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Lesson 9: Guidance And Error Are In God's Hands

1. The parts of guidance and error

A traveler has an address in his hand. He meets you and asks you to help him find the address. You have two choices before you:

First, to go with him and complete your good deed by accompanying him to his destination and then say goodbye and leave him.

Second, indicate with your hand and giving various signs guide him towards his destination.

It is evident that in both cases, you have 'guided' him towards his destination but there is a difference between these two; the second one is just 'expressing the way' and the first, is taking one to one's destination. The Holy Quran and Traditions of Islam mention both ways.

On the other hand, sometimes guidance only has a legal quality to it, that is, formed by means of laws and rules and sometimes it has an instinctive quality, that is, by means of facilities provided by creation like the guidance of a seed to becoming a complete human being and both of these ways are mentioned in the Holy Quran and the Traditions.

By clarifying the means of guidance (and, naturally, the point opposite it, leading astray or error), we return to the main discussion.

We read in many of the verses of the Holy Quran that guidance and leading astray is God's work. Doubtlessly, the 'indication of the way' comes from God. Why? Because He sent the Prophet and sent the heavenly Book to show people the way.

But 'reaching the goal' through coercion or force clearly does not agree with free will and choice but because all power and strength which is necessary to reach one's goal God gives us and it is He Who

gives us success upon this way, this sense of guidance is also from God, that is, preparation of the equipment and the preliminaries and providing them is at the disposal of humanity.

2. An important question:

Now, an important question arises and that is that we read in many verses of the Holy Quran,

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا بِلِسَانٍ قَوْمِهِ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَهُمْ ۚ فَيُضِلُّ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

"God guides Whom He wills and misleads whom He wills." (14:4)

Some people, without considering other verses of the Holy Quran, and the interpretation which one verse has with others, immediately, upon seeing this verse, object and say, "If God guides whom He wills and misleads whom He wills, what are we supposed to do in the middle?"

The important point is that the verses of the Holy Quran must always be studied in relation to each other in order to understand them in truth. Here we will recall several other verses about guidance and leading astray so that you can study them in relation to the above verse,

يُثَبِّتُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِالْقَوْلِ الثَّابِتِ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ ۚ وَيُضِلُّ اللَّهُ الظَّالِمِينَ ۚ وَيَفْعَلُ اللَّهُ مَا يَشَاءُ

"God will establish in strength those who believe, with the Word that stands firm in this world and in the hereafter; but God will leave, to stray, those who do wrong: God does what He wills. (14:27)

الَّذِينَ يُجَادِلُونَ فِي آيَاتِ اللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ سُلْطَانٍ أَتَاهُمْ ۚ كَبُرَ مَقْتًا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَعِنْدَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ۚ كَذَلِكَ يَطْبَعُ اللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ قَلْبٍ مُتَكَبِّرٍ جَبَّارٍ

"Thus does God leave to stray such as transgress and live in doubt." (40:34)

وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا ۚ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

"And those who strive in Our (Cause), we will certainly guide them to Our paths: for verily God is with those who do right." (29:69)

As we see, God's will is not unaccountable. He neither gives the success of guidance to a person nor does He deny a person success. Those who undertake the jihad upon God's Way, war with their difficulties and show strength and firmness of purpose, have been promised guidance and this is justice.

But those who create oppression and suppression and those who take steps towards extravagance, doubt, injustice and causing temptation in hearts, God takes away their possibility of guidance. Their hearts, as a result of these deeds, are darkened and they will not be able to succeed in reaching the station of wellbeing. This is how the Creator leaves the results of our deeds in our own hands and this ill justice.

3. Knowledge of the eternal is a cause to arise

The last point which we feel should be mentioned here in the discussion of predestination and free will is the excuse used by some fatalists as knowledge of the eternal of God.

They say, "Does God know that so and so at such and such an hour on such and such a day will kill someone or will drink an alcoholic beverage?" If we say, "He does not know," we have denied God's knowledge and if we say, "Yes, that person must do this, and otherwise God's knowledge will be imperfect."

Thus, in order to preserve God's knowledge, a person is obliged to sin and obey God!!

But the fact is, this excuse was fabricated in order to cover over the sins they wanted to commit but they have forgotten the fact that we say that God knew from eternity whether we would be inclined towards free will and choice and will obey or sin. That is, our will or choice was also part of God's knowledge. Thus, if we are obliged to sin, God's knowledge will become ignorant. (Pay careful attention here).

Allow us to put forth some questions on this point to clarify them. Assume that a teacher knows that a lazy student will fail at the end of the year and the teacher is one hundred per cent sure of this fact because of years of experience as a teacher.

When the student fails, can the student take the teacher to task and say, "Your knowledge and what you foresaw caused me to fail."

Or, let us assume that he is a sinless and pure person and he knew of a murder which would take place on such and such a day and interferes to prevent it, does the knowledge of this pure person take away the responsibility of the criminal, obliging the criminal to commit the crime?

Or, assume that a new machine has been invented which can predict the occurrence of an event several hours before it happens and it can say that so and so at such and such an hour in such and such a place will commit such and such an act. Does this oblige that person to do this?

In summary, God's knowledge never obliges anyone to do anything.

Think and Answer

1. How many kinds of guidance are there? Describe them.
2. Recite the verses of the Quran which describe God's guidance and leading astray.
3. What is the interpretation of God's guidance and leading astray?
4. What is meant by Gods eternal knowledge?
5. Does this knowledge withdraw our duty and responsibility? Give an example.

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