

وَمِنْ مَّ خُطْبَةٍ لَهُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ

From one of his sermons

فِي اسْمِ تَنْفَارِ النَّاسِ إِلَى أَهْلِ الشَّامِ [في بعض النسخ: إِلَى الشَّامِ] بَعْدَ فِرَاقِهِ مِنْ مَّ أَمْرِ الْخَوَارِجِ

To prepare the people for fighting with the people of Syria (ash-Shām) [1], Amīr al-Mu'minīn said:

وَفِيهَا يَتَأَفَّفُ بِالنَّاسِ. وَيَنْصَحُ لَهُمْ بِطَرِيقِ السَّدَادِ

أَفْ لَكُمْ! لَقَدْ سَمَّتْ عَتَابِكُمْ! أَرْضَيْتُمْ بِالْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا مِنَ الْآخِرَةِ عَوْضًا؟ وَبِالذَّلِّ مِنَ الْعِزِّ خَلْفًا؟ إِذَا دَعَوْتُكُمْ إِلَى جِهَادِ عَدُوِّكُمْ دَارَتْ أَعْيُنُكُمْ؛ كَأَنَّكُمْ مِنَ الْمَمُوتِ فِي غَمَلَةٍ، وَمِنَ الذُّهُولِ فِي سَكَلَةٍ، يَرْتَجِعُ عَلَيْكُمْ حَوَارِي فَتَعَلِّمَهُونَ، فَكَأَنَّ قُلُوبَكُمْ مَأْلُوسَةٌ، فَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ. مَا أَنْتُمْ لِي بِثِقَةٍ سَجِيسِ اللَّيَالِي، وَمَا أَنْتُمْ بِرُكْنٍ يَمَالُ بِكُمْ. وَلَا زَوَافِرٍ عَزِيْفَةٍ تَقْرَأُ إِلَيْكُمْ. مَا أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا كَابِلِ ضَلَّ رِعَاتُهَا، فَكَلَّمَا جَمِعَتْ مِنْ مَّ جَانِبٍ انْتَشَرَتْ مِنْ آخَرِ.

Woe to you. I am tired of rebuking you. Do you accept this worldly life in place of the next life? Or disgrace in place of dignity? When I invite you to fight your enemy, your eyes revolve as though you are in the clutches of death and in the senselessness of last moments. My pleadings are not understood by you, and you remain stunned. It is as though your hearts are affected with madness, so that you do not understand. You have lost my confidence for good. Neither are you a support for me to lean upon, nor a means to honour and victory. Your example is that of the camels whose protector has disappeared, so that if they are collected from one side, they disperse away from the other side.

لَيْسَ لِعَمَلِ اللَّهِ! سَعِيرُ نَارِ الْحَرِّ أَنْتُمْ! تَكَادُونَ وَلَا تَكِيدُونَ، وَتَنْتَقِصُ أَطْرَافَكُمْ فَلَا تَمَلِّعُضُونَ؛ لَا يَنَامُ عَنْكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ فِي غَفْلَةٍ سَاهُونَ، غَلِبَ وَاللَّهِ الْمَمْتَخَاذِلُونَ! وَأَيْلَمُ اللَّهُ! إِنِّي لِأُظَنُّ بِكُمْ أَنْ لَوْ حَمَسَ اللُّوْغَى، وَاسْتَحَرَّ الْمَمُوتِ، قَدْ انْفَرَجْتُمْ عَنْ ابْنِ أَبِي طَالِبٍ انْفِرَاجَ الرَّأْسِ.

By Allāh, how bad are you for igniting flames of war. You are intrigued against but do not intrigue (against the enemy). Your boundaries are decreasing, but you do not get enraged over it. Those against you do not sleep, but you are unmindful. By Allāh, those who leave matters one for the other are subdued. By Allāh, I believed about you that if battle rages and death hovers around you, you will cut away from son of Abī Ṭālib like the severing of head from the trunk. [2]

وَاللَّهِ! إِنَّ أَمْرًا يُمْكِنُ عَدُوهُ مِنْ نَفْسِهِ يَعْزِقُ لِحَلْمِهِ، وَيَهْلِسُ عَظْمَهُ، وَيَفْرِي جِلْدَهُ، لِعَظِيمِ عَجْزِهِ، ضَعِيفٌ مَا ضُمْتُ

عَلَيْهِ جَوَانِحُ صِدْقِهِ. أَنْزَلَتْ فَكُنْ ذَاكَ إِنْ شِئْتَ، فَأَمَّا أَنَا فَوَاللَّهِ! دُونَ أَنْ أُعْطِيَ ذَلِكَ ضَرْبٌ بِالْمَشْرِفِيَّةِ تَطِيرُ مِنْهُ  
فِرَاشُ اللَّهَامِ، وَتَطِيحُ السَّوَاعِدُ وَالْأَقْدَامُ، وَيَفْعَلُ اللَّهُ بِعَدْلٍ ذَلِكَ مَا يَشَاءُ.

By Allāh, he who makes it possible for his adversary to so overpower him as to remove the flesh from his bones, crush his bones, and cut his skin into pieces, then it means that his helplessness is great and his heart, surrounded within the sides of his chest, is weak. You may become like this if you wish. But for me, before I allow it, I shall use my sharp-edged swords of al-Mashrafiyyah, which would cut asunder the bones of the head and fly away arms and feet. Thereafter, Allāh will do whatever He wills.

[طريق السداد: أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ! إِنَّ لِي عَلَيْكُمْ حَقًّا، وَلَكُمْ عَلَيَّ حَقٌّ، فَأَمَّا حَقُّكُمْ عَلَيَّ: فَالنَّصِيحَةُ لَكُمْ، وَتَوَفِيرُ فِرَاشِكُمْ  
عَلَيْكُمْ، وَتَعْلِيمِكُمْ كَيْلًا تَجِدُّ هَلُوًا، وَتَأْدِيبِكُمْ كَيْمًا تَعْلَمُوا. وَأَمَّا حَقِّي عَلَيْكُمْ: فَالْوَفَاءُ بِالْبَيْعَةِ، وَالنَّصِيحَةُ فِي  
الْمَشْرِهْدِ وَالْمَغِيبِ، وَالْإِجَابَةُ حِينَ أَدْعُوكُمْ، وَالطَّاعَةُ حِينَ أَمْرُكُمْ.]

O people, I have a right over you and you have a right over me. As for your right over me: that is to counsel you, to pay you your dues fully, to teach you that you may not remain ignorant and instruct you in behaviourism that you may act upon. As for my right over you: it is fulfilment of (the obligation of) allegiance, well-wishing in presence or in absence, response when I call you and obedience when I order you.

Notes:

[1] Present-day Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine. Its capital was Damascus.

Wherever the word Syria is mentioned (in this book), it should be understood in its larger meaning.

[2] This sentence is employed for such severance after which there is no occasion or possibility of joining.

The author of Durrah Najafiyyah has quoted several views in its explanation:

(i) Ibn Durayd's view is that it means that, "Just as when the head is severed, its joining again is impossible, in the same way, you will not join me after once deserting me."

(ii) al-Mufaddal says ar-ra's (head) was the name of a man, and a village of Syria, Bayt al-Ra's, is named after him. This man left his home and went away somewhere and never again returned to his village, after which the proverb sprang

up: “you went as ar-ra’s had gone.”

(iii) One meaning of it is that, “Just as, if the joints of the bones of the head are opened, they cannot be restored, in the same way, you will not join me after cutting yourselves off from me.”

(iv) It has also been said that this sentence is in the sense of separating completely. After copying this meaning from the Sharḥ of al-Shaykh Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāwandī, the commentator Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd has written that this meaning is not correct because, when the word “ar-ra’s” is used in the sense of “whole”, it is not preceded by “alif” and “lam”.

(v) It is also taken to mean that, “You will so run away from me as one (fleeing for life) runs away to save his head.”

Besides this, one or two other meanings have also been stated, but being remote, they are disregarded.

First of all, it was used by the philosopher of Arabia, Aktham ibn Ṣayfī, while teaching unity and concord to his children. He says: “O my children, do not cut away (from each other) at the time of calamities like the cutting of head, because after that you will never get together.”