

Luqman's advice to his son -1

Friday Khutba by Dr Zahid Aziz, for Lahore Ahmadiyya UK, 10 December 2021

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا لُقْمَانَ الْحِكْمَةَ أَنْ اشْكُرْ لِلَّهِ ۖ وَمَنْ يَشْكُرْ فَإِنَّمَا يَشْكُرُ لِنَفْسِهِ ۖ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ
حَمِيدٌ ﴿١٢﴾ وَإِذْ قَالَ لُقْمَانُ لِابْنِهِ وَهُوَ يَعِظُهُ يَا بُنَيَّ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٣﴾

“And certainly We gave Luqman wisdom, saying: Give thanks to Allah. And whoever is thankful, is thankful for the good of his own soul; and whoever denies, then surely Allah is Self-Sufficient, Praised. And when Luqman said to his son, while he instructed him: My son, set up no partner with Allah. Surely setting up partners (with Him) is a grievous wrong.” — ch. 31, v. 12–13.

After the second verse which I read above, there are six more verses in which Luqman continues to give his son very valuable advice. The Quran tells us that God raised prophets in every nation before the coming of the Holy Prophet. Muslims are required to express belief in all of them. Those prophets were sent with true guidance, and the Holy Prophet is told about them: “These are they whom Allah guided, so follow their guidance. Say (to people): I do not ask you for any reward for it. It is nothing but a Reminder for the nations.” (6:90). The previous prophets came for the guidance of their individual nations. The revelation given to the Holy Prophet Muhammad put together the essential parts of their guidance and made it a reminder and message for all the nations.

What the earlier prophets taught is repeated in the Quran. It is repeated in what the Holy Prophet Muhammad himself is told by God to convey to the people, and it is also repeated in stories of those prophets, through the mouths of those prophets. One such prophet was Luqman. Although some Muslim religious scholars consider him as just a wise person, a sage, but his brief story in the Quran shows that he was a prophet.

Most of the prophets mentioned by name in the Quran are those who are also mentioned in the Bible. But the prophets of the Bible belonged only to the Israelite nation, the *Bani Isrā'īl*. The Quran has also mentioned by name some prophets of

other nations. Luqman is one such prophet. It is said that he was an African, a black man. What he taught to his son, as mentioned in verses 13 to 19 of this chapter, are the finest moral qualities a human can possess, and his teaching contains many sublime points. This shows that, according to the Quran, all nations, whatever the colour of skin of its people, or whichever land they lived in, were sent prophets to convey to them the finest, deepest and most sublime teachings, and those people possessed the capability of understanding those teachings and acting upon them.

Luqman was granted wisdom or *hikmah*, and the first thing God said to Luqman was: “Give thanks to Allah.” To thank God is a requirement of wisdom. Unwise is the one who fails or forgets to thank God because he does not value or appreciate what he has been given. He is neglecting his powers and abilities, not developing them. He is the like the person who is born into a lot of money, or who inherits a lot of money, but he doesn’t realise that he must maintain and develop that wealth and put it to good use. And the statement, “We gave Luqman wisdom, saying: Give thanks to Allah”, also means that he should be thankful for that very wisdom itself. The Quran says in one place: “And whoever is granted wisdom, he indeed is given a great good” (2:269). Wisdom is different from knowledge. A person may have a great deal of knowledge, but not much wisdom. Wisdom enables a person to apply his knowledge correctly in different situations in an effective way. We have, among Muslims, religious scholars with an enormous amount of knowledge but they issue rulings which are lacking wisdom, are ridiculous and people often laugh at their rulings.

Luqman here is also told by God: “whoever is thankful, is thankful for the good of his own soul; and whoever denies, then surely Allah is Self-Sufficient, Praised”. Being thankful here means that he should act on the wisdom taught to him by God. He will benefit from it. If he is ungrateful and thankless, he will cause no harm or loss to God. We should learn to adopt the same approach towards people. If someone refuses to thank us for what we have done for them, and denies what we did for them, we should not be upset and should consider ourselves as above need of their thanks.

The very first thing which Luqman teaches his son is this: “My son, set up no partner with Allah. Surely setting up partners (with Him) is a grievous wrong.” The

words “grievous wrong” can also be translated as “great injustice”. Setting up partners with God means to treat something else as having the powers or qualities of God. When a human does this, he is doing a great injustice to God and a great injustice to himself. When someone takes a worldly ruler or a religious leader as if he had some of the powers of God, or he looks upon bodies in the sky or things on earth like mountains or rivers as gods, he is firstly doing a grave injustice to God because all these things have defects, weaknesses and flaws and they rely on other things for their existence. It is an injustice to God to compare them to Him; it is not a just and fair estimation of God. Secondly, he is doing a grave injustice to himself because he thinks that he is lower than these things and his position in life is to bow and humbly submit before them.

It is this teaching of Luqman which shows him to be a prophet, and not just a wise person, because the first duty of a prophet was to teach people not to take something else as being God, or worship it or call upon it like it was God, or treat it as having some of the powers of God.

The next verse in the preaching of Luqman is as follows:

“And We have enjoined on man concerning his parents — his mother bears him with faintings upon faintings and his weaning takes two years — saying: Give thanks to Me and to your parents. To Me is the eventual coming” (31:14).

This is in fact God speaking, and Luqman is conveying God’s words, or quoting them, to his son. Duty to parents is stressed here and in particular the mother is mentioned who undergoes difficulties during pregnancy and delivery and during the time that the baby is breast fed before it is weaned off to consume normal food. Here and in other places the Quran recognises and expresses sympathy for this hardship which the mother undergoes. In another place it says: “And We have enjoined on man the doing of good to his parents. His mother bears him with trouble and she gives birth to him in pain. And the bearing of him and the weaning of him is thirty months” (46:15). What a contrast to those scriptures of religions, believed in by the most advanced nations of today, which claim that God made the suffering and pain of childbirth as a punishment for women! But even in case of us Muslims, I recall

finding out a few years ago that in Pakistan the birth certificate of a child only contains the father's name and has no entry for the mother's name. It would give the impression that the mother had little role in the birth of the child. Whether the situation is still the same I don't know. On the other hand, the Quran, while emphasising a person's duties to both the parents, only mentions the work the mother did for the child.

Here the teaching is repeated that a person must thank God and it is added: "and to your parents". A Muslim's duty is not only to be always thankful to God but also to be thankful to anyone who has done something for him. There is a hadith of the Holy Prophet: "He who does not thank people does not thank Allah" (Tirmidhi, book 27, ch. 35, hadith 1954 and 1955). Just thanking God is not sufficient. Those who do something for us — and here parents in particular are mentioned — are acting as God's agents, so to speak. And just as thanking God should not be by word only, but also by doing something practical, in the same way thanking any humans, like parents, should not be just by saying "thank you" but also by some action or deed.

The next verse continues this subject and begins with these words: "And if they strive to make you set up partners with Me, of which you have no knowledge, do not obey them, and keep kindly company with them in this world" (31:15). If your parents try to make you do something which God does not allow, then they cannot be obeyed in that matter. The words "make you set up partners with Me, of which you have no knowledge" do not only mean if they try to force you to bow before an idol or to worship something other than God. These words mean making you do anything forbidden by God. The wonderful teaching here is that while you must not obey them if they try to make you do something which has been declared wrong by God, yet still you must "keep kindly company with them *in this world*". This means fulfilling your duties to them in matters relating to this world, matters of physical welfare. While you might not join them in prayer if they are praying in the name of some person or being other than the One God, yet you must join them in social activities and see to their physical well-being, their health, their eating, etc. Let us remember that many of the

early converts to Islam had parents who were non-Muslims and they did wish to turn them back from Islam.

More generally, according to Islamic teachings, a Muslim's duties towards his family members, in matters of this world's life, are the same whether those members are Muslims or non-Muslims. We find certain religious cults and movements, in all religions, including Christianity and Islam, who want to convert people to join their organisations, but they break them up from their families and separate them. In fact, they brainwash them and turn them against their families. But the Islamic teaching is that if a person from a non-Muslim community and family becomes a Muslim, his duties towards his family's welfare remain the same. It is just that the Muslim doesn't follow them in matters of religious belief and practice. What a great teaching is conveyed in the above words: "do not obey them, and keep kindly company with them in this world". This applies not only in case of our relationship with our parents or other family members, but also to our relationship with friends and society in general.

بَارَكَ اللهُ لَنَا وَكُنَّا فِي الْقُرْآنِ الْعَظِيمِ، وَنَفَعَنَا وَإِيَّاكُمْ بِالآيَاتِ وَالذِّكْرِ الْحَكِيمِ، إِنَّهُ تَعَالَى جَوَادٌ كَرِيمٌ
مَلِكٌ بَرٌّ رَوْفٌ رَحِيمٌ-