

## Section 3: Service of the Sacred Mosque, and the Idolaters

### Surah At-Tawbah – Verse 17

مَا كَانَ لِلْمُشْرِكِينَ أَنْ يَعْمُرُوا مَسَاجِدَ اللَّهِ شَاهِدِينَ عَلَى أَنْفُسِهِم بِالْكُفْرِ أُولَئِكَ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ وَفِي النَّارِ هُمْ خَالِدُونَ

**17. “It is not for the polytheists to maintain the mosques of Allah, while they bear witness to unbelief against themselves. These it is whose deeds are null, and in the Fire shall they abide forever.”**

It is true that the occasion of revelation of this verse is about the Sacred Mosque, yet its command concerns all mosques and, for the same reason, the word of ‘mosques’ has been applied in it, not the phrase of Sacred Mosque.

One of the items that was announced by Ali (as) in immunity from pagans was that the Sacred Mosque was not permitted to be mended by idolaters. They should not even enter it. This meaning has been pointed out in verse No. 27 of the current Surah. The above verse says:

**“It is not for the polytheists to maintain the mosques of Allah, while they bear witness to unbelief against themselves. These it is whose deeds are null, and in the Fire shall they abide forever.”**

### Explanations

1. Infidels are not permissible to interfere building mosques and also in foundations belonging to the culture and religion of Muslims.

2. Neither ever income is lawful, nor ever association is worthy. Be aware that because of the love of mosques in you infidels can penetrate in your religious affairs. The verse says:

***“It is not for the polytheists to maintain the mosques of Allah...”***

3. Those who pretend to impiety are not rightful to interfere in the religious affairs. The verse says:

***“...while they bear witness to unbelief against themselves...”***

4. In building and running the sacred centers and foundations, do not take the money of impious ones, so that they can not boast, interfere and expect any thing.

5. An action alone is not so important, but its intention has the essential function. The verse says:

***“It is not for the polytheists to maintain...”***

## **Surah At-Tawbah – Verse 18**

إِنَّمَا يَعْمُرُ مَسَاجِدَ اللَّهِ مَنْ ءَامَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَءَاتَى الزَّكَاةَ  
وَلَمْ يَخْشَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ فَعَسَىٰ أُولَٰئِكَ أَنْ يَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُهْتَدِينَ

**18. “Only he shall maintain the mosques of Allah who believes in Allah and the Last Day, and performs the prayer, and pays the alms (zakāt), and fears none but Allah. They, hopefully, will be among the guided.”**

Mosques are the important centers of Muslims’ worship and social activities. Therefore, both their custodians should be pure and pious and their programs must be constructive and educative. Also, their budget should be lawful, and those who haunt there must be godly and pious.

Otherwise, when the producers of mosques are some tyrants and aggressive rulers, and their prayer-leaders are some illiterate coward persons, mosques will naturally remain far off from their main aim which is to be spiritually populated, not constructionally.

As the late Feyz-i-Kāshāni has pointed out in his commentary book entitled: At-Tafsir-us-Sāfi, maintaining a mosque includes: mending, cleanliness, pavement, light, teaching, and preaching. 1

The Messenger of Allah (S) has said: “When you see a man haunts a mosque, then testify to his Faith.”

### **Explanations**

1. Maintaining a mosque and its custodianship needs some conditions:

From the point of belief, Faith in Origin and End is necessary.

From the point of practice, establishing prayers and paying alms are obligatory.

From the point of spirit, bravery and impenetrability are demanded.

2. If the custodians of mosques be brave enough, the mosques will be the center of helpful activities against transgression.

3. The duty of the custodians of godly mosques and the maintainers of them is helping the deprive. Therefore, they should be the givers of alms. The verse says:

***“...and performs the prayer, and pays the alms (zakāt), and fears none but Allah...”*** 2

4. Faith is not aloof from practice; prayer is not separate from alms; and a mosque is not empty from revolution and struggle against injustice. The verse says:

***“Only he shall maintain the mosques of Allah who believes in Allah and the last Day, and performs the prayer, and pays the alms (zakāt) and fears none but Allah. They, hopefully will be among the guided.”*** 3

## Surah At-Tawbah – Verse 19

أَجْعَلْتُمْ سِقَايَةَ الْحَاجِّ وَعِمَارَةَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ كَمَنْ ءَامَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ  
وَجَاهَدَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَا يَسْتَوُونَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ لَيَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ

**19. “Do you make the giving of water to the pilgrims and the maintenance of the Sacred Mosque equal to someone who believes in Allah and the Last Day, and strives in the way of Allah? They are not equal with Allah, and Allah does not guide the unjust people.”**

Abbas, the Prophet’s uncle, and Shaybah, the custodian of Ka’bah, were boasting to each other. Abbas boasted of his job which was supplying water for the pilgrimages of the Sacred House, and Shaybah boasted of being the custodian of the Ka’bah.

Ali (as) said that he gloried in the fact that they embraced Islam with the help of his struggle and his sword. Abbas was annoyed and complained of Ali (as) before the Prophet (S). Then, this verse was revealed.

For his precedence, Ali (as) repeatedly called to witness by this verse, because Faith and Holy Struggle were superior to the services done in the age of idolatry which did not bring them spiritual worth. The

verse says:

***“Do you make the giving of water to the pilgrims and the maintenance of the Sacred Mosque equal to someone who believes in Allah and the Last Day, and strives in the way of Allah?...”***

Therefore, a deed without being accompanied by faith is something hollow. It is like a mirage, or as a body without soul.

This fact must be remarked here that sincere strivers are superior to others, although the latter are helpful in a lot of services through some other jobs.

That is why if the true Faithful strivers be compared as equivalent with others, it will be counted as one of the social injustices.

The verse continues saying:

***“...They are not equal with Allah, and Allah does not guide the unjust people.”***

## **Surah At-Tawbah – Verse 20**

الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَهَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ أَكْثَرُ دَرَجَةً  
عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَائِزُونَ

***20. “Those who believed and emigrated, and strove in Allah’s way with their properties and their selves, have a greater rank with Allah, and these they are the triumphant.”***

As an emphasis and a more explanation, the Qur’ān in this verse indicates that those who believed and embraced Islam and migrated (to Medina) and struggled with their possessions and their selves in the way of Allah, are the highest in rank in the view of Allah, and they are the achievers of salvation. The verse says:

***“Those who believed and emigrated, and strove in Allah’s way with their properties and their selves, have a greater rank with Allah, and these they are the triumphant.”***

### **Explanations**

1. In Islam, Faith, migration, and Holy Struggle, like piety, are located at the top of values.

***“...have a greater rank...”***

2. With some people, the criterion is their tribal and racial relationships, while in the divine reckons,

Faith, migration, and Holy Struggle are criterions of values,

(...*with Allah*...).

If all Muslims and the Prophet's companions could gather and sit in a row, the one who believed first (sooner than any other man), and spent the longest time in the battlefields of Islam, where he suffered the strokes, would not be any one save Ali-ibn-i-'Abi Tālib (as).

## Surah At-Tawbah – Verse 21

يَبْشِرُهُمُ رَبُّهُمْ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِنْهُ وَرِضْوَانٍ وَجَنَّاتٍ لَهُمْ فِيهَا نَعِيمٌ مُّقِيمٌ

**21. “Their Lord gives them good news of Mercy from Himself and (His) good pleasure, and of gardens wherein for them are lasting bounties.”**

The Qur'ān announces that for these three significant deeds (Faith, migration, and Holy Struggle) Allah will give them three great merits:

1. Their Lord bestows them glad tidings of the vast Mercy from Himself, and makes them enjoy it.

The verse says:

**“Their Lord gives them good news of Mercy from Himself...”**

2. The Lord will endow them His good pleasure. The verse continues saying:

**“...and (His) good pleasure...”**

3. In addition to them, He will let them enjoy of gardens in Heaven, and of the bounties which are perpetual and eternal. The verse says:

**“...and of gardens wherein for them are lasting bounties.”**

## Surah At-Tawbah – Verse 22

خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ

**22. “Therein they will abide for ever, verily Allah has a great reward with Him.”**

In order to lay a more emphasis on the previous meaning, the Qur'ān adds:

***“Therein they will abide for ever...”***

Then, the reason of it is stated that there are some great rewards with Allah which He will remit His servants instead of their good deeds. The verse says:

***“...verily Allah has a great reward with Him.”***

## **Surah At-Tawbah – Verse 23**

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا ءِبَاءَكُمْ وَإِخْوَانَكُمْ أَوْلِيَاءَ إِنِ اسْتَحَبُّوا الْكُفْرَ عَلَى  
الْإِيمَانِ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّهُمْ مِنْكُمْ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ

**23. “O’ you who have Faith! Do not take your fathers and your brothers for guardians if they prefer unbelief to belief, and whoever of you takes them for a guardian, those – they are the unjust.”**

The last temptation and pretext that might be appear among a group of Muslims in front of the command of war against idol-worshippers was that they thought if they fought against the idolaters, they should renounce their relatives and tribes.

On the other side, their capitals and commerce was mostly in the hands of idolaters. By means of their intercourse into Mecca, the briskness of their market would increase.

On the third side, this group of Muslims had some good and comfortable houses in Mecca which might be destroyed if they fought against idolaters.

This holy verse clearly and decisively answers such persons. At first, it says:

***“O’ you who have Faith! Do not take your fathers and your brothers for guardians if they prefer unbelief to belief...”***

Then, as an emphasis, it adds:

***“...and whoever of you takes them for a guardian, those – they are the unjust.”***

What an injustice is greater than this that a person, by making friends with disbelievers and joining to the camp of foreigners and the enemies of the Truth, does injustice both to himself, and to the society which he belongs to, and to the Messenger of Allah (S)?

## Surah At-Tawbah – Verse 24

قُلْ إِنْ كَانَ آبَاؤُكُمْ وَأَبْنَاؤُكُمْ وَإِخْوَانُكُمْ وَأَزْوَاجُكُمْ وَعَشِيرَتُكُمْ وَأَمْوَالٌ اقْتَرَفْتُمُوهَا وَتِجَارَةٌ تَخْشَوْنَ كَسَادَهَا وَمَسَاكِنُ تَرْضَوْنَهَا أَحَبَّ إِلَيْكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَجِهَادٍ فِي سَبِيلِهِ فَتَرَبَّصُوا حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ اللَّهُ بِأَمْرِهِ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ

**24. “Say: ‘If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your wives, your clan, your possessions that you have gained, commerce you fear may slacken, dwellings you are fond of, are dearer to you than Allah and His Messenger and striving in His way, then wait till Allah brings about His command; and Allah does not guide the transgressing people.”**

In this verse, for the extraordinary importance of the subject, the matter under discussion has been stated with a more explanation, emphasis, and threat. It addresses the Prophet (S) and says:

**“Say: ‘If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your wives, your clan, your possessions that you have gained, commerce you fear may slacken, dwellings you are fond of, are dearer to you than Allah and His Messenger and striving in His way, then wait till Allah brings about His command...”**

Since the preference of these things to the good pleasure of Allah and Holy Struggle is a kind of disobedience and a manifest transgression, and also having the love of the dazzling glare of the material life is not eligible for the Divine guidance, then, at the end of the verse, the Qur’ān adds:

**“...and Allah does not guide the transgressing people.”**

Whatever is cited in these verses does not mean cutting off the strings of love and friendship with relatives, neglecting the economical properties and abilities, and going toward the abundance of humane affections.

But, the objective meaning is that when it is difficult for a person to decide, the love of wife, child, wealth, rank, home and family should not hinder the execution of Allah’s command and tending toward Holy Struggle, so that it detains him from his sacred aim.

Therefore, if the person can decide and choose the way, it is necessary for him to observe both of them.

However, these verses should be taught as a motto to all the Muslims’ children, in order that the spirit of self-sacrifice, devotion and Faith serve in them, and they can guard the religion of Allah and their own heritages.

Thus, Holy Struggle is one of the pillars of Islam which is enjoined beside Unity and prophethood.

***“...than Allah and His Messenger and striving in His way...”***

Everything should be devoted in the path of the love for Allah and Holy Struggle in His way. And, detestation of wife and children or the appearance of the disturbance in the circumstances of life, can not be taken as a hinder for the fulfilment of the duty of Holy Struggle.

---

1. Ad-Durr-ul-Manthar, vol. 3, p. 219

2. In the Qur'an, the practice of ' alms ' has been mentioned 32 times, 28 of which are recited with the commandment of ' prayer '.

3. For those who haunt mosques, there are many merits mentioned in the Islamic traditions. Among them are: finding friends and brethrens in Faith, useful information, guidance and avoiding sins, obtaining the divine favours and the grace of Allah. (Durr-ul-Manthar, vol. 2, p. 16)

---

**Source URL:**

<https://www.al-islam.org/enlightening-commentary-light-holy-quran-vol-6/section-3-service-sacred-mosque-and-idolaters>