

Sūrat al-Hud Verses 25-26

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ إِنِّي لَكُمْ نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ

11:25 - Certainly We sent Nuh to his people: 'Surely I am a clear warner for you.

أَنْ لَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا اللَّهَ ۖ إِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ أَلِيمٍ

11:26 - Worship none but Allah. Surely I fear for you the punishment of a painful day'.

Questions for Reflection

- 1) What was the main mission of Prophet Nuh (a)?
- 2) Why does he mention warning and fear and not talk about bringing good news and the reward of Allah as the Prophet (s) did? (see commentary)

Commentary

Sūrat al-Hud has passages on the stories of past Prophets to teach Muslims about them. The story of Prophet Nuh (a) is narrated over 26 verses that convey some serious messages for the readers. He was the first Prophet to have to invite idol worshippers to One God. His struggle to convey his mission and his interactions with the powerful elite of his time are lessons for all times to come. Society will always have groups that claim superiority and want to control how things run. To fight and resist such misplaced authority is the Sunnah of the Prophets, upon which all believers follow.

Prophets are sent to give good tidings of the mercy of Allah and reward for believers, and also warn them about the punishment of Allah for those who reject His Lordship. Allah tells the holy Prophet (s); *Surely, We have sent you as a witness, as a bearer of good news and as a warner.* (33:45). But in the above verse Prophet Nuh only warns the people. It is also repeated in another passage about Prophet Nuh (27:115). This was because the Prophet was speaking to them according to their mentality. The people worshipped idols and were afraid of displeasing them. Their motive behind idol worship was to keep the gods appeased so their wrath would not come down upon them. The Prophet tells them to shift that motive to the worship of the One true God. He is the Creator and Lord, in control of all things.

The effect of fear is sometimes more powerful in awakening heedless consciences. It shakes people and gets them to start acting. Choosing which strategy to use – fear or hope in reward – depends on the people you are talking to. The culture and social norms of the time also play a role in that. When inviting people towards God we must do in the best manner (16:192), in a manner which will be most effective for them according to their mentality.

Note that the Prophet tells them he is a warner *for* them, or *to* them. He is there for them, for their growth and their salvation. His warning is for their benefit, not for himself. His concern for them is also manifested in verse 26 where he tells them he is worried about what will happen to them. A

Prophet is like a father, concerned about his family. A person who wishes good for another will warn them about dangers on the path and try to move them away from failure and destruction.

Prophet Nuh tells the people that his mission is only one thing – that they should worship none other than Allah. That was the message of all Prophets, to make people true servants of Allah. Through servitude and obedience to Allah people would gain spiritual freedom. They would not give in to their desires and lowly inclinations. This freedom would free society from a lot of evil which comes from human greed, selfishness etc.

The Prophet then tells them he is afraid of a painful day for them. He is referring here to the day when they will be destroyed in this world, even before going to the Hereafter. They will be annihilated, and he is worried about that. This specific fear of destruction is understood by the people as they then challenge him to bring it down upon them (11:32).

A note on Punishment

When there is a system in place, every part of it needs to follow the role it has in the system. There is a certain framework within which each part operates. When an individual part goes outside of that framework, it jeopardizes and can destroy the whole system. It is like declaring war with the other parts. The result will be that the system operator will not allow that part to destroy the system. An individual part that has been made for a purpose cannot decide, based on its own whims, that it will work differently from the role assigned to it in the system. Thus, there will be efforts made to fix the part and straighten it from its deviation. If that does not work the part will have to face being thrown away or destroyed. The entire system cannot be sacrificed for individual parts. This is an essential principle that can be seen in the world.

The human being has been created as part of a system. It has a path to follow. If he plays his role and does his part the universe will be in harmony with him and he will be blessed (rewarded). If he fails to play the part assigned to him, he will go against all the other parts of the system and disrupt the entire system. The casualties resulting from his deviation are the punishments he faces. The invitation of the Prophets is an attempt to remind him to straighten up and play his part. If he does not, he will face consequences.

Lessons

- 1) Speak to people according to their mentality.
- 2) A Prophet wishes only good for his people, whether he warns them or gives them hope of reward.
- 3) Obedience to Allah is true freedom.

Cross reference verses

- 1) Role of a Prophet as a warner: 35:42, 22:49, 29:50.
- 2) Prophet Nuh's concern for his people, his asking them to seek forgiveness – 71:2-3, 71:10

Spiritual connection

For a true believer fear of Allah is soothed by seeking refuge in Allah. We run from Him to Him. Check Imam Sajjad (a)'s supplication in fear: <https://www.al-islam.org/15-whispered-prayers-sahifa-al-kamila-sajjadiyyah/whispered-prayer-fearful>