

Sūrat al-Naml Verses 43-44

وَصَدَّهَا مَا كَانَتْ تُعْبُدُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ ۗ إِنَّهَا كَانَتْ مِنْ قَوْمٍ كَافِرِينَ

27:43 – And what she worshipped besides Allah prevented her. Surely, she was of an unbelieving people.

قِيلَ لَهَا ادْخُلِي الصَّرْحَ ۗ فَلَمَّا رَأَتْهُ حَسِبَتْهُ لُجَّةً وَكَشَفَتْ عَنْ سَاقَيْهَا ۗ قَالَ إِنَّهُ صَرْحٌ مُّمَرَّدٌ مِّنْ قَوَارِيرَ ۗ قَالَتْ رَبِّ إِنِّي ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِي وَأَسْلَمْتُ مَعَ سُلَيْمَانَ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

27:44 – It was said to her: Enter the palace; but when she saw it she deemed it to be a great expanse of water and bared her legs. He said: Surely it is a palace made smooth with glass. She said: My Lord! surely, I have been unjust to myself, and I submit with Sulayman to Allah, the Lord of the worlds.

Questions for Reflection

- 1) How did the false gods prevent the queen from accepting belief in Allah? (hardening of the heart, attachment to the false gods, change requires time and effort)
- 2) What was the second test Prophet Sulaymān subjected the queen to? (discerning if the floor was glass or water)
- 3) What do you notice about how the queen declares her submission? (she first acknowledges the wrong she has done)

Commentary

The queen accepted Prophet Sulaymān but had not yet accepted belief in One God. What prevented her from submitting to Allah was the fact that she was a sun worshipper and was from a people who did not believe in One God. That was a barrier which had to be broken for faith to enter the heart. The heart can be hardened due to continuous wrongdoing and sin. Such a heart becomes slow to accept the truth. Sometimes it is so hardened that it becomes sealed.

Prophet Sulaymān now puts the queen through another test. The courtiers of Prophet Sulayman (a) told her to enter the castle. Prophet Sulaymān had ordered that the yard of one of the castles be built of crystal, and beneath it there was flowing water. When the Queen looked at it, she thought it was a stream. She was surprised to see it and lifted her skirt to pass through. The Prophet informed her that it was glass and not water. The queen was taken aback and was humbled that she had not realized it was not water.

Upon seeing the proofs of the greatness of Prophet Sulaymān, the queen was now convinced that he was a Prophet of Allah. From the time of the arrival of Hudhud to her kingdom, then how Sulaymān(a) was not taken in by the gifts she sent him, the bringing of her throne to his palace, and now the yard made of glass, all made her realize that this was not an ordinary king. He had powers beyond that of normal human beings. The queen now accepted that he was a Prophet and submitted herself to Allah with him.

She first pleaded with God about the wrong she had done by not submitting to Him earlier. It was an oppression on her soul. There are many types of oppression and the most serious is that which is done

against one's own soul. What she regretted was the worship of other than Allah, as well as wasting her time in false glories of wealth and possessions, thinking that she had incredible power. Now she knew different. She was aware that there was more to the world than material wealth. She had learned that lesson from Prophet Sulaymān. It is a sign of her humility and faith that she first acknowledged the wrong she had done and then declared her submission. This was a plea of repentance.

Note that she used the word 'with' Prophet Sulaymān rather than 'to' when talking about her submission. It was to show that she believed in the same pure form of Tawhid that the Prophet believed. It was not just the Oneness of God that she was declaring, but also His rububiyat – that is He alone is the Lord and nurturer of the worlds.

The queen showed through her actions that accepting the truth is a form of freedom, not weakness. There are no chains that should tie a person to falsehood when its falsity becomes evident. The idea of letting her people down, or fear of their reaction, did not deter the queen. She did not hesitate or say she would have to consult her ministers as she had done earlier. People have to be free and independent in their submission and obedience to God. No creature should have control over that relationship.

The queen did not just say she believed. She said she submitted. Prophet Sulaymān had also asked that of her earlier in his letter (27:31). Submission is to consider oneself a servant of God and be ready to obey Him. Islam is a religion of submission and expects its followers who believe in God to follow the laws of God. It is not worthy of faith to say one will believe but at the same disobey God. Faith and submission go together.

Lessons

- 1) The heart becomes hardened when it is distanced from God.
- 2) Every human being must be free to accept the truth when they see it.
- 3) Faith and submission go together.

Cross reference verses

- 1) Hard heartedness – 2:74
- 2) Truth and Falsehood – 13:17
- 3) Submission – 2:285

Hadith

He who is bestowed four things is not disallowed four things: he who is allowed to pray is not deprived of the response to it; he who is allowed to offer repentance is not deprived of its acceptance; he who is allowed to seek forgiveness is not deprived of forgiveness; and he who is allowed to be grateful is not deprived of furtherance of favours.

Imam Ali (a), Nahjul Balagha, Hadith # 135

Connecting topic

- 1) Submission and obedience

<https://academyofislam.com/reflection-no-448-on-q-1652-obedience-to-allah/>

<https://www.islamicinsights.com/religion/clergy-corner/patience-in-obedience-to-god.html>