

يَتَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا عَلَيْكُمْ أَنفُسَكُمْ لَا يَضُرُّكُمْ مَن ضَلَّ إِذَا أَهْتَدَيْتُمْ
إِلَى اللَّهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٠٥﴾

Al-Ma'idah (The Table Spread) 5:105

O You Who Believe!

- Guard your own souls.
- If you follow (right) guidance.
- No hurt can come to you from those who stray.
- The goal of you all is to Allah.
- It is He that will show you the truth of all that you do.

Commentary

Allamah Tabatabai (AR)

The verse enjoins the believers to take care of themselves and adhere to the path of their guidance; they should not be worried because a group of people has gone astray, everyone is to return to Allah, and He is to judge everyone according to his deed.

It is known that going astray and being on the right way – the opposites – take place when one proceeds on a way. If one adheres to the middle of the road, he reaches to the end of the road, and it is the destination that he had intended to arrive at in his life's journey. On the other hand, if he was not serious in his proceeding and deviated from the right path, then he goes astray and misses the intended goal. The verses supposes that man has got a path to tread on and a destination to arrive at; sometimes he adheres to the way and is guided aright; at other times he deviates from it and is led astray. However, there is no other destination that a man aims at except the blissful life and good end. Yet the verse declares that to Allah is the return to Whom all have to return – those who are guided aright as well as those who go astray.

Allah has made it clear in these verses that all men are unavoidably proceeding to Him; the road for some of them is short and it leads to guidance and success, while that for the others is long and it does not end at bliss and happiness, but take the walker to destruction and perdition.

In short, the verse supposes for the believers and the disbelievers two paths, both of which end at Allah; and it directs the believers to look after their own interests and to turn away from the others, i.e. from the people of misguidance. They should not weary themselves thinking about those people; because their account is on their Lord, not on the believers; these believers will not be asked about them, so why should they involve themselves with them. Thus the verse is near in meaning to another verse: *Say to those who believe (that) they forgive those who do not hope the days of Allah that He may reward a people for what they earn* (45:14). And similar is the connotation of the verse: *This is a people that have passed away; they shall have what they earned and you shall have what you earn, and you shall not be called upon to answer for what they did.* (2:134).

Therefore, a believer must remain occupied only in that which concerns his soul by proceeding on the path of guidance; he should not be shaken by what he sees of misguidance of the people and pervasion of sins among them; he should not waste his time with involvement in their affairs. Truth is truth even if abandoned, and falsehood is falsehood even if taken up, as Allah says: *Say: The bad and the good are not equal, though the abundance of the bad may enchant you; so fear Allah, O men of understanding, that you may be successful.* (5:100); *And not alike are the good and the evil* (41:34).

In the light of the above discourse, the words of Allah: “he who errs cannot hurt you when you are on the right way,” are a sort of illusion which aims at forbidding the believers to be influenced by misguidance of those who are misled; as it may encourage them to leave the way of guidance, and to think that the present world does not support religion and does not allow them to be involved in spiritual affairs; as these things are remnants of the ancient simple customs whose time has passed away. Allah says: *And they say: If we follow the guidance with you, we shall be carried off from our country.* (28:57).

It forbids them also to fear the others’ misguidance and neglect their own guidance; in this way they would remain engaged in the others’ affairs and would forget their own selves; thus they would become like the others.

- Actually, what is incumbent on a believer is only to call towards his Lord, enjoin the good, and forbid the evil.
- In short he is to arrange the normal causes, and then he should leave the affairs of the effects in the hands of Allah, because to Him belong all the affairs.
- He has not been told to put himself in perdition in trying to rescue others from peril;
- And he shall not be called upon to account for what others had done;
- He is not an overseer to check others’ activities.

Thus, the verse is similar in meaning to what the Qur'an says in other places: Then, may be, you will kill yourself with grief, sorrowing over them, if they do not believe in this announcement. *Surely We have made whatever is on the earth an embellishment for it, so that We may try them (as to) which of them is best in deed. And most surely We will make what is on it bare ground without herbage (18:6-8).*

And even if there were a Qur'an with which the mountains were made to pass away, or the earth were traveled over with it, or the dead were made to speak thereby; nay! The commandment is wholly Allah's. Have not yet those who believe known that if Allah had willed He would certainly guide all the people? (13:31)

More over, calling the others to Allah, and enjoining good and forbidding evil are a part of a believer's involvement with the affairs of his own self, and of his advancing on the path of his Lord. How can this verse be considered as going against the verses of the Call or those of enjoining good and forbidding evil, or taken to be abrogating them, while Allah has counted these factors as the designation of this religion and a foundation upon which it has been built.

Allah says: Say: *This is my way: I invite (you) to Allah; with clear sight (are) I and he who follows me; (12:108); You are the best nation raised up for (the benefit of) men; you enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong (3:110)*

The verse proposes that there is one path for the believers that leads them aright, and another one for the disbelievers that misleads them to error. Then it orders the believers to adhere to their souls (as it says, *alaykum anfusakum*, which literally means, adhere to your souls). All this shows that the soul of the believer itself is the path which he should tread on and adhere to; exhorting one to a path conforms with exhortation to adhere to it, to never leave it; it does not connote adherence to the walker of the way; as we clearly see in verses like this: *And (know) that this is my path, the right one, therefore follow it; and follow not (other) ways, for they will lead you away from His way; (6:153).*

In this way, this verse throws brilliant light on the aim and goal to which other verses point somewhat vaguely, like the words of Allah: *O you who believe! Fear Allah, and let every soul consider what it has sent on for tomorrow, and fear Allah, surely Allah is Aware of what you do. And be not like those who forgot Allah, so He made them forget their own souls; these it is that are the transgressors. Not alike are the inmates of the fire and the dwellers of the garden; the dwellers of the garden are they that are the achievers (59:18-20).*

These verses enjoin on every soul to consider what it has sent on ahead, and to vigilantly guard its good deeds, as it is its provision for tomorrow – and the best provision is piety and fear of Allah. The soul has a today and a tomorrow, and it is proceeding ahead as it has to go a long way, and its destination is Allah, and with Him is the best reward, and that is the garden. Therefore, every soul should continuously remember its Lord without forgetting Him for a single moment; because Allah is the destination, and forgetting the destination would make one forget the path; because whoever forgets his Lord forgets his soul; such a person would not gather any provision for his tomorrow and for his future journey, which he could use to preserve his life; and it would mean perdition.

This is the meaning of what both sects have narrated from the Prophet (S) that he said:

Whoever knew his soul knew his Lord.

The end goal of man, and the destination of his affairs where his final result (his felicity and infelicity; his success and failure) is established, is based by Allah's prescription on his character and his soul's aspects, which in their turn are based on deeds which are divided into good and evil, and piety and corruption. Allah says: *Any (by) the soul and Him Who made it perfect, then He inspired it to understand what is wrong for it and right for it, he will indeed be successful who purifies it, and he will indeed fail who corrupts it. (91:7-10)*

Accordingly, the clause: *he who errs cannot hurt you when you are on the right way*, will mean that the erroneous non-Islamic societies cannot hurt them in any way. Therefore, the Muslims are not obligated to exert most strenuously for spreading Islam among the non-Muslim nations. They should limit themselves within normal limits, as explained earlier.

Or, it may mean that they should not let the guidance they have slip out of their hands by looking at the misguided societies as to how they are engrossed in base desires and how they enjoy the forbidden fruits of life; because all of them are to return to Allah and He will inform them of what they had done. Accordingly, the verse has the same implication as the following ones: *Let it not deceive you that those who disbelieve go to and fro in the cities (fearlessly). A brief enjoyment! Then their abode is hell, and evil is the resting-place (3:196-7); And do not stretch your eyes after that with which We have provided different classes of them, (of) the splendor of this world's life, (20:131).*

Mir Ahmed Ali (AR) and Aqa Mahdi Puya (AR)

The first and foremost duty of every individual is to save his own self, and persuade those who are closely related or associated to follow the right path. The straying of the wicked and the disobedient will not affect those who follow the right guidance. But in the matter of obligatory ordinances *amr bil ma-ruf* and *nahya anil munkar* have to be applied as mentioned in the commentary of Ali Imran: 101 to 115.

Ayatullah Sayyid Kamal Faqih Imani and a Group of Muslim Scholars
Everybody Is Responsible of One's Own Deeds

In the previous verse, the words were about the blindly imitation of the people of the Age of Ignorance from their misguided ancestors; and the Qur'an warned them that such an imitation did not adapt to wisdom and logic. Having this meaning in mind, they might question that if they separated their account in such affairs with their ancestors, then what about the fate of their ancestors. Besides, suppose they left that imitation, what would be the fate of many people who acted under the influence of such an imitation?

In answer to these questions, the holy verse addresses the believers and implies that they are responsible of their own selves. These misguided persons from among their ancestors, friends, and relatives, contemporary with them, could not harm them if they were on the right path. It says:

" O you who have Faith! take care of your own selves. He who strays cannot harm you when you are on the right way. ..."

Then, the Qur'an refers to the subject of Resurrection and the reckoning of everyone's deeds, and says:

"... To Allah is your return totally; then He will inform you of what you had been doing."