

يَتَّيِّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَلَا تَوَلَّوْا عَنْهُ وَأَنْتُمْ

تَسْمَعُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾

Al-Anfal (The Spoils of War) 8:20

O You Who Believe!

- Obey Allah.
- And His Messenger.
- And turn not away from him when you hear (him speak).

Commentary

Allamah Tabatabai (AR)

The words “Do not oppose the Messenger when you hear the revelation of truth.” The orders and restrictions are all beneficial for your worldly as well as religious life. Indeed the orders and the restrictions seemingly refer to the day of Badr but they are general for all times.

The meaning of this sentence is very clear but the thing to note is that there is an insult of the disbelieving polytheists, in it says, “ They said we heard it when they do not listen”. The words “We heard it” has been connected with some Ayats that come later when God says, “When Our Signs are rehearsed to them, they say: "We have heard this (before): if we wished, we could say (words) like these” and we can recite something like the same.” (Ayah 31:8).

When God says that they do not hear means that they would have accepted if they had heard as He has said in Sura Aaraf (179) “and ears wherewith they hear not.” and then refers to them when he spoke about the residents of Hell in Sura Mulk ayah-10. “And they will say “ Had we but listened or used our intelligence we would not have been among the dwellers of the blazing fire.” The words to listen to the words of truth with one’s ears and in the next ayah it means to accept the revealed and heard message.

As you are now aware both these Ayats are addressed to the Muminin and both are attached to the preceding Ayats, which are addressed to the polytheists. God declares the polytheists fit for admonishment and ridicules their plea for victory when He says, “ The dominance is given to the words of truth over the words of disbelief and to the invitation to truth over the invitation to evil.” God then addresses the Muminin and orders them to obey Him and His Messenger. If they do not pay heed even after hearing the revelations then He gives them respite (to become faithful) but he admonishes them that they should not try to emulate the polytheists and say “ We have heard when they have not paid heed.”

It is possible that the ayah may be referring to those selected few individuals of Makkah who initially declared their belief in Islam but their hearts were still in doubts and so they sided with the polytheists in the battle. When the torment of God overtook the polytheists at Badr these people also suffered the same fate. When they reached Khybar, some of them had already become believers but their parents would not let them go, fearing that they will side with the Messenger once they reached Madina. They reluctantly came with their parents to join in the battle of Badr. When they saw the strength of the Muslims at Badr they reneged from their allegiance to Islam saying, “ These poor people have been misled by their religion”

These selected few individuals were, Qais bin Waleed bin Mughira, Ali bin Ummaya bin Khalaf, Aas bin Hajjaj, Haris bin Zama'a and Qais bin Fakhri bin Mughira.

Mir Ahmed Ali (AR) and Aqa Mahdi Puya (AR)
Verse 46 of Believers

Ayatullah Sayyid Kamal Faqih Imani and a Group of Muslim Scholars

In the Qur'an thoroughly, the commandment of the obedience from the Messenger of Allah (S) has occurred next to the obedience from Allah. In eleven occurrences the term /ati'un/ (do obey) has been mentioned after the Qur'anic phrase: “ Be in awe of Allah ”.

In this verse, although both the obedience from Allah and the obedience from the Messenger are referred to, the objective is the disobedience from the Messenger, (not from Allah) , specially in the Battle of Badr and his commands concerning the military affairs.

Therefore, for the continuation of the order of the truth, people should always be recommended to be obedient unto the Divine leader. The verse says:
“ O you who have Faith! Obey Allah and His Messenger, ...”

It should also be known that leaving the obedience from the Prophet (S) is the disobedience from Allah. The verse continues saying:
“...and do not turn away from him while you hear (him) .”

In this obedience, the obedience from the Divine leader, truthfulness is the necessary condition, and only the act of ‘ hearing ’ is not enough. The verse says:
“ And be not like those who say: ‘ We heard ’ , but they do not hear (indeed) . ”