

ومن خطبة له (عليه السلام)

From one of his sermons

بعد انصرافه من صفين

Delivered on return from Şiffin

وفيها حال الناس قبل البعثة و صفة آل النبي ثم صفة قوم آخرين

And in it he mentions Arabia before the proclamation of Prophethood, the characteristics of the Prophet's Household, and the traits of another group of people.

أَحْمَدُهُ اسْتِثْمَامًا لِنِعْمَتِهِ، وَاسْتِسْلَامًا لِعِزَّتِهِ، وَاسْتِعْصَامًا مِنْ مَعْصِيَتِهِ، وَأَسْتَعِينَهُ فَاقَةً إِلَى كِفَايَتِهِ، إِنَّهُ لَا يَضِلُّ مَنْ هَدَاهُ، وَلَا يَثُلُ مَنْ عَادَاهُ، وَلَا يَفْتَقِرُ مَنْ كَفَاهُ، فَإِنَّهُ أَرْجَحُ مَا وَزَنَ، وَأَفْضَلُ مَا خَزَنَ.

I praise Allāh seeking completion of His blessings, submitting to His Glory and expecting safety from committing His sins. I invoke His help being in need of His Sufficiency (of protection). He whom He guides does not get astray, He with whom He is hostile gets no protection. He whom He supports does not remain needy. Praise is most weighty of all that is weighed and the most valuable of all that is treasured.

وَأَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ، شَهَادَةً مَمْتَحِنًا إِخْلَاصُهَا، مَعْتَقِدًا مَصَاحِبُهَا، نَتَمَسَّكُ بِهَا أَبَدًا مَا أَبْقَانَا، وَنَدَّخِرُهَا لِأَهَاوِيلِ مَا يَلْقَانَا، فَإِنَّهَا عَزِيمَةُ الْإِيمَانِ، وَفَاتِحَةُ الْإِحْسَانِ، وَمَرْضَاةُ الرَّحْمَنِ، وَمُدْحَرَةُ الشَّيْطَانِ.

I stand witness that there is no god but Allāh the One. He has no like. My testimony has been tested in its sincerity, and its essence—free of doubt—is our belief. We shall cling to it forever till we live and shall store it facing the tribulations that overtake us because it is the foundation stone of Belief (imān) and the first step towards good actions and a means to attain Divine pleasure. It is the means to keep Satan away.

وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ، أَرْسَلَهُ بِالْدِينِ الْمَشْهُورِ، وَالْعِلْمِ الْمَأْثُورِ، وَالْكِتَابِ الْمَسْطُورِ، وَالنُّورِ السَّاطِعِ، وَالضِّيَاءِ الْأَلَمَعِ، وَالْأَمْرِ الصَّادِعِ، إِزَاحَةً لِلشُّبُهَاتِ، وَاحْتِجَاجًا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ، وَتَحْذِيرًا بِالْآيَاتِ، وَتَخْوِيفًا بِالْمَثَلَاتِ.

I also stand witness that Muḥammad (ﷺ) is His. slave and His Prophet. Allāh sent him with the illustrious religion, effective emblem, written Book, [1] effulgent light,

sparkling gleam and decisive injunction in order to dispel doubts, present clear proofs, administer warning through signs and to warn of punishments.

وَالنَّاسُ فِي فِتْنٍ أَنْجَدِمَ فِيهَا حَبْلَ الدِّينِ، وَتَزَعَزَعَتِ سِوَارِي الْيَقِينِ، وَاخْتَلَفَ النَّجْرُ، وَتَشْتَبَتِ الْأُمُرُ، وَضَاقَ الْمَخْرَجُ، وَعَمِيَ الْمَصْدَرُ، فَالْهَدْيُ خَامِلٌ، وَالْعَمَى شَامِلٌ. عَصَى الرَّحْمَنُ، وَنَصَرَ الشَّيْطَانَ، وَخَذَلَ الْإِيمَانَ، فَانْهَارَتْ دَعَائِمُهُ، وَتَنَكَّرَتْ مَعَالِمُهُ، وَدَرَسَتْ سَبِيلُهُ، وَعَفَتْ شَرْكُهُ.

At that time people had fallen in vices whereby the rope of religion had been broken, the pillars of belief had been shaken, principles had been sacrilegied, system had become topsy-turvy, openings were narrow, passage was dark, guidance was unknown and darkness prevailed. Allāh was being disobeyed, Satan was given support and Belief had been forsaken. As a result the pillars of religion fell down, its traces could not be discerned, its passages had been destroyed and its streets had fallen into decay.

أَطَاعُوا الشَّيْطَانَ فَسَلَكُوا مَسَالِكَهُ، وَوَرَدُوا مَنَاهِلَهُ، بِهِمْ سَارَتْ أَعْلَامُهُ، وَقَامَ لُؤَاؤُهُ، فِي فِتْنٍ دَأَسْتَهُمْ بِأَخْفَافِهَا، وَوَطَّئَتْهُمْ بِأَطْلَافِهَا وَقَامَتْ عَلَيَّ سَنَابِكُهَا، فَهَمَّ فِيهَا تَائِهُونَ حَائِرُونَ جَاهِلُونَ مَفْتُونُونَ، فِي خَيْرِ دَارٍ، وَشَرِّ جِيرَانٍ، نَوْمُهُمْ سُهُودٌ، وَكَلْهَمُهُمْ دُمُوعٌ، بِأَرْضِ عَالَمِهَا مَلْجَمٌ، وَجَاهِلِهَا مَكْرَمٌ.

People obeyed Satan and tread his paths. They sought water from his watering places. Through them Satan's emblems got flying and his standard was raised in vices which trampled the people under their hoofs, and treaded upon them with their feet. The vices stood on their toes (in full stature) and the people immersed in them were strayed, perplexed, ignorant and seduced as though in a good house [2] with bad neighbours. Instead of sleep they had wakefulness and for antimony they had tears in the eyes. They were in a land where the learned were in bridle (keeping their mouths shut) while the ignorant were honoured.

وَمِنْهَا: [يَعْنِي آلَ النَّبِيِّ عَلَيْهِ الصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ] هُمْ مَوْضِعُ سِرِّهِ، وَلَجَأُ أَمْرِهِ، وَعَيْنِيَّةُ عِلْمِهِ، وَمَوْئِلُ حُكْمِهِ، وَكُهُوفُ كُتُبِهِ، وَجِبَالُ دِينِهِ، بِهِمْ أَقَامَ انْحِنَاءُ ظَهْرِهِ، وَأَذْهَبَ ارْتِعَادُ فَرَائِصِهِ.

[In the same sermon Amīr al-Mu'minīn referred to Āl an-Nabī (the Household of the Holy Prophet) as under:] They are the trustees of His secrets, the stronghold for His affairs, the source of knowledge about Him, the centre of His wisdom, the valleys for His books, and the mountains of His religion. With them Allāh straightened the bend of religion's back and removed the trembling of its limbs.

وَمِنْهَا: [يَعْنِي قَوْمًا آخِرِينَ] [فِي بَعْضِ النُّسخِ: فِي الْمَنَافِقِينَ]: [زَرَعُوا الْفُجُورَ، وَسَقَوْهُ الْغُرُورَ، وَحَصَدُوا الثُّبُورَ.

[In the same Sermon he spoke about the hypocrites:] They sowed vices, watered them with deception and harvested destruction.

لَا يُقَاسُ بِآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ) مِنْ هَذِهِ الْأُمَّةِ أَحَدٌ، وَلَا يُسَوَّى بِهِمْ مَنْ جَرَتْ نِعْمَتُهُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَبَدًا. هُمْ أَسَاسُ الدِّينِ، وَعِمَادُ الْيَقِينِ، إِلَيْهِمْ يَفِيءُ الْغَالِي، وَبِهِمْ يَلْحَقُ التَّالِي، وَلَهُمْ خِصَائِصُ حَقِّ الْوِلَايَةِ، وَفِيهِمُ الْوَصِيَّةُ وَالْوَرَاثَةُ، الْآنَ إِذْ رَجَعَ الْحَقُّ إِلَى أَهْلِهِ، وَنُقِلَ إِلَى مُنْتَقَلِهِ.

[Āl-i Muḥammad:] None in the Islamic community can be taken at par with the Progeny [3] of the Prophet (Āl-i Muḥammad). One who was under their obligation cannot be matched with them. They are the foundation of religion and pillar of Belief. The forward runner must return to them while the follower must strive to catch up with them. They possess the chief characteristics for vicegerency. In their favour exists the will and succession (of the Prophet). This is the time when right has returned to its owner and has been restored to its rightful place.

Notes:

[1] The Preserved Record.

[2] Good House means 'Mecca' while the bad neighbours mean the 'Unbelievers of Quraysh.'

[3] About the Progeny of the Prophet Amīr al-Mu'minīn has said that no person in the world can be brought at par with them, nor can any one be deemed their equal in sublimity, because the world is overladen with their obligations and has been able to secure eternal blessings only through their guidance. They are the corner stone and foundation of religion and the sustenance for its life and survival. They are such strong pillars of knowledge and belief that they can turn away the stormy flow of doubt and suspicion. They are such middle course among the paths of excess and backwardness that if some one goes far towards excess and exaggeration or falls behind then unless he comes back or steps forward to that middle course he cannot be on the path of Islam. They possess all the characteristics which give the superiority in the right for vicegerency and leadership. Consequently, no one else in the ummah enjoys the right of patronage and guardianship. That is why the Prophet declared them his vicegerents and successors.

About will and succession the commentator Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd Mu'tazilī writes that there can be no doubt about the vicegerency of Amīr al-Mu'minīn but succession

cannot imply succession in position although the Shī'ite sect has so interpreted it. It rather implies succession of learning. Now, if according to him succession is taken to imply succession in learning even he does not seem to succeed in achieving his object, because even by this interpretation the right of succeeding the Prophet does not devolve on any other person. When it is agreed that learning is the most essential requirement of Khilāfah (caliphate) because the most important functions of the Prophet's Caliph consist of dispensation of justice, solving problems of religious laws, clarifying intricacies and administration of religious penalties. If these functions are taken away from the Prophet's deputy his position will come down to that of a worldly ruler. He cannot be regarded as the pivot of religious authority. Therefore either we should keep governmental authority separate from Prophet's vicegerency or accept the successor of Prophet's knowledge to suit that position.

The interpretation of Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd could be acceptable if Amīr al-Mu'minīn had uttered this sentence alone, but observing that it was uttered soon after 'Alī's (a.s.) recognition as Caliph and just after it the sentence "Right has returned to its owner" exists, this interpretation of his seems baseless. Rather, the Prophet's will cannot imply any other will except that for vicegerency and caliphate, and succession would imply not succession in property nor in knowledge because this was not an occasion to mention it here but it must mean the succession in the right leadership which stood proved as from Allāh not only on the ground of kinship but on the ground of qualities of perfection.