

Surah Al-Mumtahinah

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

When I read or listen to stories about our glorious past and the amazing heights of success achieved by the Muslims, both in spiritual and material aspects, it makes me wonder at our present state of helplessness and this one question keeps circulating in my mind that what is wrong with us? Why can't we make any progress in this world even though we have the best minds, the best resources and the best guidance from Allah? The reason is that even if some of us have taken Islam as a way of life and we follow its rules and regulations to some extent; but our hearts are not attached to Allah Subhanahu WA Ta'ala as they should be and that is why there is no unity or brotherhood among Muslims anymore. So far in the Quran Allah has taught us many things about life and our purpose of existence but in this last portion of the book Allah is warning us that this knowledge cannot really benefit us unless we have the strongest connection of love and loyalty with Allah and His Prophet (s.a.w) and which should result in a strong brotherhood among the believers as well.

It is so easy to assume in times of comfort that we love Allah and our Prophet (s.a.w) more than any other thing; but what about the times when you are forced to choose between what Allah wants and what your near and dear ones want from you? Would you really give the first preference to Allah? That is "the test"... which is the essence as well as the meaning of Al-Mumtahina.

At the time of the conquest of Makkah, this test was faced by a companion of the Holy Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wassallam) named Hatib Bin Abi Balta .It so happened that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w) had decided to keep this expedition a secret because he wanted to take the Makkans by surprise. The purpose was to avoid fighting in the city of peace. But this companion tried to inform the enemy of the advance of the Muslim army, so that as a reward they might protect him and his family in case of a war. Now this was a blunder which could have had most disastrous consequences, but Allah revealed it to the Prophet (s.a.w) who succeeded in preventing this information from getting across to the enemies. As a lesson for all the believers, Allah gave a severe warning in the following verse:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا عَدُوِّي وَعَدُوَّكُمْ أَوْلِيَاءَ تُلْقُونَ إِلَيْهِم بِالْمَوَدَّةِ وَقَدْ كَفَرُوا بِمَا جَاءَكُمْ مِنَ الْحَقِّ
يُخْرِجُونَ الرَّسُولَ وَإِيَّاكُمْ أَنْ تُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ رَبِّكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ خَرَجْتُمْ جِهَادًا فِي سَبِيلِي وَابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِي تُسِرُّونَ
إِلَيْهِم بِالْمَوَدَّةِ وَأَنَا أَعْلَمُ بِمَا أَخْفَيْتُمْ وَمَا أَعْلَنْتُمْ وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْهُ مِنْكُمْ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَاءَ السَّبِيلِ {1}

O believers! Do not make friendship with those who are enemies of Mine and yours. Would you show them friendship, when they have denied the truth that has come to you and have driven the Rasool and yourselves out of your homes, simply because you believe in Allah, your Rabb? If it was indeed to strive in My way, and to seek My good pleasure that you left your homes, how can you befriend in secret? I know all that you conceal, and all that you reveal. Any of you who does this, he indeed has gone astray from the Right Way

It is very important to note here that Allah has not used the words “non muslims” or “disbelievers” but “enemies” meaning anyone who is actively involved in creating obstacles for the believers to follow their faith. How can we even think of befriending such a person who has enmity against Allah and Islam? And Allah knows what we hide and what we display so it means that only an outward show of detachment is not enough; rather our hearts should be detached from all such people and things. But what about our families and relatives? After all we love them so much and Allah has commanded us to do Ehsaan (excellent behaviour) with them...the answer is that we cannot ever be disobedient to Allah for the sake of being popular or to please anybody even if they are our closest relatives because they will not save us from Allah’s punishment on the day of recompense:

لَنْ تَنْفَعَكُم أَرْحَامُكُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يَفْصِلُ بَيْنَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ {3}

On the Day of Resurrection, neither your relatives nor your children shall avail you. Allah will judge between you, and He is observing all your actions

It does not mean that if your family is against religiousness then you should not be kind to them; or not give them their rights. Allah certainly does not allow us to do that. The fact is that if we truly want the rewards of Akhirah then we will be even more eager in bringing our families towards religion by showing them the beauty of Islam through our own behaviour and dealings with them. We will have to do unconditional Ehsaan which means to give more and to expect nothing in return. This can only be done by someone who believes in Allah and Akhirah and has the strongest desire to save his family from the horrors of hell fire. Otherwise it is so convenient to say that I don’t want to be good to anybody because everybody is so bad...

The test of being good for the sake of Allah... to love our relatives and friends for the sake of Allah and yet giving top most priority to Allah's rights is not an easy thing to do; but then what is life except a test?!!

But sometimes there is such a situation that someone tries to force you to leave your faith and it is no longer possible to go on being nice to them then what should we do? Allah reminds us of the beautiful example of His Prophet Ibrahim (a.s):

قَدْ كَانَتْ لَكُمْ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ فِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ إِذْ قَالُوا لِقَوْمِهِمْ إِنَّا بُرَاءُ مِنْكُمْ وَمِمَّا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ كَفَرْنَا بِكُمْ وَبَدَا بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمُ الْعَدَاوَةُ وَالْبَغْضَاءُ أَبَدًا حَتَّى تُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَحَدُّهُ إِلَّا قَوْلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لِأَبِيهِ لَأَسْتَغْفِرَنَّ لَكَ وَمَا أَمْلِكُ لَكَ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ رَبَّنَا عَلَيْنَا نَوَكَلْنَا وَإِلَيْكَ أَنبْنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ {4}

You have an excellent example in Ibrahim (*Abraham*) and his companions. They said to their people plainly: "We are clear of you and *your gods*, whom you worship besides Allah. We renounce you. Enmity and hate shall reign between us forever until you believe in Allah, the *One and Only God*." But do not emulate what Ibrahim said to his father: "I will pray for your forgiveness, although I have no power to get anything for you from Allah." *Their collective prayer was: "Our Rabb! In You we have put our trust, to You we turn in repentance and to You is our final goal*

There are many things to learn from the story of Ibrahim (a.s) but the thing which I find most touching is that he did not reject his father or his nation on the first day when he recognized that they were spiritually blind. It is our biggest mistake that as soon as we learn the truth in Quran and our inner self is awakened to reality of life and death; we start hating people because of their lack of awareness...not realizing that we were also like that and it took us time to come out of that darkness. But we refuse to give the same time to others! We want to drag them to our faith and it is indeed the worst thing to do. Ibrahim (a.s) made this announcement after he had done everything and been through all the tests including being thrown into the fire. And yet there is no arrogance in him, only softness and humility which is reflected in the prayer at the end of this verse. Through this prayer Allah is teaching us that no test can be endured without His help and that we are always in need of Allah's forgiveness, because no matter what our level of Imaan and Taqwa might be, we are still human beings and never free from flaws:

رَبَّنَا لَا تَجْعَلْنَا فِتْنَةً لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَاعْفِرْ لَنَا رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ {5}

Our Rabb! Do not expose us to the plots of the unbelievers. Forgive us, our Rabb! You are the All-Mighty, the All-Wise."

Sometimes it gets really painful to bear the enmity of our loved ones, just because they don't want us to leave the former lifestyle, based on ignorance, which we shared with them. But no matter how difficult it might be, we should stay firm in Allah's obedience and trust Allah that He will do the best for us....certainly it is not difficult for Allah to change the hearts!

عَسَى اللَّهُ أَنْ يَجْعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَ الَّذِينَ عَادَيْتُمْ مِنْهُمْ مَوَدَّةً وَاللَّهُ قَدِيرٌ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ {7}

It may well be that Allah will put love between you and those with whom you are now at odds because of the order which is given to you, for Allah is All-Powerful, and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful

We as believers are quick to assume that we are doing everything for Allah but we seriously need to examine our real intentions because in the final analysis, our deeds will be weighed according to our inner sincerity; and unlike this world, labels will be of no value at all. Even a great act like migrating from one place to another will not be accepted unless it is truly for the sake of Allah. That is why; when some women from Makkah migrated to Madinah to join the believers, it was essential to assess what was their real motivation...It shows that Islam has no place for empty slogans and false assumptions...

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا جَاءَكُمْ الْمُؤْمِنَاتُ مَهَاجِرَاتٍ فَامْتَحِنُوهُنَّ اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِإِيمَانِهِنَّ فَإِنْ عَلِمْتُمُوهُنَّ مُؤْمِنَاتٍ فَلَا تَرْجِعُوهُنَّ إِلَى الْكُفَّارِ(10)

O believers! When there come to you believing women refugees; examine (and test) them. Allah best knows their faith. If you find them true believers, do not send them back to the unbelievers.....

To enter Islam, is to make a lifetime commitment with Allah that we will obey Him over all other things and we will follow the teachings of His Prophet (s.a.w) in all areas of our lives. Thus Allah ordered the Prophet to take a formal oath from the men as well as women who had entered into Islam so that they realize that they have not just adorned a new cloak but a whole new way of life based on truth and sincerity....a straight way that leads straight to success:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِذَا جَاءَكَ الْمُؤْمِنَاتُ يُبَايِعْنَكَ عَلَى أَنْ لَا يُشْرِكْنَ بِاللَّهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَسْرِقْنَ وَلَا يَزْنِينَ وَلَا يَقْتُلْنَ أَوْلَادَهُنَّ وَلَا يَأْتِينَ بِبُهْتَانٍ يَفْتَرِينَهُ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِنَّ وَأَرْجُلِهِنَّ وَلَا يَعْصِيَنَّكَ فِي مَعْرُوفٍ فَبَايِعْنَهُنَّ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُنَّ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ {12}

O Prophet! When the believing women come to you to take the oath of allegiance, *take their pledge*: that they will not commit shirk with Allah, that they will not steal, that they will not

commit adultery, that they will not kill their children, that they will not give any cause for scandal which they may invent between either their hands or feet (inventing falsehood), and that they will not disobey you in any just matter, then accept their allegiance and pray to Allah for forgiveness. Surely Allah is Oft-Forgiving, most Merciful.

Taking a decision to follow the straight path of success is not enough unless we avoid all things which might distract us from it. Initially the diversion seems to be trivial but if one is not careful he ends up being far from where he had intended to reach. The biggest motivation is our environment so at the end of this great Surah Allah is warning us not to make any friends who do not believe in the Akhirah. In the words of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w) "A man is on the religion of his friend"...So be careful and choose the right company which will help you to stay focused for success!

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَوَلَّوْا قَوْمًا غَضِبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ قَدْ يَتَسَوَّأُ مِنَ الْآخِرَةِ كَمَا يَتَسَوَّأُ مِنَ الْكُفَّارِ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ الْقُبُورِ
{13}

O believers! Do not befriend those who have incurred the wrath of Allah. Indeed they despair of the Hereafter, just as the unbelievers despair of those buried in the graves.