



38701 - Enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil, and the verse, “Take care of your ownelves”

the question

How can we refute, with strong and definitive evidence, those who quote the verse (interpretation of the meaning): “O you who believe! Take care of your ownelves” when they are enjoined to do that which is good and told not to do that which is evil?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

This verse from Soorat al-Maa'idah is one that is misunderstood by some people. They think that it means that it is not obligatory to enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil, and they sometimes quote it to those who are enjoining them to do something good or telling them not to do something evil.

In his commentary on the verse (interpretation of the meaning):

“O you who believe! Take care of your ownelves. If you follow the (right) guidance [and enjoin what is right (Islamic Monotheism and all that Islam orders one to do) and forbid what is wrong (polytheism, disbelief and all that Islam has forbidden)] no hurt can come to you from those who are in error”

[al-Maa'idah 5:105]

The scholar Muhammad al-Ameen al-Shanqeeti said:

The ignorant person may imagine, from the apparent meaning of this verse, that it is not obligatory to enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil, but the same aayah also indicates that if a person does his best (to enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil), and there is no response, then this is what this verse refers to. That is where Allaah says “If you follow the (right) guidance”,



because whoever does not enjoin what is good is not following right guidance. Those who said this include Hudhayfah and Sa'eed ibn al-Musayyib, as quoted by al-Aloosi in his Tafseer; Ibn Jareer, as quoted by al-Qurtubi from Sa'eed ibn al-Musayyib; and Abu 'Ubayd al-Qaasim ibn Salaam. Ibn Jareer also quoted something similar from a group of the Sahaabah including Ibn 'Umar and Ibn Mas'ood.

Some of the scholars said that "If you follow the (right) guidance" means if you tell them but they do not listen; and some of them said that enjoining what is good is included in the meaning of guidance in this verse. This is very clear to any fair-minded person.

Further evidence that the one who does not enjoin what is good is not following true guidance is the fact that Allaah swears that such a person is lost, as He says (interpretation of the meaning):

"By Al-'Asr (the time).

Verily, man is in loss,

Except those who believe (in Islamic Monotheism) and do righteous good deeds, and recommend one another to the truth [i.e. order one another to perform all kinds of good deeds (Al-Ma'roof) which Allaah has ordained, and abstain from all kinds of sins and evil deeds (Al-Munkar) which Allaah has forbidden], and recommend one another to patience (for the sufferings, harms, and injuries which one may encounter in Allaah's Cause during preaching His religion of Islamic Monotheism or Jihad)"

[al-'Asr 103:1-3]

The truth of the matter is that it is obligatory to enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil, and once he has done his duty, the one who enjoins good cannot be harmed by the misguidance of those who have gone astray. This is indicated by several verses such as (interpretation of the meaning):

"And fear the Fitnah (affliction and trial) which affects not in particular (only) those of you who do wrong"



[al-Anfaal 8:25]

and the ahaadeeth which indicate that if people do not enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil, then Allaah will include them in His punishment. For example:

It was narrated that Abu Bakr al-Siddeeq (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: "O people, you recite this verse (interpretation of the meaning):

"O you who believe! Take care of your ownelves. If you follow the (right) guidance [and enjoin what is right (Islamic Monotheism and all that Islam orders one to do) and forbid what is wrong (polytheism, disbelief and all that Islam has forbidden)] no hurt can come to you from those who are in error"

[al-Maa'idah 5:105]

But I heard the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) say, 'If the people see an evildoer and do not take him by the hand [to put a stop to his evil], soon Allaah will punish all of them.'" Narrated by Abu Dawood, 4338; al-Tirmidhi, 2168; and al-Nasaa'i - with a saheeh isnaad. Also classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh al-Tirmidhi, no. 2448.

From Adwa' al-Bayaan, 2/169.

And Allaah knows best.