

وَمِنْ خُطْبَةٍ لَهُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ

From one of his sermons

وَهُوَ فَصَلُّ مِنْ الْخُطْبَةِ الَّتِي أَوْلَاهَا: «الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ غَيْرَ مَقْنُوطٍ مِنْ رَحْمَتِهِ» وَفِيهِ أَحَدُ عَشَرَ تَنْبِيْهًا

This is a section of the Sermon (45) that begins: 'All praise belongs to Allah from Whose mercy no one loses hope...'. It contains 11 exhortations

أَمَّا بَعْدُ، فَإِنَّ الدُّنْيَا قَدْ أَدْبَرَتْ [في بعض النسخ: الدُّنْيَا أَدْبَرَتْ]، وَأَذْنَتْ بِوَدَاعٍ، وَإِنَّ الْآخِرَةَ قَدْ أَقْبَلَتْ، وَأَشْرَفَتْ بِاطِّلَاعٍ

So now, surely this world has turned its back and announced its departure while the next world has appeared forward and proclaimed its approach.

أَلَا وَإِنَّ الْيَوْمَ الْإِمْرُ الْمَضْمَارَ وَغَدَا السِّبَاقَ، وَالسَّبْقَةَ الْجَنَّةَ، وَالْغَايَةَ النَّارَ؛

Today is the day of preparation while tomorrow is the day of race. The place to proceed to is Paradise while the place of doom is Hell.

أَفَلَا تَأْتِبُ مِنْ خَطِيئَتِهِ قَبْلَ مَنِيئَتِهِ؟ أَلَا عَامِلٌ لِنَفْسِهِ قَبْلَ يَوْمِهِ بِؤْسِهِ؟

Is there no one to offer repentance over his faults before his death? Or is there no one to perform virtuous acts before the day of trial?

أَلَا وَإِنَّكُمْ فِي أَيَّامٍ أَمَلٍ مِنْ وَرَائِهِ أَجَلٌ، فَمَنْ عَمِلَ فِي أَيَّامٍ أَمَلِهِ قَبْلَ حُضُورِ أَجَلِهِ فَقَدْ نَفَعَهُ عَمَلُهُ، وَلَمْ يَضُرُّهُ أَمَلُهُ؛ وَمَنْ قَصَرَ فِي أَيَّامٍ أَمَلِهِ قَبْلَ حُضُورِ أَجَلِهِ، فَقَدْ خَسِرَ عَمَلَهُ، وَضُرَّ أَجَلُهُ.

Beware, surely you are in the days of hopes behind which stands death. Whoever acts during the days of his hope before approach of his death, his action would benefit him and his death would not harm him. But he who fails to act during the period of hope before the approach of death his action is a loss and his death is a harm to him.

أَلَا فَاعْلَمُوا فِي الرُّغْبَةِ كَمَا تَعْلَمُونَ فِي الرُّهْبَةِ، أَلَا وَإِنِّي لَمْ أَرْ كَالْجَنَّةِ نَامَ طَالِبُهَا، وَلَا كَالنَّارِ نَامَ هَارِبُهَا،

Beware, and act during a period of attraction just as you act during a period of dread. Beware, surely I have not seen a coveter for Paradise asleep nor a deserter from hell to be asleep.

أَلَا وَإِنَّهُ مَنْ لَا يَنْفَعُهُ الْحَقُّ يَضُرُّهُ [في بعض النسخ: يَضُرُّهُ] الذَّبَابُ، وَمَنْ لَا يَسْتَتِيمُ بِهِ الدُّهُدَى يَجْرُ بِهِ الضَّلَالُ إِلَى الرَّدَى.

Beware, he whom right does not benefit must suffer the harm of the wrong, and he whom guidance does not keep firm will be led away by misguidance towards destruction.

أَلَا وَإِنَّكُمْ قَدْ أُمِرْتُمْ بِالطَّعْنِ، وَدَلِلْتُمْ عَلَى الزَّادِ. وَإِنْ أَخَذْتُمْ مَا أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ: اتَّبَاعِ [في بعض النسخ: اذلتان] الهوى، وطول الأمل. تزودوا [في بعض النسخ: فتزودوا] في الدنيا من الدنيا ما تحوزون به أنفسكم غدا.

Beware, you have been ordered insistingly to march and been guided how to provide for the journey. Surely the most frightening thing which I am afraid of about you is to follow desires and to widen the hopes. Provide for yourself from this world what would save you tomorrow (on the Day of Judgement).

قال السيد الشريف رضي الله عنه: وأقول: [في بعض النسخ: أقول، أو: قال السيد: وأقول:] إنه لو كان كلام يأخذ بالأعناق إلى الزهد في الدنيا، ويضطر إلى عمل الآخرة لكان هذا الكلام، وكفى به قاطعا لعلائق الآمال، وقادحا زناد الاعتاض والازم دجار.

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: If there could be an utterance which would drag by neck towards renunciation in this world and force to action for the, next world, it is this sermon. It is enough to cut off from the entanglements of hopes and to ignite the flames of preaching (for virtue) and warning (against vice).

وَمِنْ أَعْجَبِهِ قَوْلُهُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ: «أَلَا وَإِنَّ الْيَوْمَ الْمَضْمَارَ وَغَدَا السِّبَاقَ، وَالسِّبْقَةَ الْجَنَّةَ، وَاللَّغَايَةَ النَّارَ»، فَإِنَّ فِيهِ مَعَ فَخَامَةَ اللَّفْظِ، وَعِظْمَ قَدْرِ الْمَعْنَى، وَصَادِقَ التَّمَثِيلِ، وَوَاقِعَ التَّشْبِيهِ - سِرًّا عَجِيبًا، وَمَعْنَى لَطِيفًا،

His most wonderful words in this sermon are “Today is the day of preparation while tomorrow is the day of race. The place to proceed to is Paradise while the place of doom is Hell,” because besides sublimity of words, greatness of meaning, true similes and factual illustrations, there are wonderful secrets and delicate implications therein.

وهو قول له عليه السلام: «وَالسِّبْقَةَ الْجَنَّةَ، وَاللَّغَايَةَ النَّارَ»، فَخَالَفَ بَيْنَ اللَّفْظَيْنِ لِاخْتِلَافِ الْمَعْنَيَيْنِ، وَلَمْ يَقُلْ: «وَالسِّبْقَةَ النَّارَ»، كَمَا قَالَ: «وَالسِّبْقَةَ الْجَنَّةَ»، لِأَنَّ الْإِسْلَامَ تَبَاقٌ إِنَّمَا يَكُونُ إِلَى أَمْرِ مَحْبُوبٍ، وَغَرَضٌ مَطْلُوبٍ، وَهَذِهِ صِفَةُ الْجَنَّةِ، وَلَيْسَ هَذَا الْمَعْنَى مَوْجُودًا فِي النَّارِ، نَعُودُ بِاللَّامِ مِنْهَا!

It is his saying that the place to proceed to is Paradise while the place of doom is Hell. Here he has used two different words to convey two different meanings. For

Paradise he has used the word “the place to proceed to” but for Hell this word has not been used. One proceeds to a place which he likes and desires, and this can be true for Paradise only. Hell does not have the attractiveness that it may be liked or proceeded to. We seek Allāh’s protection from it.

فَلَمْ يَجْزِ أَنْ يَقُولَ: «وَالسَّبْقَةُ النَّارُ»، بَلْ قَالَ: «وَاللَّغَايَةُ النَّارُ»، لِأَنَّ اللَّغَايَةَ قَدْ يَنْتَهِي إِلَيْهَا مَنْ لَا يَسْرُهُ الْإِنْتِهَاءُ إِلَيْهَا وَمَنْ يَسْرُهُ ذَلِكَ، فَصَلِحَ أَنْ يَعْبُرَ بِهَا عَنِ الْأَمَلِ رِيْلِنَ مَعًا، فَهِيَ فِي هَذَا اللَّمَوْضِعِ كَالْمَصِيرِ وَاللَّمَالِ، قَالَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى: ﴿قُلْ تَمَتَّعُوا فَإِن مَصِيرَكُمْ إِلَى النَّارِ﴾، وَلَا يَجُوزُ فِي هَذَا اللَّمَوْضِعِ أَنْ يُقَالَ: «سَبَقْتُمْ» [فِي بَعْضِ النِّسَخِ: يُقَالُ: فَإِن «سَبَقْتُمْ» إِلَى النَّارِ، فَتَأْمَلْ ذَلِكَ، فَبَاطِنُهُ عَجِيبٌ، وَغَوْرُهُ بَعِيدٌ [فِي بَعْضِ النِّسَخِ: بَعِيدٌ لَطِيفٌ]، وَكَذَلِكَ أَكْثَرَ كَلَامِهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ.

Since for Hell it was not proper to say “to be proceeded to” Amīr al-Mu’minīn employed the word “doom” implying the last place of stay where one reaches even though it may mean grief and worry or happiness and pleasure. This word is capable of conveying both senses. However, it should be taken in the sense of “al-maṣīr” or “al-ma’āl”, that is, last resort. Qur’ānic verse is “say thou Enjoy ye (your pleasures yet a while) for your last resort is unto the (hell) fire” (14:30). Here to say “sabqatukum” that is, ‘the place for you to proceed to’ in place of the word “maṣīrakum” that is, your doom or last resort would not be proper in any way. Think and ponder over it and see how wondrous is its inner implication and how far its depth goes with beauty. Amīr al-Mu’minīn’s utterance is generally on these lines.

[وزاد في بعض النسخ:] وَقَدْ جَاءَ فِي رِوَايَةِ أُخْرَى: «وَالسَّبْقَةُ الْجَنَّةُ»، بِضَمِّ السِّينِ، وَالسَّبْقَةُ عِنْدَهُمْ اسْمٌ [فِي بَعْضِ النِّسَخِ: وَالسَّبْقَةُ اسْمٌ عِنْدَهُمْ] لِمَا يَجْعَلُ لِلْسَّابِقِ إِذَا سَبَقَ مِنْ مَالٍ أَوْ عَرْضٍ، وَالْمَعْلَمَانِ مُتْقَارِبَانِ، لِأَنَّ ذَلِكَ لَا يَكُونُ جِزَاءً عَلَى فِعْلٍ إِلَّا لِلْمَذْمُومِ، وَإِنَّمَا يَكُونُ جِزَاءً عَلَى فِعْلٍ إِلَّا لِلْمَحْمُودِ.

In some versions the word “sabqah” is shown as “subqah” which is applied to reward fixed for the winner in race. However, both the meanings are near each other, because a reward is not for an undesirable action but for good and commendable performance.