

Enjoin²⁸ [others to do] good²⁹ and you shall be among the doers of good.³⁰ Forbid evil with your hand and your tongue, and distance yourself from its perpetrators with all your might.³¹ Fight for God in a way worthy of him,³² and do not let people's censure overwhelm you while you fight for [the pleasure of] God.³³ Plunge into hardship for truth's sake wherever it may lie,³⁴ and become learned in the religion.³⁵ Accustom yourself to have patience through hardship, as patience for truth's sake is a marvelous trait.³⁶

²⁸ Up until here Imām 'Alī's exhortation has focused on the individual's duties to himself before God. In this and the next paragraph, he highlights our two most important societal duties: enjoining good and forbidding evil and waging war against God's enemies.

²⁹ When he tells us not to speak of that "with which [we] have not been charged," he does not want us to think he is relieving us of our duty to enjoin good and forbid evil. Rather, this is a duty with which we *have been* charged.

³⁰ One of the personal benefits of enjoining good and forbidding evil is that it encourages the enjoiner and forbidder to be more conscientious about his duties to God. He would not want to be like the Israelites whom Allah chastised saying, "Do you enjoin the people to do good and forget [to enjoin] yourselves? (Qur'an 2:44).

³¹ Imām 'Alī says, "Among them is he who rejects evil with his hand, tongue, and heart. He has attained all the traits of goodness. And among them is he who rejects it with his tongue and heart, not his hand. He has attained two of the traits of goodness and forsaken one. And among them is he who rejects it with his heart, not his hand and tongue. He has forsaken the two greater of the three traits and laid hold of one. And among them is he who fails to reject it with his tongue, his heart, and his hand. He is a dead man walking. All good deeds, along with *jihad* for God's sake is but a drop of spittle in the vast ocean compared to enjoining good and forbidding evil. And enjoining good and forbidding evil does not bring death near, nor does it decrease sustenance. However, better than all that is a word of justice spoken before a tyrant" (*Nahj al-balāghah* saying 374).

³² This phrase is an allusion to Qur'an 22:78. *Jihad* means to fight against all forces that stand against God. Warfare is one of the ways God's enemies must be fought. But *jihad* is not limited to warfare. Just as God's enemies are multifarious, so too are the types and tactics of *jihad*. The following tradition of the Prophet puts two types of *jihad* into perspective: "The Prophet deployed an army. When it returned, he said, 'Blessed are those who have performed the minor *jihad*, and have yet to perform the major one.' It was asked, 'What is the major *jihad*?' He replied, '*Jihad* with the self' (*al-Kāfi* 5.1.3.3). Perhaps one of the most important forms of *jihad* that must be waged in our times is an "educational *jihad*," since ignorance and the challenges of modernity are as formidable an enemy as any.

By admonishing us to fight "in a way worthy of God," he is earmarking the importance of ensuring that our intention behind waging *jihad*—whichever kind it may be—is godly and sincere, for only such a *jihad* is worthy of God. If, on the other hand, our intention is to gain fame, power, or praise, then we can expect to get no more than that, for God has said, "We shall give the reward of this world to him who desires it, and we shall give the reward of the hereafter to him who desires it" (Qur'an 3:145).

³³ This phrase is an allusion to Qur'an 5:54. The path of *jihad*—insofar as it is a path of reform and revolution—is lined with naysayers, who desire status quo. Those soldiers are valuable to the cause who are thick-skinned enough to persevere despite this censure. In this vein, Imām al-Bāqir told Jābir ibn Yazīd al-Ju'fī, "You must know that you cannot be our devotee until you are not saddened when everyone in your city colludes against you and says you are an evil man, and until you are not gladdened when they say you are a good man. Rather compare yourself to the book of God. If you are traveling in synch with it: you abstain when it says abstain, you seek when it says seek, and you fear what it says fear; then remain constant and receive glad tidings, for what is said about you cannot harm you" (*Bihār al-anwār* vol. 75 p. 162 chapter 22, tradition 1).

³⁴ The path of *jihad* and commanding and forbidding is no doubt difficult. But we must be willing to lunge into any gambit for the sake of God's pleasure. Faṭimah al-Zahrā' said the following about Imām 'Alī in her "Fadak Sermon," thereby characterizing him as one who plunged into hardship for truth's sake: "Everytime...Satan showed his might and a host of pagans bore their teeth, [the Messenger of Allah] threw his brother ['Alī] into the thick of it, and he never returned until he had crushed their ears under the soles of his feet [and vanquished them] and extinguished their flames with [the water of] his sword. [All the while] he exhausted himself for the sake of God and fought for his cause. [He was] close to the Messenger of God, the master of the friends of God. [He was] intense, sincere, serious, and hard-working while you were all living it up, in comfort, enjoyment, and safety..." (*Bihār al-anwār* vol. 29 p. 223 chapter 11, section 2).

³⁵ Harder than enjoining good, forbidding evil, and waging *jihad* is knowing how to do them effectively. At the confluence of the law and human behavior lies the delicate balance one must achieve to fulfill these obligations in