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Section 5: The Ingratitude of Men to Allah's Bounties

Surah 'Ibrahim – Verses 28 - 29

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَي الَّذِينَ بَدَّلُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ كُفْراً وَأَحَلُّوا قَوْمَهُمْ دَارَ الْبَوَارِ

جَهَنَّمَ يَصْلَوْنَهَا وَبِئْسَ الْقَرَارُ

28. "Have you not seen those who changed Allah's favour for ingratitude, and caused their people to alight into the abode of perdition?"
29. "Hell! They shall enter into it; and (what) a bad place it is!"

It is the Prophet (S) who is being addressed in this verse and, in fact, it is a depiction of one of the aspects of 'evil tree' pointed out here.

At first, the Qur'an implies whether you did not see those who converted Allah's blessings and gratitude into ingratitude and sent themselves ultimately to the land of annihilation. Such people are the roots of the 'evil tree' and are the pioneers of paganism and deviation.

The verse says:

"Have you not seen those who changed Allah's favour for ingratitude, and caused their people to alight into the abode of perdition?"

Commentators have sometimes commented this blessing as the existence of the Prophet (S) and, at

other times, they have considered it to be Ahl-ul-Bayt (as) and the ungrateful ones of this blessing to Umayyads, or to Bani Muqayrah and, at times, they have introduced all the unbelievers who were contemporaries of the Prophet (S).

Yet, definitely, the meaning of the verse is extensive and covers a wide range, thus one cannot confine it to a certain group. It embraces all of those who have been ungrateful with respect to one of the blessings of Allah and have misused it.

The pagans and the unbelievers converted the great blessings of Allah into a matter of ingratitude.

A- They took the option of paganism instead of the blessing of monotheism.

B- They abandoned the blessing of the clean and pure inherent nature and imitated their seduced ancestors.

C- They preferred superstitions to the Divine revelation.

D- They expressed their lack of gratitude in face of the blessing of the Divine leaders and followed the despots.

Many quotations indicate that the Imams (as) of Shi'ites have remarked:

"By Allah, we are the blessing of Allah that He bestowed upon His servants." 1

In other words, it means: Swearing to Allah: the blessings which were converted were our existence. The folks abandoned us and went in search of other leaders. Thus, they changed the blessing of Allah.

The Qur'an, later, comments on the Qur'anic phrase: /d ar-ul-baw ar/ (a bad place) as: It is Hell in the flames of which they will immerse, and it is the worst of all places for someone to settle, for its ultimate end is annihilation.

In other word, they invite their people to oppose against the Prophet (S), throwing them into the Hell Fire, and what an evil abode is Hell.

The verse says:

"Hell! They shall enter into it; and (what) a bad place it is!"

Surah 'Ibrahim – Verse 30

وَجَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ أَندَاداً لِّيُضِلُّوا عَن سَبِيلِهِ قُلْ تَمَتَّعُوا فَإِنَّ مَصِيرَكُمْ إِلَي النَّارِ

30. "And they set up (idols as) equals to Allah that they might mislead (the people) from His path. Say: 'Enjoy yourselves, for verily your journey's end will be the Fire'."

Some consider equal partners for Allah in the course of the creation of the world. Others consider equal partners for Allah in connection with His blessings. Such people consider enjoying good health, knowledge, power, splendour, and property as of the outcome of their own ability, and or as the result of different powers. Nonetheless, they soon find out that they have gone astray.

Therefore, the Qur'an alludes to one of the worst cases of ingratitude in this verse, and says:

"And they set up (idols as) equals to Allah that they might mislead (the people) from His path..."

They do all these things so as to make the people deviate from thinking about the true path and, as a result, they enjoy their material life, and presiding over and governing the people also for a few days.

Then the verse, addressing the Prophet (S), implies that he should tell them to enjoy themselves out of this worldly life which is worthless. However, they must know that the ultimate objective of their job will direct them towards the hell-fire.

The verse says:

"...Say: 'Enjoy yourselves, for verily your journey's end will be the Fire'."

Notwithstanding such a life is not a true life; it is rather a misery, and such a presidency and governorship is of no value, but, in its real sense, it is deceit, disaster, and affliction.

Surah 'Ibrahim – Verse 31

قُل لِّعِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا يُقِيمُوا الصَّلاةَ وَيُنفِقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ سِرّاً وَعَلاَنِيَةً مِن قَبْلِ أَن يَأْتِيَ يَوْمٌ لاَّ بَيْعٌ فِيهِ وَلا خِلالٌ

31. "O' Prophet! Say to My servants who have believed, to perform the prayers and to spend (in charity) out of what We have provided them, secretly and openly, before the coming of a Day in which there shall be neither bartering nor befriending."

Openly spending out of the wealth may encourage the present generation, and cause the encouragement of others, and self-acquittal from all accusations, while secretly spending out of the wealth is the cause of development and sincerity.

Some commentators, of course, have claimed that overt spend relates to the obligatory giving away of

the wealth, like Khoms (one fifth) and alms, while secretly giving away of it relates to the recommended cases, such as: charity.

Although each of the open and in secret giving away of the wealth exerts some impacts on others, nonetheless, one can perhaps say that to give away part of the wealth in secret is better, for the Qur'anic term /sirran/ (secretly) precedes the word /'al anyatan/ (openly) in this verse.

Explanations

1- In order to command others, respect their personalities first. Serving as subservient to Allah provides the believers with a medal of honour.

The verse says:

"O' Prophet! Say to My servants..."

2- Having mere faith in the bottom of one's heart is not sufficient. Prayers, giving away of one's wealth, and good deeds are also necessary.

The verse says:

"...who have believed, to perform the prayers and to spend (in charity) out of what We have provided them..."

3- Islam is a comprehensive religion. One's relationship with Allah (s.w.t.), along with one's assistance to the deprived, are coupled with each other and are required for the acceptance of both.

"...to perform the prayers and to spend (in charity) out of what We have provided them..."

4- Spending out is not only confined to wealth alone. One must often share whatever he has with others, whether they are knowledge and wealth, or prestige and power.

5- Giving away of the wealth must be out of one's allowed earnings and wealth, and not out of whatever wealth we have.

Allah said:

"We have provided them"

and He did not say: "*with you*"

6- The act of spending out of the wealth must sometimes be done in secret and sometimes openly.

It says:

"…secretly and openly…"

7- One must take the opportunity.

The Qur'an remarks:

"…before the coming of a Day…"

8- If you wish to have good trade, try to barter and have transactions with Allah, for there will be no transactions carried out in the Day of Resurrection.

It continues saying:

"…in which there shall be neither bartering…"

9- One cannot get away from the punishment with bribing and his special relationships on in the Day of Resurrection.

The verse remarks:

"…there shall be neither bartering nor befriending."

Surah 'Ibrahim – Verse 32

اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَات وَالأَرْضَ وَأَنزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَاَخْرَجَ بِهِ مِنَ
الثَّمَرَاتِ رِزْقاً لَّكُمْ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الْفُلْكَ لِتَجْرِيَ فِي الْبَحْرِ بِأَمْرِهِ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الاَنْهَارَ

32. "Allah is He Who created the heavens and the earth, and sent down water from the sky; then brought forth fruits with it to be sustenance for you; and He has made the ships subservient to you that they might run through the sea by His command; and He has made the rivers subservient to you."

The issue of 'water' is being discussed in this noble verse from three dimensions:

1- Rain-water by which irrigation of the plants, source of their life, and purification of the weather are provided.

2- Sea-water which provides the water required for the life of the sea animals, and which also provides water ways for the passage of ships, and is the source of clouds and rain.

3- Canal waters which provide an irrigation system for regions lacking water.

In the previous verse, the Qur'an made allusions to prayers and sharing of one's wealth with others. In this verse, it asserts: Why are you so neglectful in connection with spend despite the fact that Allah has provided you with everything?

The holy verse says:

"Allah is He Who created the heavens and the earth, and sent down water from the sky; then brought forth fruits with it to be sustenance for you; and He has made the ships subservient to you that they might run through the sea by His command; and He has made the rivers subservient to you."

The Arabic term /tasxir/ denotes both utilization of all interests, such as the making subservient of the sun and the moon, and in the sense of man's full domination, such as making the ships and canals subservient to him.

In the end, cognition of Allah's blessings is the best method for theology which is coupled with general understanding and the public love, motives and worship. Among entire blessings of Allah, water is one of the most important of them.

Surah 'Ibrahim – Verse 33

وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ دَآئِبَيْنِ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ

33. "And He has made the constantly moving sun and the moon subservient to you, and He has made the night and the day subservient to you."

The Qur'anic term /d a'ibin/ is derived from the word /da'b/ which means a 'continuous habit'. Maraghi has mentioned in his commentary that /d a'ibin/ means 'those continues in moving'.

Certainly, the sun is a great power house which functions constantly, as contrary to the man-made power plants which require repair every now and then and close down at times. Once the sun disappears for sometime, what will then happen?

How will man's life and the life of the plants and animals terminate or come to an end? In face of the existence of numerous microbes and lack of heat and steam, what kind of catastrophe would await the world?

Allah not only conquered and made the existing beings subservient to you but He also made the constantly moving sun and moon subservient to you.

The verse says:

"And He has made the constantly moving sun and the moon subservient to you..."

Allah not only made the existing beings of this world subservient to you but He also made their accidental states as submissive to you in the same way He did with the day and night.

From the Qur'an's point of view, man is so splendid that all these beings are made submissive to him by the command of Allah. That is, either they are directly at the service of man's interest, or they are running by man's control.

Surah 'Ibrahim – Verse 34

وءَاتَاكُم مِن كُلِّ مَا سَأَلْتُمُوهُ وَإِن تَعُدُّوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ لاَ تُحْصُوهَآ إِنَّ الإِنسَانَ لَظَلُومٌ كَفَّارٌ

34. "And He has given you whatever you have asked Him; and if you count Allah's blessings, you are unable to number them. Verily, man is very unjust, very ungrateful."

We read in verse 18 from Surah An-Nahl

"And if you count Allah's blessings, you are unable to number them. Verily Allah is Forgiving, Merciful."

In the previous verses, we read that the corrupt leaders direct and lead people towards persons or objects other than Allah:

"And they set up (***idols as***) ***equals to Allah..."***2

This verse proclaims: despite the fact that the ones other than Allah are unable to do anything, and whatever one possesses belongs to Allah alone, but man is usually heedless in these respects and is ungrateful in these connections.

In the meantime, the Arabic term /'add/ signifies counting, and the term /'ihs a'/ means 'to count accurately in such a way that nothing is left over in the process'. Anyway, if one decides to count Allah's blessings, he can never do that, for the material and spiritual blessings provided by Allah are so widespread throughout our lives, and our environment which can never be counted.

The verse says:

"And He has given you whatever you have asked Him; and if you count Allah's blessings, you are

unable to number them. Verily, man is very unjust, very ungrateful."

Nonetheless, despite all those favours and Divine grace, mankind is still oppressive and ungrateful for Allah's blessings. The blessings which if utilized properly can turn the entire world into a paradise-like garden.

In fact the Qur'an implies: O' man! Everything is at your disposal in sufficient quantities but on condition that you are not ungrateful and oppressive, while you should try to remain content with your lot and with your own rights and do not violate the rights of other people.

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1. Majma'-ul-Bayan
2. The current Surah, verse 30

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