

ISLAM

Excerpts from “What is True Success?” Imam Ali Bin Abu Talib

Introduction: The Arabic word *Islam* means peace and submission. In the religious sense, in principle, it is professing that there is no god but God, and Muhammad (s) is the Messenger of God. In a practical sense, it is submission to the Will of God. For a Muslim, it requires belief in one God, belief in all the previous prophets of God, following the teachings of Muhammad (s), and obeying the commands (laws) contained in the Qur’an. In this chapter, Imam Ali (p) presents his perspective regarding his religious beliefs, his strong faith in God, and his belief in the prophethood of Muhammad (s).

He Defines Islam:

I shall define Islam for you in a way that nobody has done before me.

Islam means obedience to God. Obedience to God means having sincere faith in Him. Such a faith means to believe in His Power. Belief in His Power means recognizing and accepting His Majesty. Acceptance of His Majesty means fulfilling the obligations laid down. The fulfillment of obligations means actions. (Therefore, Islam does not mean mere faith, but it is faith accompanied with action).

(His saying)

He Explains the Merits of Islam:

Praise be to God who established Islam and made it easy for those who approach it and gave strength to it against anyone who tries to overpower it. Therefore, God made it (a source of) peace for him who attaches to it, safety for him who enters it, argument for him who speaks about it, witness for him who fights (in defense) with its help. He made it a (source of) light for him who seeks light from it, a means of understanding for him who supports it, a source of sagacity for him who strives, and a sign (of guidance) for him who is receptive.

He made it a lesson for him who seeks advice, a means of salvation for him who testifies, a source of confidence for him who trusts, a surety for him who relies, and a shield for him who endures.

It is the brightest of all the paths and clearest of all passages. It has bright highways, burning lamps, prestigious fields of activity, and high objectives. It is sought after earnestly. Its observers are honorable, the testimony (to oneness of God) is its way, and good deeds are its high points.

(Sermon 105)

Addressing the Misguided Followers of Islam:

God is bounteous to you, for you have acquired a position where even your servants are honored and your neighbors are treated well. However, now you see pledges to God being broken, but you do not feel enraged, although you fret and frown on the breaking of the traditions of your ancestors. You have preferred the company of deviators and delegated your affairs in their hands. They have doubts in what they do and they act in pursuit of their (selfish) desires. God will gather you all on a day (Day of Reckoning) that would be hard on the wrongdoers.

(Sermon 105)

Means of Seeking Nearness to God:

The best means to seek nearness to God is to believe in Him (His Oneness) and His Prophet and fight to defend His cause, for it is the highest pinnacle of faith. It is to believe in His (God's) purity and justice; to establish (ritual) prayers, for they are the foundation of the community; to pay the poor-due (Islamic charity or *Zakaat*), for it is an obligation; to fast for one month in the month of Ramadan, for it is a shield against chastisement; to perform Hajj (Pilgrimage) to the House of God (K 'aba), for it drives away poverty and washes away sins.

Also, to have regard for kinship, for it increases wealth and increases the length of life (as a reward from God); to give alms secretly, for it covers shortcomings; to give alms openly, for it protects against a bad death, and to be of benefit (to people), for it protects from falling into disgrace.

Keep God in remembrance, for it is the best remembrance, and desire for that which He has promised to the pious people, for His promise is the truest promise. Adopt the way of the Prophet, for that is the most distinguished way. Follow the teaching and practice of the Prophet, for it is the most honorable of all practices.

Learn the Qur'an, for it is the fairest of discourses, and understand it thoroughly, for it is the best for blossoming of hearts. Seek cure with its light, for it is cure for (the ailments of) hearts. Recite it beautifully, for it is the most beautiful narration.

Certainly a scholar who acts not according to his knowledge is like the off-headed ignorant who does not find relief from his ignorance. On the learned, the plea of God is greater, grief incumbent, and he is more blameworthy before God for his faults.
(Sermon 109)

God Chose Islam¹ (Submission to God)

This Islam is the religion that God has chosen for Himself, developed it before His eyes, preferred it as the best among His creations and established its pillars on His love. He has given honor to it above other creeds. He has humbled its enemies and frustrated its opponents by giving His support. He has smashed the pillars of misguidance with it. He has quenched the thirst of the thirsty from its cisterns.

He made Islam such that its constituent parts cannot break up: Its links cannot separate. Its structure cannot fall. Its columns cannot decay, and it cannot be uprooted. In addition, its time does not end: Its laws do not expire. Its paths do not become narrow. Its ease does not change into difficulty. Its clarity is not affected by gloom. Its straightness does not become crooked. Its vast paths have no narrowness. Its lamp cannot be put out, and its sweetness does not change to bitterness.

Its foundation is strong and built on truthfulness. Its streams are ever full. Its lamps remain ever lighted, and its beacons help travelers seeking guidance. God has granted Islam His highest pleasure: Made it the pinnacle of His pillars and the path to His obedience. Therefore, you should honor it and follow it. Fulfill its obligations and accord it the position it deserves.

1. In the Qur'an, the Prophet Abraham is referred to as Muslim, i.e., he submitted to the Will of God. All Prophets of God were Muslims. Their followers, who adhered to the teachings of the respective Prophets, were also Muslims.

Then, God, the Glorified, deputed Muhammad (s) with the message of truth, at a time when the brightness of civilization was turning into gloom. The world had become troublesome for its inhabitants, and its decay had approached near. God made him responsible for conveying His message and made it (a means of) honor for his people, a source of dignity for its supporters, and an honor for his helpers.
(Sermon 197)

(The End)

Presented by Syed H. Akhtar

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Additional references about religion (of Islam) from the Qur'an.

- ❖ "God has chosen you the religion (Islam) for you; therefore, you must not die except as Muslims." (2:133)
- ❖ "Verily the religion according to God is Islam, " (3:19)
- ❖ "Whoever seeks any religion other than Islam, it shall never be accepted from him, " (3:85)
- ❖ "This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favors upon you, and chosen Islam as your religion;" (5:3)
- ❖ "And whoever reneges (from religion), he dies an infidel; as such are they, whose deeds will be in vain in this world and in the Hereafter," (2:217)
- ❖ "Say: "Verily, my prayer (Salaat) and sacrifice, my life and death, (are only) for God, the Lord of the worlds. No associate (is there) for Him, and thus I am commanded; I am the first of the Muslims (those who submit to God)." (6:163)
- ❖ "Call on Him sincerely, turning to Him exclusively in religion," (7:29)

There are more than 60 verses in the Qur'an about religion (of Islam, the religion of God.)

Note: As Imam Ali (p) pointed out, Islam requires action (to practice it) and not just belief. Some misguided Muslims have given bad name to Islam by abusing it for their selfish political or other goals. This is not new; the followers of all other prophets also did it. However, we cannot ruin our Hereafter because of their misdeeds. They will answer for their deeds and we will answer for our deeds. We will be held in pledge for our deeds, not their deeds.

Quote from Imam Ali (p)

"Many educated people have ruined their Hereafter because of their ignorance of religion. Their (secular) knowledge was not of use to them." Saying #67, page 205, book "What is True Success?"

