

(135) *“O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah (SWT), even though it be against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, be he rich or poor.”* This *ayah* contains the clear guidance for Muslims by Allah (SWT) for conducting themselves with justice without any fear or favor for anyone. They are commanded to establish justice and fight against injustice and tyranny and bear witness for Allah (SWT) i.e. say the truth whenever a testimony is needed, without any partiality, fear or favor in it, whether it be their parents, relatives or their kinsfolk. *“Allah (SWT) is a Better Protector to both.”* i.e. do not give a false testimony even if it is in favor of the poor or the rich, because Allah (SWT) is a better protector and well-wisher for them than you. *“So follow not the lusts, lest you may avoid justice, and if you distort your witness or refuse to give it, verily, Allah (SWT) is Ever Well-Acquainted with what you do.”* i.e. do not let your selfish desires swerve you from the truth and do not distort or hide the testimony because of lust or hatred against anyone, for if you do, then remember that Allah (SWT) knows all your actions. Allah (SWT) is cognizant of all that you do.

(136) *“O you who believe! Believe in Allah (SWT), and His Messenger (SAW), and the Book which He has sent down to His Messenger (SAW), and the Scripture which He sent down to those before (him).”* Allah (SWT) commands the Muslims to believe sincerely in the fundamental elements of faith laid down in this *ayah*. A person's verbal attestation of the credo of Islam does not necessarily make him a true believer. But one has to believe in all fundamentals of Islam sincerely and with devotion to satisfy the actual demands required of a true Muslim. The first element of faith is belief in Allah (SWT), then to believe in His Messenger (SAW) and the Book revealed to him, along with all the scriptures revealed to His previous Messengers. Further Allah (SWT) says: *“And whosoever disbelieves in Allah (SWT), His Angels, His Books, His Messengers, and the Last Day, then indeed he has strayed far away.”* There are mainly two kinds of *Kufr* (disbelief). The *Kufr* of rejection i.e. those who deny the truth and reject Islam, and the *Kufr* of hypocrisy i.e. not believing in the heart but submitting outwardly to show off to the people. Here in this *ayah* it implies both kinds of disbelief. Thus Allah (SWT) warns that those who

disbelieve in any of the elements of faith will indeed deviate far away from the right path. They have strayed far from the truth.

(137) *“Verily, those who believe, then disbelieve, then believe (again), and (again) disbelieve, and go on increasing in disbelief; Allah (SWT) will not forgive them, nor guide them on the (Right) Way.”* These are the hypocrites who outwardly embrace Islam but inwardly they are disbelievers. They accept Islam, but if tested with trials and tribulations, they renounce it. Then they again profess Islam if it is in their interest only to revert from it and then remain in disbelief. They are not content with disbelief but further strive hard to turn the Muslims away from Islam. For such people there is neither forgiveness nor guidance from Allah (SWT).

(138) *“Give warning to the hypocrites of a stern chastisement.”* i.e. the hypocrites who remain in disbelief until death approaches them, their abode in the Hereafter will be none but Hellfire.

(139) *“Those who take disbelievers for protectors or helpers, instead of believers.”* This is another of the characteristics of the hypocrites who make disbelievers their protectors and friends instead of the believers, so that if the tables are turned and the disbelievers become victorious then they could show loyalty to them and renounce faith in Islam. *“Do they seek honor with them. Verily, to Allah (SWT) belongs all honor.”* i.e. do they show their loyalty and friendship to the disbelievers because they expect honor and power from them, whereas all honor, power and glory only belongs to Allah (SWT).

(140) *“And it has already been revealed to you in the Book that when you hear the revelations of Allah (SWT) being denied and mocked at, then sit not with them, until they engage in a talk other than that; certainly in that case you would be like them. Surely, Allah (SWT) will collect the hypocrites and disbelievers all together in Hell.”* This refers to the *ayah* 68 of surah *Al-An'am*, which already had been revealed in *Makkah*. Allah (SWT) strictly advised the Muslims not to accompany those who indulge in blasphemous talks regarding His revelations and to turn away from them until they change their topic, otherwise they would be considered as one of them. But the hypocrites ignored these instructions and continued to participate in their talk. Thus the

hypocrites will also meet the same fate as that of the disbelievers and both of them will be thrown into the Hell.

(141) *"Those who wait and watch about you; if you gain a victory from Allah (SWT), they say: "Were we not with you," but if the disbelievers gain a success, they say (to them): "Did we not gain mastery over you and did we not protect you from the believers?"*" Yet again this *ayah* describes the double-faced behaviour of the hypocrites. They wait and watch to see where the wind blows. If Allah (SWT) gives victory to the Muslims, they join them and come closer to the believers but if the disbelievers are victorious, they try to befriend them and help them against the Muslims. *"Allah (SWT) will judge between you (all) on the Day of Resurrection. And never will Allah (SWT) grant to the disbelievers a way over the believers."* i.e. the hypocrites may enjoy the worldly benefits for a while but in the Hereafter Allah (SWT) will disclose their true reality and will judge them according to their deeds and He will never give the disbelievers any way of success over the believers. He will not let the unbelievers triumph over the faithful.

(142) *"Verily, the hypocrites seek to deceive Allah (SWT), but it is He Who deceives them."* We commented upon this *ayah* in the beginning of surah *Al-Baqarah*. It states that the hypocrites try to deceive Allah (SWT) and the believers. They think that their outward belief will help them with Allah (SWT) and that they will save themselves and mislead Allah (SWT) and the believers by what they utter; but in fact it is Allah (SWT) who increases them in their deviation in this world and on the *Day of Judgment* He will surely disclose their true nature and punish them severely. *"And when they stand up for the prayer, they stand up sluggishly and to be seen by men, and they do not remember Allah but little."* This is the typical prayer of a hypocrite. Although they do not have any interest in Islam but to show their loyalty towards the Muslims and hide their true nature, they join prayer in congregation five times a day, so that Muslims consider them as part of the Islamic community. But their prayer can easily be distinguished from that of the true believers. The hypocrites do not have the same interest and enthusiasm as that of the believers and whenever they stand for prayer they show laziness and do not remember Allah (SWT) much after the prayer as do the true believers. Rather as soon as the congregation is over they leave the

mosque in haste as if they had been released from a prison. And they remember Allah (SWT) but little.

(143) *“(They are) wavering between this and that, belonging neither to these nor to those, and he whom Allah (SWT) leaves in error, you will not find for him a way.”* i.e. they waver in between belief and disbelief, belonging neither to the Muslims nor the disbelievers, because they are not sincere to anyone except themselves. Thus Allah (SWT) has led them astray from the truth, because of their own actions, and whosoever He leaves in error, there is no one who can guide him.

(144) *“O you who believe! Take not for protectors or helpers, disbelievers instead of believers.”* Allah (SWT) prohibits the believers to follow the way of the hypocrites who befriend the disbelievers instead of the believers. *“Do you wish to offer Allah (SWT) a manifest proof against yourselves?”* i.e. whoever does that, will never be helped by Allah (SWT), and on the *Day of Judgment* it will be taken as a proof against him for he disobeyed Allah (SWT). So would you give Allah (SWT) a clear proof against yourselves?

(145) *“Verily, the hypocrites will be in the lowest depths (grade) of the Fire; no helper will you find for them.”* Hypocrisy is even worse than disbelieve, because a hypocrite unlike a disbeliever does not reject Islam outright, rather he hides his disbelief while showing belief outwardly. This is why they are declared as the worst enemies of Islam and thus Allah (SWT) says that the hypocrites will be thrown into the lowest depths of the Hellfire, where they will not find any help or protection from their punishment. There shall be none to help them.

(146) *“Except those who repent, mend their ways, hold fast to Allah (SWT), and purify their religion for Allah (SWT), then they will be with the believers.”* But those who repent from hypocrisy and mend their ways and do righteous good deeds, hold fast to Allah’s (SWT) religion and become sincere in their devotion to Him by worshipping none but Him, and do good for His sake only, and not to show off to other people, then they will be considered with the believers on the *Day of Resurrection*. *“And Allah (SWT) will grant to the believers a great reward.”* i.e. those who

show gratitude to Him and are sincere in their belief shall be richly rewarded by Allah (SWT).

(147) *“Why should Allah (SWT) punish you if you have thanked (Him) and have believed in Him. And Allah (SWT) is Ever All-Appreciative (of good), All-Knowing.”* i.e. Allah (SWT) does not take pleasure in punishing His servants. If they are grateful to Him for all the blessings that He has bestowed on them and do not show ingratitude towards Him i.e. by obeying Him, then there is no reason that He should punish them, rather He fully appreciates the services of His servants and deprives none of them of their due reward. Allah is Rewarding, Knowing.

(148) *“Allah (SWT) does not like that the evil should be uttered in public speech except by him who has been wronged”* The following two *ayah* contain some moral instructions for Muslims as to what kind of relations should they have with their fellow men. In this *ayah* Allah (SWT) commands the believers not to utter evil words or insulting remarks in public that are intended to harm a person’s feelings or injure one’s reputation. But those who utter evil when they have been wronged will not be blamed because of the oppression and injustice they have suffered, as Allah (SWT) said in another *ayah*: *“And whosoever defends himself after he has suffered wrong for such, there is no blame against them.”*¹ *“And Allah (SWT) is Ever All-Hearer, All-Knower”*

(149) *“Whether you do good openly or in private or pardon an evil.”* This *ayah* allows the Muslims either to acknowledge good done to them in the form of a favor by someone or conceal it, and pardon those who have wronged them. Although it is permissible for a person who has suffered wrong to invoke Allah (SWT) against those who have wronged him, yet Allah (SWT) encourages the believers to observe patience and forgive others' mistakes as they themselves wish their mistakes be pardoned by Allah (SWT). Hence He said: *“Verily, Allah (SWT) is Ever Oft-Pardoning, All-Powerful.”* i.e. although He is All-Powerful and able to punish whosoever He wants, yet He does not punish His servants immediately after they commit a sin. Rather He gives them respite, so that they repent for their mistakes, and He forgives them.

(150) *"Verily, those who disbelieve in Allah (SWT) and His Messengers and wish to make distinction between Allah (SWT) and His Messengers saying, "We believe in some but reject others," and wish to adopt a way in between."*

(151) *"They are in truth disbelievers. And We have prepared for the disbelievers a humiliating torment."* These two *ayaat* contain a stern warning for those who believe that a person can attain salvation even without having belief in Allah's Messengers. Allah (SWT) states categorically that those who either deny Him and His Messengers or make distinction between them by believing in Him and disbelieving in His Messengers or those who try to differentiate between His Prophets by believing in some and rejecting the others, are all disbelievers who desire to take a middle path between belief and disbelief. And they will suffer a humiliating punishment in the Hereafter.

(152) *"And those who believe in Allah (SWT) and His Messengers and make no distinction between any of them (Messengers), We shall give them their rewards"* On the other hand, Allah (SWT) promises great reward for those who believe in Him and His Messengers and do not differentiate between any of them i.e. they believe in all of them. Allah (SWT) revealed the prayer of such persons in *Al-Baqarah*, they say: *"We make no distinction between one another of His Messengers. And they say: "We hear and we obey. (We seek) Your forgiveness, our Lord and to You is our return."*² *"And Allah (SWT) is Ever Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."* i.e. He will bestow His mercy and forgiveness on those who believe in Him and His Messengers.

From the following lines begins the address to the People of the Book. In these *ayaat* they have been criticized for their misconceptions, evil actions and wrong views of morality.

(153) *"The People of the Book ask you to cause a book to descend upon them from heaven."* The *Children of Israel* demanded the Prophet (SAW) that a Book be brought down upon them from heaven as a proof of his prophethood, just as *Torah* was given to Moses (AS). *"Indeed they asked Moses (AS) for even greater miracles than that, when they said: "Show us Allah (SWT) in public," but they were struck with thunder-bolt and lightning for their wickedness."* i.e. They asked Moses (AS) for far greater signs to prove his

prophethood. They said to him that we will not believe in Allah (SWT) until we see Him with our own eyes, but Allah's (SWT) wrath fell upon them and a thunderbolt struck them and they all died.³ *"Then they worshipped the calf even after clear proofs, evidences, and signs had come to them. Even so We forgave them. And We gave Moses (AS) a clear proof of authority."* As soon as Moses (AS) left for Mount Sinai, the *Children of Israel* started worshipping the Calf, even though Allah (SWT) showed them great miracles and signs through His Prophet.⁴ After all that, still Allah (SWT) pardoned them and gave Moses (AS) clear proofs of the truth.

(154) *"And for their covenant, We raised over them the Mount and (on the other occasion) We said: "Enter the gate prostrating (or bowing) with humility;" and We commanded them: "Do not transgress the Sabbath." And We took a solemn covenant from them."* These three incidents mentioned in this *ayah* have already been commented upon in detail in surah *Al-Baqarah*. The covenant taken by the Children of Israel under the Mount *Sinai* is mentioned in *ayah* 63, the commandment to enter the town with humility in *ayah* 58 and their transgression of the *Sabbath* day is mentioned in *ayah* 65 of *Al-Baqarah*.

(155) *"Because of their breaking the covenant, and of their rejecting the revelations of Allah (SWT), and of their killing the Prophets unjustly, and of their saying: "Our hearts are wrapped (with coverings, i.e. we do not understand what the Messengers say)" - nay, Allah (SWT) has set a seal upon their hearts because of their disbelief, so they believe not but a little."* Again these crimes committed by the *Children of Israel* are mentioned earlier in surah *Al-Baqarah*. They broke the covenant⁵ that they made with Allah (SWT) on Mount *Sinai*, rejected His revelations and killed the Messengers of Allah (SWT)⁶ unjustly. And when they were called upon to accept Islam, they said: "our hearts are covered and sealed."⁷ i.e. we have every type of knowledge, so we don't need the knowledge of you O Muhammad (SAW), and your preaching is not going to affect our hearts. But Allah (SWT) says that it is not they who do not believe, rather it is He who has sealed their hearts because of their arrogance and disobedience. And they do not believe. They have no faith, except a few of them.

(156) *“And because of their disbelief and uttering against Mary (AS) a grave false charge.”* The Jews did not believe in the miraculous birth of Jesus (AS) and thus accused his mother Mary (AS) of fornication.

(157) *“And because of their saying (in boast), “We killed Jesus (AS), son of Mary (AS), the Messenger of Allah,” but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them. and those who differ therein are full of doubts. They have no knowledge, they follow nothing but conjecture. For surely; they killed him not”* The belief of the Christians regarding Jesus (AS) is that he died on the cross, was resurrected on the third day and then raised up into the heavens. But Islam has rejected a larger part of this theory as Allah (SWT) states in this *ayah* that Jesus (AS) was not killed nor crucified on the cross, rather it was made apparent to the Jews and they mistook as Jesus the man whom they crucified. The *Gospel of Barnabas*⁸ also supports this theory of substitution on the cross and according to it the person who was crucified instead of Jesus (AS) was Judas Iscariot. So Allah (SWT) says that He raised him up unto Himself, and he will return again at the end of time in flesh following Imam Mahdi to defeat the *Dajjal* (Antichrist) once the world has become filled with sin, deception and injustice. He will then live out the rest of his natural life and rule the earth, as it is narrated by Abu Hurayrah (RA) that the Prophet (SAW) said: *“There is no prophet between me and him, that is, Jesus (AS). He will descend (to the earth). When you see him, recognise him: a man of medium height, bronze skin, wearing two light yellow garments, looking as if drops were falling down from his head though it will not be wet. He will fight the people for the cause of Islam. He will break the cross, kill swine, and abolish jizyah. Allah (SWT) will perish all religions except Islam. He will destroy the Antichrist and will live on the earth for forty years and then he will die. The Muslims will pray over him.”*⁹

Foot Notes

[1] Surah *Asb-Sbura* (42) : 41.

[2] Surah Al-Baqarah (2) : 285.

[3] Cf. Surah Al-Baqarah (2) : 55.

[4] Cf. Surah Al-Baqarah (2) : 51, 92.

[5] Cf. Surah Al-Baqarah (2) : 63.

[6] Cf. Surah Al-Imran (3) : 21.

[7] Cf. Surah Al-Baqarah (2) : 88.

[8] Barnabas was a Jew born in Cyprus. His name was Joseph, and due to his devotion to the cause of Jesus (AS), the other apostles had given him the surname of Barnabas; this term is variously translated as "Son of Consolation" or "Son

of Exhortation". He was a successful preacher with a magnetic personality. His eminence as a man who had been close to Jesus (AS) had made him a prominent member of the small group of disciples in Jerusalem who had gathered together after the disappearance of Jesus (AS). They observed the Law of the Prophets and practiced what Jesus (AS) had taught them.

[9] Sunan Abu Dawud, Book 37 : 4310.