

٢٣٣. وَقَالَ (عليه السلام) لِابْنِهِ الْحَسَنِ (عليه السلام): لَا تَدْعُونَ إِلَى مِبَارَزَةٍ وَإِنْ دُعِيَ إِلَيْهَا فَأَجِبْ فَإِنَّ الدَّاعِيَ إِلَيْهَا بَاغٍ وَالْبَاغِي مَصْرُوعٌ.

233. Amīr al-mu'minīn said to his son al-Ḥasan, peace be upon them both: Do not call out for fighting, but if you are called to it do respond, because the caller to fighting is a rebel and the rebel deserves destruction. [1]

Footnote :

[1] The meaning of this is that if the enemy aims at fighting and takes the initiative in it, then one should advance to face him, but one should not initiate the attack because this would be clear high-handedness and excess, and whoever commits high-handedness and excess will be disgracefully vanquished and thrown down. That is why Amīr al-mu'minīn always entered the battlefield on being challenged by the enemy. He never offered the challenge from his side. In this connection, Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd writes:

We have never heard that Amīr al-mu'minīn ever challenged anyone for confrontation. Rather, when either he was particularly challenged or the enemy flung a general challenge, then alone he would go out to meet the enemy and would kill him. (Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah, vol. 19, p. 60)