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Section 10: The Faithful and the Unfaithful Ones Compared

Surah An-Nahl – Verse 71

وَاللَّهُ فَضَّلَ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلَي بَعْضٍ فِي الرِّزْقِ فَمَا الَّذِينَ فُضِّلُوا بِرَادِّي رِزْقِهِمْ عَلَي مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ فَهُمْ فِيهِ سَوَآءٌ أَفَبِنِعْمَةِ اللَّهِ يَجْحَدُونَ

71. "And Allah has made some of you excel others in the (means of) sustenance. So those who have been made to excel do not give their (means of) sustenance to those whom their right hands possess, so that they may be equal therein. Do they then deny Allah's bounty?"

And Allah has made some of you excel in means of sustenance over others. This blessing is allocated to man by Allah and through one's own effort, either because of his purity of soul, or for testing of others by him being made an example such as the cases of knowledge, health, and security.

However, those who have been made to excel, (owing to their own narrow-sightedness and narrow vision) are not predisposed to part with a portion of their share for the sake of their subjects so as to enable them to be on equal footing with them.

The verse says:

"And Allah has made some of you excel others in the (means of) sustenance. So those who have been made to excel do not give their (means of) sustenance to those whom their right hands possess, so that they may be equal therein..."

One may conclude that Muslims must not feel privileged or at an advantage when facing those who are in an inferior position with respect to them in their families.

Such differences in the amount of incomes have their origin in the abilities and talents of individuals which in turn are also from Allah's gifts. In certain cases, they may be acquired in some aspects, though in other cases they are definitely not acquired.

Therefore, even in a healthy sound environment from the economics point of view, one finds widespread gaps in incomes, which is undeniable. At any rate and despite all this, what lays the main foundations of one's successes is one's own struggle.

People's differences in their means of sustenance is one of the Divine wise programs, for if all people were to enjoy equal benefits, their spiritual peaks of perfection would not be demonstrated. For instance, generosity, perseverance, self-sacrifice, protection, compassion, modesty and the like usually exhibit their significance whenever there are some differences among men.

Certainly, justice does not prevail only when Allah sets up all on an equal footing from the point of view of their abilities and conditions, for if all were to enjoy an equal amount of blessings, the issues of employment and cooperation, which are required for social life, would lose sense.

Nevertheless, individual differences in talents, abilities and incomes should not result in misuse of the potentialities with regard to the social strata.

It is for this reason that He proclaims at the end of the verse that:

"...Do they then deny Allah's bounty?"

Here, He makes an allusion to the fact that such differences in their original natural forms (and not in their artificial and oppressive sense) are also among Allah's blessings which have been brought forth to protect the human society and for the development of their different potentialities.

Surah An-Nahl – Verse 72

وَاللَّهُ جَعَلَ لَكُم مِّنْ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجاً وَجَعَلَ لَكُم مِّنْ أَزْوَاجِكُم بَنِينَ وَحَفَدَةً
وَرَزَقَكُم مِّنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ أَفَبِالْبَاطِلِ يُؤْمِنُونَ وَبِنِعْمَتِ اللَّهِ هُمْ يَكْفُرُونَ

72. "And Allah has designated wives for you from among your own selves and has designated children and grandchildren for you from your wives and sustained you of clean means. Do they (still) believe in the falsehood and they disbelieve in the bounty of Allah?"

We read in Tafsir-i-Tabari that the Arabic term /hafadah/ refers to the son-in-law, child, grandchild and even the companions and servants, as well as the children who are born to the wife from a different husband. In Tafsir-i-Al-Mizan, it is cited that /hafadah/ is the plural form of /h afid/ and means 'rapidity

in action' and as those near-of-kin are quicker in assisting the parents, they are called /hafadah/.

Anyway, this verse, which like the above two verses, begins with the term 'Allah' and discusses Allah's blessings, makes allusions to the graces from the humanitarian point of view, the aids, as well as to the social workers and clean means of sustenance. This verse complements the three-fold circle of blessings which are mentioned in these three verses.

That is, it begins with the life and death system, then it explains the 'variety in life style' by referring to the differences in means of sustenance and their abilities. The verse in question, which superintends the reproductive system of mankind, ends with clean means of sustenance.

It says:

"And Allah has designated wives for you from among your own selves..."

He has designated for you such wives who are the sources of both comfort for your soul and body, and the survival of generations.

Therefore, He hastens to add:

"...and has designated children and grandchildren for you from your wives..."

Then the Qur'an says:

"...and sustained you of clean means..."

And at the end of the discussion, the Qur'an declares this as a general conclusion: Do they still call on the idols despite all the splendor and power which they observe and despite all these graces which have been made available to them by Allah? Do they embrace the wrong and believe in it, and neglect the blessings of Allah?

The verse says:

"...Do they (still) believe in the falsehood and they disbelieve in the bounty of Allah?"

What a judgment is it? And what a wrong and an untrue schedule this consists of that man has forgotten about the source of all blessings and has taken to those beings which lack even the least of all effects and which serve as an example of all the 'untruth' in all its dimensions.

Explanations

One's spouse and children are all among the Divine blessings. One's spouse is the source of comfort and one's children are the sources of hope.

Matching between husband and wife is one of the favors of Allah and of the Divine wisdom, and

marriage is a deliberate Divine program for man.

"And Allah has designated wives for you from your own selves..."

Allah makes provisions for both one's spiritual needs and one's material needs.

Separation of oneself from matrimonial links, preventing oneself from having children and abstaining oneself from what is allowed by Allah are all the examples of adhering to wrong principles and are signs of ingratitude for Allah's blessings.

To fornicate or to commit adultery despite having wives and having allowed means of sustenance, present cases of disregarding Allah's favours.

Tafsir-i-Safi and Jawami'-ul-Jami' indicate that the objective of 'Allah's favours', mentioned in the verse, is the blissful Prophet (S), the Qur'an, and Islam which the unbelievers used to reject.

Surah An-Nahl – Verse 73

وَيَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لاَ يَمْلِكُ لَهُمْ رِزْقاً مِنَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالاَرْضِ شَيْئاً وَلاَ يَسْتَطِيعُونَ

73. "And they worship other than Allah that has no power to provide them, of sustenance, anything from the heavens and the earth and can do nothing."

Following the previous discussions on monotheism, this verse deals with the issue of paganism and, taking a stern and blaming tone, declares that they worship idols other than Allah which do not have at their disposal any means of sustenance in the skies and on the earth.

They are not only the proprietors of anything in this regard, but they also have no capabilities to create and have access to the means of sustenance.

The verses says:

"And they worship other than Allah that has no power to provide them, of sustenance, anything from the heavens and the earth and can do nothing."

This style of meaning makes allusion to the matter that the pagans believed in and worshipped idols for they considered them as an impact in their destiny, their profits and their losses, while the worshipped one must be both provider of means of sustenance and mighty.

However, the partners whom they designate for Allah are neither able to make provisions now nor in the

future.

Their imaginary objects of worship are neither able to pour rains from the sky nor are they able to grow plants on the earth.

Surah An-Nahl – Verse 74

فَلاَ تَضْرِبُوا لِلَّهِ الاَمْثَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنتُمْ لاَ تَعْلَمُونَ

74. "Therefore do not coin any similitudes for Allah. Verily, Allah knows and you do not know."

The pagans regarded Allah as a king and considered idols as His ministers. This holy verse declares that an end must be put to such similes, and you should not designate equals for Him when worshipping Allah for He has not got any equals or counterparts who may deserve being worshipped.

The verse says:

"Therefore do not coin any similitudes for Allah. Verily, Allah knows and you do not know."

Some commentators have claimed that the first sentence of the verse which says:

"Therefore do not coin any similitudes for Allah..."

refers to the logic of the pagans during the 'Age of Ignorance', (the exact replica of which can also be found among some of contemporary pagans).

They used to claim that the reason why they would call on the idols was that they were not worthy for worshipping Allah, so they had to take idols because these were the near-stationed ones to the Lord. Allah is like a great king who grants audience only to ministers and his exclusive entourage.

However, the masses of the people who cannot have access to Him, will call on those who are exclusively received by Him.

Such groundless and unjustified kinds of logic which are sometimes depicted in the form of a deviating parable, are the most dangerous of all kinds of logic.

To answer such a claim, the Qur'an asserts that you should not use allegories in case of Allah; that is, allegories which suit limited scopes of thought and fit in the category of those whose existence is probable and which is full of defects and flaws.

If you were aware of the All-Encompassing attribute of Allah with regard to all beings and you knew

about His grace and favour which is unlimited, and His proximity towards yourself, in which case makes Him approach you closer than your own 'self', you would never turn to other means for securing Allah's attention.

That Lord Who has invited you to be in direct touch with Him in prayers, and has left the doors of His house wide-open to you day and night, He must not be likened to an oppressive king who has slipped into his palace and does not let anyone in there, except a few.

In our discussion of concerning Allah's attributes, we have particularly pointed out the fact that one of the sliding slopes which exists in the way of understanding the attributes of Allah is that of the land-slide of using similes.

That is, comparing Allah's attributes with those of man and considering them as similarities, because Allah is an infinite and boundless being in every respect and other beings are the ones which are finite and within limits and any comparison made in here causes one to remain aloof from knowing Him.

Even in cases where we are bound to do so, and to compare His Holy Essence to light and the like, we must note that such similes and metaphorical applications have got shortcomings and fail to achieve our purpose, and they might be only acceptable in part and not as a whole.

While most people are heedless of this fact, they are often thrown down the bottom of the slopes of the valley seemingly of simile and syllogism, when making their comparisons. They are then distanced from the truth of monotheism.

Thus, the Qur'an warns us repeatedly and attracts our attention to this fact; sometimes with the sentence:

"And there is none like unto Him."1

and sometimes it also uses the sentence:

"Nothing is similar to Him."2

At other times, the Qur'an calls our attention by using the first sentence of the abovementioned verse.

And, perhaps, the last sentence of the verse, by saying:

"Verily, Allah knows and you do not know"

explains this same subject that usually people are unaware of the secrets of the attributes of Allah.

Surah An-Nahl – Verse 75

ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلاً عَبْداً مَّمْلُوكاً لاَ يَقْدِرُ عَلَي شَيْءٍ وَمَن رَّزَقْنَاهُ مِنَّا رِزْقاً حَسَناً فَهُوَ يُنفِقُ مِنْهُ سِرّاً وَجَهْراً هَلْ يَسْتَوُونَ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لاَ يَعْلَمُونَ

75. "Allah sets forth a parable of a bonded slave, having no power over anything, and one whom We have provided with good means of sustenance from Us, then he spends from it secretly and openly. Are they equal? Praise belongs to Allah! But most of them do not know."

Allah has discussed the fact as to how the pagans are being misled, saying:

"Allah sets forth a parable of a bonded slave, having no power over anything..."

Allah here sets forth a parable to clarify His intention by it and thereby approaches the concept to the audience. The parable is: 'the slave who is a bonded one and has authority over nothing;' that is, he has got no options.

And a free man whom Allah has provided with means of sustenance, possesses property and blessings, gives away out of his belongings openly and in secret and without any fear.

The verse says:

"...and one whom We have provided with good means of sustenance from Us, then he spends from it secretly and openly..."

As for the sentence: /hal yastaw□n/ signifies:

"***Are they equal?***",

some commentators claim that this allegory relates to the believers and the disbelievers, since a disbeliever has not got involved in anything 'good ', while a believer acquires the 'good'.

Thus Allah has explained the difference between the believer and the disbeliever, hence, He has persuaded people to choose the path of the believers and dissuade them from taking the path of the disbelievers.

The holy phrase:

"***Praise belongs to Allah!***"

signifies that one must thank Allah for His blessings. This meaning refers to all of Allah's blessings. That

is, say that the act of worship only deserves Him Who leads us towards monotheism, theology (the sciences of Divinities), and gratitude, and shows us the road to Paradise.

However, most people, that is the pagans, do not know that it is He Who deserves being worshipped, and all blessings belong to Him.

The verse says:

"…Are they equal? Praise belongs to Allah! But most of them do not know."

Surah An-Nahl – Verse 76

وَضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلاً رَجُلَيْنِ أَحَدُهُمَآ أَبْكَمُ لاَ يَقْدِرُ عَلَي شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ كَلٌّ عَلَي مَوْلاَهُ أَيْنَمَا يُوَجِّهْهُ لاَ يَأْتِ بِخَيرٍ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي هُوَ وَمَن يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَهُوَ عَلَي صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ

76. "And Allah sets forth a parable of two men, one of whom is dumb having authority over nothing, and he is a burden upon his master, wherever he sends him he brings no good. Is he then equal to him who enjoins justice and he (himself) is on the straight path?"

You who do not consider the master and the slave as equals, how can you equalize the creator with the creature?

Thus, we find Him using another parable for the slaves of the idols and the true believers, likening them to a deaf-mute born person who is at the same time a disabled slave, and a free man who is always engaged in calling the people to be just and fair and who is on the right path.

The Qur'an says:

"And Allah sets forth a parable of two men, one of whom is dumb having authority over nothing, and he is a burden upon his master…"

That is why he usually does not perform well whatever he is sent to. In this manner, this man has got four negative attributes: being a dumb by birth, absolute disability, being a burden to his lord, and, finally, procuring no useful outcome for whatever is referred to him.

Is such a man equal to the one who is eloquent in his speech, always calling people to be just, and following the right path? Of course, it is not so.

The verse says:

"…wherever he sends him he brings no good. Is he then equal to him who enjoins justice and he (himself) is on the straight path?"

Allah has set two allegories in this holy verse and in the previous verse inciting the people to condescend to the fact that all know that neither of these two groups are equal.

That is, as the two sides of either of these two parables can not be considered as equal, Allah can not be considered equal to the inanimate idols (which are incapable of doing any harm or benefit) despite all His favours and graces as well as all the religious blessings of this world and of the next which He has accorded to mankind.

Some have claimed that this allegory has been used by Allah to differentiate the believer from the unbeliever. The goal in using a dumb man is the pagan while the aim in mind in the case of mentioning he who resorts to preaching justice, is a believer who are not equal.

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1. Surah Tauhid, No. 112, verse 4
2. Surah Shura, No. 42, verse 11

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