said, “Be patient. Likewise, the believers are hated among the people. The example of them is like the example of wheat. How sweet is its taste and how numerous are its enemies.”

Providing for Yourself

It is reported that the disciples were the followers of Jesus. Whenever they were hungry they said, “O Spirit of God! We are hungry.” Then Jesus would hit his hands on the ground, whether smooth or hilly, and he would bring out two loaves of bread for each of them. Whenever they were thirsty they said, “O Spirit of God! We are thirsty.” Then Jesus would hit his hands on the ground, and brought out water and they drank from it. They asked, “O Spirit of God! Who is better than we are? Whenever we want, we are given food, and whenever we want water is given to us. We have faith in you and follow you.” Jesus said, “Better than you are those who work with their hands and eat from what they earn.” After that the disciples washed clothes by the stream and ate from their wages for it.”

The Best of People

Jesus was asked about the best of people and he said, “One whose speech is the mention of God, whose silence is contemplation, and whose vision is admonition.” [That is, he takes a lesson from what he sees.]

The Greatest Action

The disciples asked Jesus, “Indicate to us a work by which we may enter the Garden.” He said, “Do not speak at all.” They said, “We cannot do that.” He said, “So, do not speak except what is good.”

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A man said to Jesus the son of Mary, “O good teacher, indicate to me a work by which I may enter the Garden.” Then he said to him, “Beware of God secretly and openly, and do good to your parents.”

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Jesus, the son of Mary, passed by a group of people who were crying. He asked why they were crying. It was said to him that they were crying for their sins. He said, “You should pray about them and you will be forgiven.”

Self-Training

It was said to Jesus, “Who trained you?” He said, “No one trained me. I saw the ugliness of ignorance and, so, I avoided it.”

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The Apostles met with Jesus and said to him, “O teacher of the good! Guide us!” He said to them, “Verily Moses the interlocutor of God, commanded you not to swear by God, the Blessed and Exalted, falsely, and I command you not to swear by God falsely or truly.” They said, “O Spirit of God! Guide us more!” Then he said, “Verily Moses, the prophet of God, commanded you not to commit adultery, and I command you not to talk to yourselves about adultery, let alone to commit adultery. Verily, one who talks to himself about adultery, is like one who sets fire to a room that is decorated so the smoke damages the decor, even though the room is not burnt.”

Having a Good Regard for Others

It is reported that Jesus passed by a carcass with his disciples. Then the disciples said, “How putrid the smell of this dog is!” Then Jesus said, “How intense is the whiteness of his teeth!”

Whom to Associate With

The Apostles said to Jesus, “O Spirit of God! With whom should we keep company?” He said, “He the sight of whom reminds you of God, the speech of whom increases your knowledge, and the works of whom make you desirous of the other world.”

Knowing the Prophet

Jesus the son of Mary used to spend some time with the disciples and advise them, and he used to say, “He does not know me, who knows not his soul, and he who does not know the soul between his two sides, does not know the soul between my two sides. And he who knows his soul which is between his sides, he knows me. And he who knows me, knows He who sent me.”

Moral Traits

“He who often becomes upset, his body becomes sick; he whose character is bad, his self becomes his torment; he who often talks, often stumbles; he who often lies, loses his worth; he who quarrels with men, loses his manliness.”

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“That which is not loved by you for someone to do to you, do not do that to others; if someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him your left cheek also.”

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“O Children of Israel! Do not be excessive in eating, for those who are excessive in eating are excessive in sleeping; those who are excessive in sleeping are deficient in praying; of those who are deficient in praying, it is written that they are negligent.”

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“Mind your tongue to reform your heart, be satisfied with your house, beware of pretentiousness and excess, be ashamed before your Lord, cry over your mistakes, and escape from people as you would run from the lion or viper, [for] they were medicine but today, they have become illness. Then, encounter God when you will.”

The Life of the World

“Who would build a house on the waves of the sea? This world is that house, so you should not take it as a dwelling.”



“The love of this world and the next cannot be aligned in the heart of a believer, like water and fire in a single vessel.”



“When one of you sits in his house, he should have clothes on. Verily, God has allotted modesty for you, just as He has allotted your sustenance.”



“If you are my lovers and my brothers, you must accustom yourself to the enmity and hatred of the people, otherwise you will not be my brothers. I teach you this that you may learn it; I do not teach you so that you may become proud. Verily, you will not achieve that which you desire unless you give up that which you desire, and by enduring patiently that which you detest, and guard your gaze, for it plants lust in the heart, and it is sufficient to tempt him. Happy are they who see that which they desire with their eyes, but who commit no disobedience in their hearts. How far is that which is in the past, and how near is that which is to come. Woe to those who have been deluded when what they loathe approaches them, and what they love abandons them, and there comes that which they were promised. Woe to those whose efforts are for the sake of this world, and whose works are mistaken. How he will be disgraced before his Lord! Moreover, do not speak much for aught but the remembrance of God. Those who speak much about aught but God harden their hearts, but they do not know it. Do not look at the faults of others over much [the phrase used here indicates spying], but look after the purity of your own selves, for you are enslaved servants. How much water flows in a mountain without its becoming soft? And how much wisdom are you taught without your hearts becoming soft? You are bad servants, and you are not pious servants. You are not nobly free. Indeed, you are like unto the oleander, all who see it wonder at its flower, but when they eat from it they die. So, peace be unto you.”



“This world and the next are rivals. When you satisfy one of them you irritate the other; when you irritate one of them you satisfy the other.”



“In truth I say to you, just as one who is sick looks at food and finds no pleasure in it due to the severity of the pain, the masters of this world find no pleasure in worship and do not find the sweetness of it, for what they find is the sweetness of this world. In truth I say to you, just as an animal which is not captured and tamed becomes hardened and its character is changed, so too when hearts are not softened by the remembrance of death and the effort of worship they become hard and tough, and in truth I say to you, if a skin is not torn, it may become a vessel for honey, just as hearts, if they are not

torn by desires, or fouled by greed, or hardened by blessings, may become vessels for wisdom.”



“Do not take the world as a master, for it will take you as its servants. Keep your treasure with One who will not squander it. The owners of the treasures of this world fear for its ruin, but he who owns the treasure of God does not fear for its ruin.”



Jesus said to the disciples, “Be satisfied with a little of the world, while your religion is safe, likewise the people of this world are satisfied with a little of the religion, while their world is safe; love God by being far from them, and make God satisfied by being angry with them.” The disciples said, “O spirit of God, so with whom should we keep company?” He said, “He the sight of whom reminds you of God, his speech increases your knowledge and his action makes you desirous of the other world.”

Conduct with Others

“O Children of Israel! Do not speak with the ignorant of wisdom, for otherwise you do injustice with it, and do not keep it from its folk, for otherwise you do injustice to them, and do not help the unjust with his injustice, for otherwise your virtue becomes void. Affairs are three: the affair whose righteousness is clear to you, so follow it; the affair whose error is clear to you, so avoid it; and the affair about which there are differences, so return it to God, the Almighty and Glorious.”



A man said to Jesus the son of Mary, “O good teacher, indicate to me a work by which I may enter the Garden.” Then he said to him, “Beware of God secretly and openly, and do good to your parents.”

Lowering the Gaze

“Beware of looking at what is prohibited, for it is the seed of lust and plant of depravity.”

Entering into Paradise

“In truth I say to you, the folds of heaven are empty of the rich; the entering of a camel through the eye of a needle is easier than the entering of a rich man into heaven.”

A Prayer of Jesus

Among the supplications narrated from Jesus, the son of Mary, is: “O God! You are the Deity of all who are in heaven and the Deity of all on the earth. There is no Deity in them other than You, and You are

the All-wise for all in heaven and the All-wise for all on the earth. There is no All-wise in them other than You. And you are the King of all in heaven and all on the earth. There is no King in them other than You. Your power in heaven is like Your power on the earth. And Your sovereignty in heaven is like Your sovereignty on the earth. I ask you by Your All-generous Name and Your radiant face and Your eternal kingdom, do such and such for me.”



It is reported that a man complained to Jesus about his debts. Jesus said to him, “Say: ‘O God, Who takes away grief, removes sadness, disposes of sorrow, and answers the prayers of the needy! O Merciful of this world and the other world and the Compassionate of them! You are Merciful to me and Merciful to all things! So, be Merciful to me, with a mercy that will make me needless of the mercy of others than You, and by that mercy let my debts be paid.’”

Be Critics of Speech

“Take the truth from the folk of falsehood, but do not take the false from the folk of truth. Be critics of speech. How much aberration is adorned by a verse of the Book of God, like the adornment of a copper dirham with silver plating. Looking at it is the same, but those who have vision are aware.”

Divine Retribution

It is said that a man accompanied Jesus the son of Mary and said that he would go with him. They continued along until they came to a river. They sat and started to eat. They had three loaves of bread. They ate two of them and one remained. Jesus went to the river, drank some water and returned. He did not find the third loaf. He asked the man who had taken that loaf. He said that he did not know. They continued until they came to a doe followed by two fawns. Jesus beckoned one of the fawns, killed it, roasted it and they ate it. Then Jesus addressed the fawn [that had been eaten,] saying, “Live!” It came to life and went away. Then Jesus said to the other man, ‘By the God Who has shown you this miracle, who took that loaf of bread?’ He said that he did not know.

They continued until they reached a lake. Jesus took the hand of the man and led him over the water. When they reached the other side, Jesus said, ‘By the One who has shown you this miracle, who took that loaf of bread?’ He said that he did not know. They continued until they reached a desert and sat down. Jesus gathered some sand or dust and said, “By the permission of God, be gold!” and it became gold. He divided it into three portions and said, “One third is for me, one third for you, and one third for whoever took that loaf of bread.” The man said, “Alright, I took that loaf of bread.” Jesus said, “Then all of this gold is yours’ and he left him.

The man encountered two other men in the desert who wanted to take his gold and kill him. He said, “Let us divide the gold into three portions.” They sent one of them to the village to buy food. The one

who went said to himself, “Why should I let them have portions of this wealth? I shall put some poison into the food, and kill them.” So, he poisoned the food. The other two said, “Why should we give a third of this wealth to him. When he comes back, let us kill him, and divide the rest of the wealth between us.” When he returned, they attacked him and killed him. Then they ate the food and died. The wealth remained in the desert with the three dead men beside it. Jesus passed them and saw the situation. He said to his disciples, “This is the world, so beware of it!”

Life to the Dead

Imam As-Sadiq¹ (peace be upon him) was asked, “Did Jesus the son of Mary enliven someone after his death, so that he was eating and had a daily living, continued his life for a term and had a child?” He said, “Yes, he had a friend who was a brother in God to him. And when Jesus passed by he would go down to him. And Jesus would spend a while with him. Then he would leave with salutations of peace unto him. Then his mother came out to him [Jesus]. Then she said to him, ‘He died, O Apostle of God!’ He said to her, ‘Would you like to see him?’ She said, ‘Yes.’ He said to her, ‘I will come to you tomorrow to enliven him, with the permission of God.’

When the morrow arrived he came and said to her, ‘Accompany me to his grave.’ So they went to his grave. Jesus stopped, then called on God. Then the grave opened and her son came out alive. Then when his mother saw him and he saw her, they cried. Jesus had mercy on them and said to him, ‘Would you like to remain with your mother in the world?’ He said, ‘O Apostle of God! With eating and a daily living and a term, or without a term and no daily living and no eating?’

Then Jesus said to him, ‘But with a daily living and eating and a term you will live for twenty years, marry and father a child.’ He said, ‘Yes, in that case.’ [Imam As-Sadiq] said, “Then Jesus returned him to his mother and he lived for twenty years, married and fathered a child.”

The Closest Ones to God

Verily, Jesus passed by three people. Their bodies had become thin and their colors had changed. Then he said, “What has brought you to what I see?” They said, “Fear of the Fire.” He said, “It is the duty of God to give security to those who fear Him.” Then he passed from them to three other men. He was surprised to find them even thinner and more changed. Then he said, “What has brought you to what I see?”

They said, “Yearning for the Garden.” He said, “It is the duty of God to give to him who has hope in Him.” Then he passed to three others. He was surprised to find them even thinner and their faces were shining like mirrors. Then he said, “What has brought you to what I see?” They said, “Love of God, the Mighty, and Magnificent.” Three times, he said, “You are those who are close to God.”

¹ The 6th Divinely appointed successor to the Prophet Muhammad (blessings of Allah be upon him and his family) – Ja’far

ibne Muhammad.

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