

وَمِنْ كَلَامٍ لَهُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ

From one of his statements

لَمَّا بُويعَ بِالْمَدِينَةِ [في بعض النسخ: في المدينة]

Delivered when allegiance was sworn to him at Madīnah

وَفِيهَا يُخْلِبُ النَّاسَ بَعْدَ مَا تَقُولُ [في بعض النسخ: تقول] إِلَيْهِ أَحَدٌ وَالْهَمُّ، وَفِيهَا يَقْلِبُ سِمَهُمْ إِلَى أَقْسَامٍ

ذَمِّي بِمَا أَقُولُ رَهِينَةٌ وَأَنَا بِهِ زَعِيمٌ: إِنَّ مَنْ صَرَحَتْ لَهُ الْعَبْرُ عَمَّا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ الْمَثَلَاتِ، حَجَزَتْهُ [في بعض النسخ: حجزه] التَّقْوَى عَنْ تَقَحُّمِ الشَّبَهَاتِ.

The responsibility for what I say is guaranteed and I am answerable for it. He to whom experiences have clearly shown the past exemplary punishments (given by Allāh to peoples) is prevented by piety from falling into doubts.

أَلَا وَإِنْ بَلَّيْتُمْ قَدْ عَادَتْ كَهَيْئَتِهَا يَوْمَ بَعَثَ اللَّهُ نَبِيَّهُ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ.

You should know that the same troubles have returned to you which existed when the Prophet (ﷺ) was first sent.

وَالَّذِي بَعَثَهُ بِالْحَقِّ لِيَتْبَلَ بِلِنِّ بَلَابَةٍ، وَلِتَغْرِبَ بِلِنِّ غَرَابَةٍ، وَلِتَسَاطِنَ سَوَاطِنُ السَّوْطِ الْقَدِيمِ، حَتَّى يَعُودَ أَسْفَلُكُمْ أَعْلَىكُمْ، وَأَعْلَىكُمْ أَسْفَلُكُمْ، وَلَيْسَ بَقَيْنَ سَابِقُونَ كَانُوا قَصْرُوا، وَلِيَقْصِرَنَّ سَابِقُونَ كَانُوا سَبِقُوا.

By Allāh who sent the Prophet with faith and truth you will be severely subverted, bitterly shaken as in sieving and fully mixed as by spooning in a cooking pot till your low persons become high and high ones become low, those who were behind would attain forward positions and those who were forward would become backward.

وَاللَّهِ! مَا كَتَمْتُ وَشَمَمْتُ وَلَا كَذَبْتُ كَذِبَةً، وَلَقَدْ نَبَّتُ بِهَذَا الْمَقَامِ وَهَذَا الْيَوْمِ.

By Allāh, I have not concealed a single word or spoken any lie and I had been informed of this event and of this time.

أَلَا وَإِنَّ الْإِخْطَايَا خِيَلُ شَمْسٍ حُمِلَ عَلَيْهَا أَهْلُهَا، وَخُلِعَتْ لُجْمُهَا، فَتَقَحَّمَتْ بِهِمْ فِي النَّارِ.

Beware that sins are like unruly horses on whom their riders have been placed and their reins have been let loose so that they would jump with them in Hell.

أَلَا وَإِنَّ التَّقْلُوبَ مَطَايَا ذُلٍّ، حُمِلَ عَلَيْهَا أَهْلُهَا، وَأُعْلِطُوا أَرْزَمَتَهَا، فَأَوْلَدَتْ لَهُمُ الْجَنَّةَ.

Beware that piety is like trained horses on whom the riders have been placed with the reins in their hands, so that they would take the riders to Heaven.

حَقٌّ وَبَاطِلٌ، وَلِكُلِّ أَهْلٍ، فَلْتَنَ أَمْرَ الْبَاطِلِ لَقَدِيمًا فَعَلَّ، وَلْتَنَ قَلَّ الْحَقُّ فَلَرُبَّمَا [في بعض النسخ: لَرُبَّمَا] وَلَعَلَّ، وَلَقَلَّمَا أَدْبَرَ شَيْئًا فَأَقْبَلَ.

There is right and wrong and there are followers for each. If wrong dominates, it has (always) in the past been so, and if truth goes down that too has often occurred. It seldom happens that a thing that lags behind comes forward.

أَقُولُ: [فِي بَعْضِ النسخ: وَأَقُولُ، أَوْ: قَالَ السَّيِّدُ الشَّرِيفُ: وَأَقُولُ:] إِنَّ فِي هَذَا الْكَلَامِ الْإِدْنَى مِنْ مَوَاقِعِ الْإِحْسَانِ مَا لَا تَبْلُغُهُ مَوَاقِعُ الْإِسْلَامِ تَحْسَانًا، وَإِنَّ حِظَّ الْعَجَبِ مِنْهُ أَكْثَرُ مِنْ حِظِّ الْعَجَلِ بِهِ، وَفِيهِ - مَعَ الْجِجَالِ الَّتِي وَصَفَلْنَا - زَوَائِدَ مِنَ الْإِفْصَاحَةِ لَا يَقُومُ بِهَا لِسَانٌ، وَلَا يَطَّلِعُ فَجْهًا إِنْ لِسَانٌ، وَلَا يَعْرِفُ مَا أَقُولُهُ إِلَّا مَنْ ضَرَبَ فِي هَذِهِ الصَّنَاعَةِ بِحَقٍّ، وَجَرَى فِيهَا عَلَى عِرْقٍ، ﴿وَمَا يَعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا الْعَالِمُونَ﴾.

al-Sharīf al-Raḍī says: In this small speech there is more beauty than can be appreciated, and the quantity of amazement aroused by it is more than the appreciation accorded to it. Despite what we have stated, it has so many aspects of eloquence that cannot be expressed, nor can anyone reach its depth, and no one can understand what I am saying unless one has attained this art and known its details. "No one appreciates it except those who know" (Qur'ān, 29:43).

وَمِنْ مَوَاقِعِ هَذِهِ الْخُطْبَةِ: [وَفِيهَا يَقْسَمُ النَّاسُ إِلَى ثَلَاثَةِ أَصْنَافٍ:] شَغِلَ مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ وَالنَّارِ أَمَامَهُ! سَاعَ سَرِيعِ نَجَا، وَطَالِبِ بَطِيءِ رَجَا، وَمَقْصِرِ فِي النَّارِ هَوَى.

From the same Sermon: He who has heaven and hell in his view has no other aim. He who attempts and acts quickly, succeeds, while the seeker who is slow may also entertain hope, and he who falls short of action faces destruction in Hell.

الْيَمِينِ وَالشِّمَالِ مُضَلَّةً، وَالطَّرِيقُ الْوَسْطَى هِيَ الْجَادَةُ عَلَيْهَا بَاقِي الْكِتَابِ وَأَثَارُ النَّبِيِّ، وَمِنْهَا مَنَافِعُ السُّنَّةِ، وَإِلَيْهَا مَصِيرُ الْعَاقِبَةِ.

On right and left there are misleading paths. Only the middle way is the (right) path which is the Everlasting Book and the traditions of the Prophet. From it the sunnah

has spread out and towards it is the eventual return.

هَلَكَ مَنْ ادَّعَى، وَخَابَ مَنْ اِفْتَرَى، مَنْ اَبْدَى صَفْحَتَهُ لِلْحَقِّ هَلَكَ [في بعض النسخ: ..... عنده جهلة الناس]. وكفى بالمرء جهلاً ألا يعلم قدره، لا يهلك على التقوى سنخاً أصلاً، ولا يظلماً عليها زرعاً قوياً.

He who claims (otherwise) is ruined and he who concocts falsehood is disappointed. He who opposes [1] right with his face gets destruction. It is enough ignorance for a man not to know himself. He who is strong rooted [2] in piety does not get destruction, and the plantation of a people based on piety never remains without water.

فاسلِّتُوا فِي بُيُوتِكُمْ [في بعض النسخ: فاسلِّتُوا بُيُوتَكُمْ]، ﴿وَأَصْلِحُوا ذَاتَ بَيْنِكُمْ﴾، وَالتَّوْبَةُ مِنْ رَأْيِكُمْ.

Hide yourselves in your houses and reform yourselves. Repentance is at your back.

وَلَا يَحْمَدُ إِلَّا رَبَّهُ، وَلَا يَلْمُ إِلَّا نَفْسَهُ.

One should praise only Allāh and condemn only his own self.

Notes:

[1] In some versions after the words “man abdā ṣafḥatahu lil-ḥaqqi halaka” the words “inda jahalati al-nāsi” also occur. In that case the meaning of this sentence would be that he who stands in face of right dies in the estimation of the ignorant.

[2] Piety is the name of heart and mind being affected and impressed by the Divine Greatness and Glory, as a result of which the spirit of man becomes filled with fear and awe of Allāh, and its inevitable result is that enthusiasm in worship and asceticism increases. It is impossible that heart may be full of Divine fear and there be no manifestation of it in a person’s actions and deeds. And since worship and submission reform the heart and nurture the spirit, purity of soul increases with the increase of worship. That is why in the Qur’ān “taqwā” (piety) has been applied sometimes to fear, sometimes to worship and devotion, and sometimes to purity of heart and spirit. Thus in the verse “wa-iyāya fa-ttaqūn” (and Me you fear [16:2]), taqwā implies fear; in the verse, “ittaqu Allāha ḥaqqa tuqātihī” (worship Allāh as He ought to be worshipped [3:102]), taqwā implies worship and devotion; and in the verse “wa-yakhsha Allāha wa-yattaqhi fa-ulā’ika hum al-fā’izūn” (24:52), taqwā implies purity of spirit and cleanliness of heart.

In the traditions, taqwā has been assigned three degrees. The first degree is that a man should follow the injunctions and keep aloof from prohibitions. The second degree is that recommendatory matters should also be followed and disliked things should be avoided. The third degree is that for fear of falling into doubts one may abstain from the permissibles as well. The first degree is for the common people, the second for the nobles, and the third for high dignitaries. Allāh has referred to these three degrees in the following verse:

On those who believe and do good, is no blame for what they ate (before), when they did guard themselves and did believe, and did good, still (furthermore) they guard themselves and do good; and Allāh loveth the doers of good. (Qur'ān, 5:93)

Amīr al-Mu'minīn says that only action based on piety is lasting, and only that action will blossom and bear fruit which is watered by piety, because worship is only that wherein the feeling of submissiveness exists. Thus, Allāh says:

Is he therefore better who hath laid his foundation on fear of Allāh and (His) goodwill, or he who layeth his foundation on the brink of a crumbling down with into the fire of Hell; ... (Qur'ān, 9:109)

Consequently, every such belief as is not based on knowledge and conviction is like the edifice erected without foundation, wherein there is no stability or firmness; while every action that is without piety is like the plantation which withers for lack of watering.