

IN HIS NAME & BY THE REMEMBRANCE OF HIS LAST HUJJAT (ATFS)

GHADEER LECTURE SERIES

Lecture 3: VERSE OF MASTERSHIP (Wilayah)

In our first lecture, we discussed about the Quranic verses – both hidden & apparent – that speak on the topic of Imamah. Later, we continued the topic with the discussion on the necessity of a Divine representative in every era.

In today's gathering we will speak about the most important and key verse on Imamah – famous as the ***“Verse of Wilayah”***

إِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ رَاكِعُونَ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّ
اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فَإِنَّ حِزْبَ اللَّهِ هُمُ الْغَالِبُونَ

“Only Allah is your Vali and His Apostle and those who believe, those who keep up prayers and pay the poor-rate while they bow. And whoever takes Allah and His apostle and those who believe for a guardian, then surely the party of Allah are they that shall be triumphant” ¹.

In our analysis of these two verses – famous as the ‘Verses of Wilayat’ – we will

- examine– in the light of *Tafaseer* - some of the terms used in the verse.
- investigate the context in which this verse was revealed.
- Reply to the doubts and queries raised by the Sunni exegetists and put forth our replies.

1. Analysis of the words

This verse starts with **إِنَّمَا**. In Arabic grammar, it is used in the meaning of “confining” or “restricting” a thing to a particular thing or person(s). It is generally translated as “only and only” or “exclusively” or “solely”

¹ Surah Maidah, v 55

Hence, in this verse, the word *innama* is applicable to three entities

- Allah
- His Messenger (sawa), &
- Those who believe (with the attributes mentioned in the verse)

2. Based on this interpretation, all others who have some form of authority – like father, husband, guardian, Faqih (religious scholar) etc – are all subset of anyone of these meanings. Hence, besides Allah, His Messenger and “**those who believe**”, no one else can claim to have authority on the people. Neither the caliphs of Bani Umayyah nor of Bani Abbas, neither any king nor any ruler can assert to have (absolute) authority upon the people. His authority will always be considered to be subordinate and subservient to the authority of Allah and His Messenger and “**those who believe**”.

The word Master (ولي) had been used thrice in the verse. Hence, the meaning of “Master” which is applicable on Allah is also applicable - in all it’s aspects - to Allah’s Messenger as well as “**those who believe**”. Then what is the “authority” of Allah? It is in the sense of “rulership” and “governance”. Allah is the “Supreme ruler” of His creatures. What is the “authority” of Messenger of Allah? It is in the meaning of “superiority”. The Holy Quran clearly says

النَّبِيُّ أَوْلَىٰ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ

“The Prophet is superior to all the believers” ²

Since the “authority” of Allah corresponds to “His absolute rulership” and the authority of the Messenger corresponds to his “rulership & superiority”, then the authority of “**those who believe**” should also be interpreted in the same context.

3. The phrase “**those who believe**” has a specific meaning and cannot be applied to every believer. It applies only to the believer who has done charity while in the state of bowing (ruku). Hence, any debate that “**those who believe**” includes every believer is fallacious and invalid. This phrase points to an individual (or

² Surah Abzab, v 6

group of individuals) who have given charity while bowing. And according to circumstantial and contextual analysis of the revelation of this verse and in the light of the tradition of Janab Abu Zar, it refers to Ameerul Momineen (a.s).

4. The word 'zakat'(charity) in this verse does not imply the obligatory zakat. Rather, it implies the recommended form of charity or aid which is generally given to poor people. Shia and Sunni scholars and exegetists are unanimous in this interpretation.
5. The word (تَوَلَّى)“tawalla” in the second verse – according to the rules of Arabic grammar – means “to accept the authority.” In other words, the right translation of the second verse would be “the one who accepts and submits to the authority of Allah and His Messenger and those who believe”
6. The last part of the second verse indicates that the group that accepts and submits to all the three forms of authority is considered to be in the **“party of Allah”** (Hezbollah) and this group is fortunate and successful.

Context of the verse

Regarding the circumstances in which this verse was revealed, Imam Sa’lbi – a famous Sunni exegetist and author of *Tafseer Kashf wa Bayan* – narrates a tradition from Janab Abu Zar. Zamakshari – the greatest litterateur of the Arab world and foremost among the Sunni scholars too has explained the circumstances of the revelation of this verse in *Tafseer Kashhaf*. Without quoting from Janab Abu Zar, he too agrees that this verse is concerning Ameerul Momineen (a.s).

Janab Abu Zar says,

One day I was praying Salat-uz-Zuhr along with Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) in the mosque. At that time a beggar entered the mosque asking for some charity. No one came forward to help him. Feeling hopeless and despondent, the beggar raised his hands to the sky and said, “O Allah! Bear witness that I came to the mosque of your Prophet but no one volunteered to help me.” (In some traditions it has come that Abu Zar was reciting the nafilah (recommended prayers) of Zuhr which is recited before the obligatory Zuhr prayers.) H. Ali (a.s) lifted his little finger, which was

adorned with a ring, and drew the attention of the beggar. He came forward and removed the ring from his (a.s) finger and kept it as charity. In this way the meaning of the verse was fulfilled. It was at this time, that this verse – “Surely Allah is your Master and His Messenger.....” was revealed.

Hence it is proved beyond doubt – through the exegesis’ of both Shia and Sunnis – that this verse is solely in favour and honour of Ameerul Momineen (a.s)

O Allah! For the sake of Your Great names mentioned in the Quran – hasten the reappearance of Imam Zamana (as)