

Last verses of Surah al-Baqarah – 3

Friday Khutba by Dr Zahid Aziz, for Lahore Ahmadiyya UK, 18 March 2022

أَمَّنَ الرَّسُولُ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ رَبِّهِ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ كُلٌّ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَكَيْهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ لَا نَفَرْتُمْ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِنْ رُسُلِهِ وَقَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا غُفْرَانَكَ رَبَّنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿٢٨٥﴾

“The Messenger believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, and (so do) the believers. They all believe in Allah and His angels and His Books and His messengers. We make no distinction between any of His messengers. And they say: We hear and obey; our Lord, Your forgiveness (do we crave), and to You is the eventual course.” (The Quran, 2:285)

Continuing with this verse from my last *Khutba*, I would like to point out that it says that the Messenger, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, and the believers, the *mu'minūn*, believe in the same basic doctrines. That includes believing in the messengers of Allah. It means that the Holy Prophet believed **in the same messengers that his followers believe in**. This leads to the conclusion that there can be no prophets after the Holy Prophet Muhammad. The reason is simply that if prophets arise after him, **he cannot possibly believe in them**, because they would be arising after his time, but the believers at the time when these prophets arose, **would believe in them**. That means that a time would come, after the Holy Prophet, when the Muslims are believing in more prophets than the Holy Prophet believed in. This would go against this verse, which indicates that the Holy Prophet and his followers — “they all” (*kull-un*) — believe in the same messengers.

In the second part of this verse, the believers are described as saying: “We hear and obey”. The question arises, Does this mean blind and unthinking obedience to whatever the believers are told to do? Today, in Muslim groups we find that the members of those groups are prepared to do anything that the leader commands them to do. In Pakistan, and elsewhere in the Muslim world, it happens that some religious leaders announce to the public that a person has desecrated the Quran or insulted the

Holy Prophet and it is everyone's duty to go and attack that person and kill him. Hearing such an announcement, hundreds of people respond and turn up to attack that person. Is this what the Quran means when it describes the true believers as saying: "We hear and obey"?

No. According to the Quran, "hear" does not mean just hearing some words, but also understanding them and absorbing them in the heart. The Quran make the following statement about itself: "It is to those who believe a guidance and a healing, and those who do not believe, there is a deafness in their ears and it is obscure to them" (41:44). Earlier in this chapter 41 the unbelievers themselves make the same statement to the Holy Prophet: "Our hearts are under coverings from that to which you call us, and there is a deafness in our ears, and there is a veil between us and you, so act, we too are acting" (41:5). Of course, there is no deafness in the physical ears of the unbelievers and they can hear perfectly well. But we cannot say they are hearing because hearing includes reflecting upon what they hear. At another place the Quran says to the Holy Prophet: "And some of them listen to you. But can you make the deaf to hear, though they will not understand?" (10:42). They listen but they are deaf because they don't apply their understanding to what they are hearing.

The Quran refers to certain Christians who accepted the message of Islam as follows: "And when **they hear** what has been revealed to the Messenger you see their eyes overflow with tears because of the truth they recognize. They say: Our Lord, we believe, so write us down with the witnesses (of truth)" (5:83). This is the kind of hearing that is mentioned in the verse I am discussing when it says: "We hear and obey". Through hearing they recognise the truth and this recognition overwhelms their hearts and minds with feeling. Another verse we may quote in this context is the following prayer of the believers: "Our Lord, surely **we have heard** a Crier calling to the faith, saying: Believe in your Lord. So we do believe. Our Lord, grant us protection from our sins and remove our evils and make us die with the righteous" (3:193). The Crier is the Holy Prophet. People hear him calling them to belief in God and they come to believe in God. Hearing the message creates faith in their hearts, and it creates the realisation in them that they must ask God for forgiveness for their sins

and pray that they lead lives of righteousness so that when they die they are included among the righteous.

This is so very far from the concept of “we hear and obey” being that you hear an order, and without having any faith, feeling or understanding, you carry it out mechanically. Looking at those Muslims who, on hearing the command of a *pir* or *maulvi*, rush to carry it out without any thought of whether it is right or wrong, wise or foolish, do we see their hearts melting and eyes shedding tears “because of the truth they recognize”? Do we see them asking forgiveness of God? No, they are absolutely sure that all they need to do is “hear and obey”, and the *pir* or *maulvi* who ordered them will take care of them in front of Allah because they obeyed him. In another place in the Quran, a quality of the true believers is given as follows: “And they who, when reminded of the messages of their Lord, do not fall down at them deaf and blind” (25:73). In other words, they must let the messages of their Lord enter into their minds and hearts.

Examples of what is really meant by “we hear and obey” can be found in the life of Hazrat Umar. In his close circle of advisors there was a young man called Al-Hurr. Umar had kept in his close circle people who knew the Quran well, whatever their age, old or young like Al-Hurr. Al-Hurr’s uncle persuaded him to arrange for him to meet Hazrat Umar. As soon as the uncle went in to see Hazrat Umar, he started abusing him with various accusations of being unfair and unjust to certain people. Hazrat Umar became very angry and decided to punish him. Al-Hurr intervened, saying: “O *Amīr-ul-Mu’minīn*, Allah has said to His Prophet: ‘Resort to forgiveness and enjoin good and turn away from the ignorant’ (7:199), and this man is one of the ignorant.” Now the reporter of this incident says: “By Allah! Umar did not violate the guidance of this verse when Al-Hurr recited it to him. Umar used to stop (in his tracks) at the Book of Allah.” (Bukhari, hadith 4642). As soon as Hazrat Umar heard this verse, which teaches that when you have to deal with the ignorant people, forgive them because they are acting out of ignorance, teach them some good, and then turn away from them, which means: do not entangle yourself with them any further, Hazrat Umar gave up his decision to punish him, which he had been determined to do. As

this report tells us, this was what Umar always did: change his mind immediately if someone recited in front of him a verse of the Quran which went against what Umar was going to do.

You are well aware of the famous incident when Hazrat Umar delivered a *khutba* against the practice of setting large amount of *mahr* to be given to the bride on marriage. A woman in the audience stood up and quoted before Umar a verse of the Quran which mentions “a heap of gold” being given as *mahr*, and she said: How dare you deprive us of what God says we can receive? Hazrat Umar immediately accepted her point and said: “The women of Madinah have more understanding than Umar.” The recitation of the verse of the Quran made him pause, cancel his decision and even praise the objector. Umar did not say, “I am the *Amīr-ul-Mu'minīn*. What is your knowledge compared to mine? Moreover, you are only a woman whose intelligence and understanding are a half of that of a man.”

It is reported in the book *Tarīkh-ul-Khulafā* that his son, Ibn Umar, said: “Whenever I saw Umar angry, it always happened without exception that if someone reminded him of Allah or the fear of Allah or recited a verse of the Quran, his anger subsided.” It says in the same book that Hazrat Bilal once asked someone what kind of man he found Umar to be? He replied: “He is the best person but when he gets angry it is difficult to control him.” Bilal said: “When he is angry, why don't you recite some verse of the Quran? All his anger will go away.”

So, this is what is “we hear and obey”, that a person is totally determined to do something, but if he is reminded that the word of Allah tells him to do something different, the word of Allah strikes such a chord in his heart that he instantly changes his course of action. He does not do it because someone is forcing him or threatening him, but because hearing the word of Allah awakens something inside him. In the verse under discussion, 2:285, after saying “we hear and obey”, the believers say: “our Lord, Your forgiveness (do we crave), and to You is the eventual course”. The seeking of forgiveness could mean: our Lord, we were on the verge of disobeying You until we heard Your word, so forgive us. It could also mean: our Lord, our

understanding of what we have heard is limited and flawed, and may not be correct, and our ability to obey is also limited because of our human limitations. So cover our shortcomings, and we realise that eventually we will return to You.

May Allah enable us to “hear and obey” His messages in the true sense that He has also taught us, ameen.

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