

Tafsīr Sūrat al-Hujūrāt

Learning Objectives:

- A study of verse 7 and 8 of Surat al-Hujurat

وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ فِيكُمْ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ لَوْ يُطِيعُكُمْ فِي كَثِيرٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْرِ لَعَنِتُّمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ حَبَّبَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْإِيمَانَ وَزَيَّنَهُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَكَرَّهَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْكُفْرَ وَالْفُسُوقَ وَالْعِصْيَانَ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الرَّاشِدُونَ [7] فَضَلًّا مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَنِعْمَةً وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ [8]

And know that among you is God's Messenger; if he obeyed you in much of the affair, you would fall into error. But God has made the faith dear to you and occupy your hearts, while making disbelief and transgression and disobedience hateful to you; these are the followers of the right way. (This is all due to) the grace from God and as a favour. Indeed God is all-Knowing, all-Wise.

This verse is a continuation and completion of the discussion from the previous verse. The Muslims are reminded that they are blessed by the presence of God's Messenger, who would better advise them in the correct course of action because he received guidance from God Himself. The opening phrase advises the Muslims that the "investigation" which is required in the previous verse should take into account the fact that, unlike others, they have the Prophet (S) amongst them for their guidance.

If they desire not to fall into error, the Muslims are directed to give preference to the instructions of the Prophet (S) over their own opinions, and not to expect him to follow all their proposals and suggestions.

God then says that because He desired that they become of the correctly guided (*rāshidūn*), He has made the religion such that faith (*īmān*) is beautiful and attractive so that the believer's heart is drawn to it and has made disbelief, transgression and disobedience ugly so that the heart of the believer is repelled by it.

1. The Difference between Knowledge (*'Ilm*) and Faith (*īmān*)

Faith is superior to knowledge, because it involves an attachment and love in the heart. A believer may know many things, but he does not necessarily love them. However, when the knowledge is to do with God, and becomes internalized, it transforms into faith, which gives the heart comfort. And this attractiveness of faith is a gift from God, as mentioned in the verse under discussion.

Knowledge may give rise to belief, but is faith that gives rise to action. And the stronger the faith, the more sincere and God-focussed the action becomes.

2. The Importance of following the Prophet (S) and after him, the Imams (A)

The verse directs us to obey the Prophet (S), and this is a sign of faith having entered the heart. It is important that we follow the Prophet's (S) words and deeds because God has sent him as a guide to add to the guidance He has placed in our hearts already.

To guide us to perfection, God has placed instinctive knowledge in our hearts. He says in the Qur'an,

وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا [7] فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا

“I swear by the soul and by what has made it perfect. He inspired it with and understanding of what is bad for it and what is good for it.” [91: 7-8]

In addition, God has prepared a second, external form of guidance, which comes through the Qur’an and His Messenger (S).

In several places in the Qur’an, God has instructed the believers to follow Him and the Prophet(S); in fact He has considered the two the same. For example:

مَنْ يُطِيعِ الرَّسُولَ فَقَدْ أَطَاعَ اللَّهَ

“Whoever follows the Prophet, he has followed God.” [4:59]

This is because the Prophet (S) did not speak or act except in complete obedience of God:

وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ [3] إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ

“He does not speak from his own desire, it is (from) a revelation revealed (unto him).” [53:3-4]

And the Qur’an adds that:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ

“O Believers! Obey God and obey the Prophet and those given authority amongst you.” [4:80]

Thus, the authority of the Prophet (S) also extends to the Ulu’l Amr (those given authority) and from the way the command “obey” has been used for both the Prophet and the Ulu’l Amr, it becomes clear that they are people who are protected from sin, and these are the 12 Imams (A).