

Tafseer Surah As-Saf

Introduction

- I. This *surah* deals with the hypocrites' refusal to go along with the instructions of the Prophet ﷺ
- II. In this *surah*, both Prophets Musa and Eesa are mentioned to show that the struggle of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ involved elements from both of their lives
- III. Purpose of the *surah* [*Al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer* and *al-Tafseer al-Muyassar*]:
 - A. Motivate the believers to support the religion of Allah and strive in His cause and remaining steadfast in it
 - B. Calling upon the believers to support the religion and follow the example of the truthful ones, like the disciples of Eesa when he called them to support Allah, and they responded
 - C. Clarifying the stance of the enemies of this religion by giving examples of those who try to extinguish the light of the sun with their mouths, symbolizing their determination to fight against the religion of Allah
 - D. Warning against harming the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and citing examples of the Jews' actions towards Moses and Jesus (peace be upon them) as a consolation for the Prophet ﷺ

Tafseer of the Verses

- 1. Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth glorifies Allah. For He 'alone' is the Almighty, All-Wise.**
 - a. The Arabic word *sabbaha* (سبح), which is translated as 'glorify' here, literally means to swim or to stay afloat. *Tasbeeh* literally means to make something swim or float and not let it go down
 - i. In the context of worship, *tasbeeh* means to say things about Allah that befit Him (mercy, power, unique, etc.) and not to say things that lower His status
 1. It is a refusal to say something that is inappropriate for Him, it is a constant declaration of Allah's perfection
 - b. All of creation is in constant declaration of Allah's perfection in language we cannot understand and is also in complete submission to Allah
 - i. The creation staying in constant obedience to Allah's commands is also its declaration of Allah's perfection
 - c. He is the Mighty whom none can overpower, Wise in His creating, decrees and laws [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]
- 2. O believers! Why do you say what you do not do?**
 - a. This is a form of admonition towards the believers [Sabuni]
 - i. We as believers may declare Allah's perfection with our tongues but we do not always follow it up by abiding with His commands unlike the remaining of creation which constantly does both

- ii. Meaning why do you speak of goodness and encourage it, and perhaps you praised it, while not practicing it yourselves. And you may forbid evil and distance yourself away from it while being characterized by it yourself [Sa'di]
- b. It is reported that the believers said before they were commanded to fight in the path of Allah, "If we knew the most beloved action to Allah, we would certainly do it!" But when the verses of *jihad* came down, some of them disliked it while others slowed down so this verse was revealed in response to them [Sabuni]

3. How hateful it is in the sight of Allah that you say what you do not do!

- a. It is a most detested thing to Allah that you say what you do not do. It is only appropriate for a believer to be truthful with Allah, and for his actions to confirm his statements [Al-Mukhtasar fee al-Tafseer]
 - i. It is incumbent upon the enjoiner of good to be the first among people to initiate it and for the forbider of evil to be the furthest from it [Sa'di]
- b. The Arabic word *maqt* (مقت), translated here as 'hateful', means to severely hate something [Sabuni]

4. Surely Allah loves those who fight in His cause in 'solid' ranks as if they were one concrete structure.

- a. Fighting entails willing to give up the most precious thing for His sake, our very life, so this is highlighted here
- b. Allah loves those who fight in His cause in ranks as though they are a solid structure firmly joined together, impervious to the enemy's attacks. The verse highlights the virtue of *jihad* and the *mujahideen*, as it reflects Allah's love for His believing servants when they align themselves to confront the enemies of Allah, fighting in His cause [al-Tafseer al-Muyassar]
- c. Emphasis is given to 'ranks' because it shows discipline, unity, and organization. Without it, the army cannot succeed on the battlefield
 - i. We are also required to engage in communal discipline during congregational prayers and Hajj
 - ii. This religion teaches believers to be disciplined, unified, and organized, this is why many of our rituals revolve around these factors
- d. The believers are also like 'one concrete structure' and the bond that holds them all together is the Qur'an, the Word of Allah

5. 'Remember, O Prophet,' when Musa said to his people, "O my people! Why do you hurt me when you already know I am Allah's messenger to you?" So when they 'persistently' deviated, Allah caused their hearts to deviate. For Allah does not guide the rebellious people.

- a. After Allah mentioned fighting and praised the believers who stand tightly together in fighting in His path, He mentioned the opposition that the people of Musa and Eesa displayed towards their messengers, as a warning to the believers against opposing their prophet ﷺ [al-Mukhtasar fee al-Tafseer]
 - i. [Every] messenger [of Allah] has the right to honor, respect, and obedience to his commands, and to abide by his rulings [Sa'di]

- b. Musa said to his people: “O my people! Why do you hurt me [with speech and action] by going against my instruction when you know that I am Allah’s messenger to you?!”
[*al-Mukhtasar fee al-Tafseer*]
 - i. He said this when they moved away and deviated from the truth that he brought to them [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-Tafseer*]
 - ii. They knew he was Allah’s messenger without a doubt because they had witnessed many miracles at his hands from Allah [Sabuni]
- c. They deviated from the discipline of following their prophet’s command so it had a direct impact on their hearts
 - i. When they deviated from the truth despite their knowledge of it and persisted in their deviation, Allah turned their hearts away from accepting guidance. This was a punishment for their willful choice of straying. Indeed, Allah does not guide those who are disobedient and deviate from the path of truth [*al-Tafseer al-Muyassar*]

6. And ‘remember’ when Eesa, son of Mary, said, “O Children of Israel! I am truly Allah’s messenger to you, confirming the Torah which came before me, and giving good news of a messenger after me whose name will be Ahmad.” Yet when the Prophet came to them with clear proofs, they said, “This is pure magic.”

- a. The previous verse mentions the first messenger sent to the Children of Israel and this verse mentions the last one sent to them
- b. Notice how Prophet Musa in the previous verse referred to his people as, “O my people,” but Prophet Eesa referred to them as, “O Children of Israel”
 - i. This is because Prophet Eesa did not have a father and the Children of Israel attributed themselves to Prophet Ya’qub through their fathers
- c. Eesa was taught the Torah and the Injeel by Allah
- d. Eesa informed the children of Israel about the coming of Muhammad ﷺ by calling him Ahmad
 - i. The word ‘Ahmad’ could mean someone who is praised the most or someone who praises Allah the most
- e. There is a difference of opinion about the last part of the verse whether it is in reference to Eesa or Muhammad, peace be upon them both [My comment]
- f. Allah is trying to console the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ through the stories of Musa and Eesa to let him know that messengers before him have also been harmed by their people, thus, he should be patient [Sabuni]

7. Who does more wrong than the one who fabricates lies about Allah when invited to submit ‘to Him’? For Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people.

- a. There is none who is more wrong than the one who makes up lies about Allah by making up rivals for Him to worship besides Him, whilst he is called to Islam, the religion of pure monotheism for Allah [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-Tafseer*]
 - i. Such a person has no excuse because the evidence has been clarified to him by the one calling him to Islam [Sa’di]
- b. Allah does not grant success to those who have wronged themselves by disbelief and

associating partners with Him [*al-Tafseer al-Muyassar*]

8. They wish to extinguish Allah's light with their mouths, but Allah will 'certainly' perfect His light, even to the dismay of the disbelievers.

- a. The phrase 'their mouths' here means through propaganda, schemes, lies, false accusations, etc.
- b. Any manifestation of Islam, even the simple daily prayers, is a form of Allah's light. Other examples include: *hijab*, the call to prayer, Qur'an, mosque, etc.
 - i. The disbelievers hate any manifestation of this light, they cannot stand it. They do not want this light spreading through their lands, however, Allah says that He will complete His light despite their hatred for it
 - ii. Every effort for the sake of Islam, no matter how small, is a bit of this light
- c. Allah will perfect His light despite them by making His religion triumph in the east and the west of the earth and by raising His word [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-Tafseer*]
 - i. They are like those who blow at the sun in an attempt to extinguish it, but they will never attain their desires [Sa'di]

9. He is the One Who has sent His Messenger with 'true' guidance and the religion of truth, making it prevail over all others, even to the dismay of the polytheists.

- a. Shah Waliullah said if you understand this verse, you understand the Qur'an
- b. Many of the Islamic movements developed in the last century used this verse as inspiration for their cause
- c. Allah brought this religion to take over and manifest over all other ways of life
- d. Allah is the One Who sent His messenger, Muhammad ﷺ with the religion of Islam, the religion of guidance and direction to good, the religion of beneficial knowledge and righteous action, so that He makes it prevail over all other religions despite the idolaters who hate for it to be established on earth [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-Tafseer*]
 - i. Today, Islam has spread to all corners of the world and is on its way to becoming the largest religion in the world [My comment]
- e. As for those who affiliate themselves with this religion, when they uphold it, are illuminated by its light, and are guided by its guidance in their religious and worldly affairs, no one can prevail over them. They must necessarily surpass the people of other religions. However, if they neglect it and content themselves with mere affiliation, that will not benefit them. Their negligence towards it becomes a reason for their enemies to oppress them. This is known to anyone who examines the conditions and observes the early and later Muslims [Sa'di]

10. O believers! Shall I guide you to an exchange that will save you from a painful punishment?

- a. This is a testament, a guidance, and an instruction from the Most Merciful to His believing servants. It is the greatest trade, the most noble pursuit, and the highest aspiration through which one attains salvation from painful torment and achieves everlasting bliss [Sa'di]
 - i. In the next verse, Allah tells us what this trade consists of and clarifies its conditions [Sabuni]

11. 'It is to' have faith in Allah and His Messenger, and strive in the cause of Allah with your wealth and your lives. That is best for you, if only you knew.

- a. This profitable trade is that you continue to maintain your faith in Allah and His Messenger, and strive in the cause of Allah, supporting His religion with whatever resources and means you possess. That is better for you than the trade of this world if you only knew the harms and benefits of things. So adhere to that [*al-Tafseer al-Muyassar*]
 - i. There are many different ways of 'striving' for Allah's religion. Everyone has a part to play in different capacities. It is not a monolith
- b. It is known that complete faith is firm belief in what Allah has commanded to believe in, which necessitates actions of the limbs. And one of the most important actions of the limbs is striving in the cause of Allah. That is why Allah said, "*And strive in the cause of Allah with your wealth and your lives,*" meaning that you expend your efforts and dedicate yourselves to confronting the enemies of Islam, with the intention of supporting the religion of Allah and upholding His word. And you spend from your wealth whatever is within your means for that purpose [*Sa'di*]
- c. In the next verse, Allah tells us the result of this profitable trade [*Sabuni*]

12. He will forgive your sins, and admit you into Gardens under which rivers flow, and 'house you in' splendid homes in the Gardens of Eternity. That is the ultimate triumph.

- a. The profit of this trade is that Allah will forgive your sins and enter you into gardens under the palaces and trees of which rivers flow and He will enter you into pleasant homes in gardens of permanence from which you will not be transferred. That mentioned recompense is the supreme success to which no other success can come close [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-Tafseer*]
 - i. Paradise is named 'Gardens of Eternity' because its inhabitants will reside there permanently forever, never leaving it and never seeking any other place [*Sa'di*]
- b. The inhabitants of its chambers, the people of the highest ranks, will be able to see each other, just as the shining star is visible on the eastern or western horizon. The construction of Paradise includes bricks made of gold and silver, its tents are made of pearls and coral, and some of its dwellings are adorned with emerald and multicolored gemstones of the finest hues. Its clarity is such that its exterior can be seen from its interior, and its interior can be seen from its exterior. It possesses goodness and beauty beyond description, beyond the grasp of those who attempt to describe it, and it brings no distress to the hearts of anyone in the universe. It cannot be comprehended until it is seen, and its beauty and splendor bring joy and delight to the eyes of those who behold it [*Sa'di*]

13. 'He will also give you' another favour that you long for: help from Allah and an imminent victory. 'So' give good news 'O Prophet' to the believers.

- a. Meaning part of the profit of this trade is another feature that you love, which is immediate in this world, that Allah will assist you against your enemy, and He will give you an imminent victory which is the conquest of Makkah and other places [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-Tafseer*]

- i. This did come to pass at the end by Muslims taking over Mecca and defeating the Quraysh as is well known through the *seerah* [My comment]
- b. At the end Allah tells the Prophet ﷺ to give glad tidings to the believers of victory and triumph in this worldly life and of Paradise in the Hereafter [*al-Tafseer al-Muyassar*]

14. O believers! Be helpers of Allah, as Jesus, son of Mary, asked the disciples, “Who are my helpers for Allah?” The disciples replied, “We are the helpers of Allah.” Then a group from the Children of Israel believed while another disbelieved. We then supported the believers against their enemies, so they prevailed.

- a. Helping Allah means helping the religion of Allah [i.e. Islam]. It is in reference to anything we can do to help spread the message and religion of Allah whether through our statements or actions
 - i. Some examples include: adhering to the religion of Allah and striving to establish it for others. It involves striving against those who oppose it, with our bodies and wealth. It also includes refuting falsehood and defending the truth by presenting evidence and establishing proof against falsehood, as well as warning against it. It also entails enjoining good and forbidding evil [Sa’di]
- b. We are reminded here of the story of Prophet Eesa when he asked the disciples who would assist him in conveying the message of Allah and helping His religion, they rushed to respond in the affirmative to assist in the cause. Their persistent *da’wah* led to a group of the Children of Israel believing in the message and another rejecting it. Then Allah supported those who believed against those who rejected it [Sabuni and Sa’di]
 - i. We are being told in this verse to be the helpers of Allah and the callers to His religion. Allah will grant us victory as He granted victory to those before us [i.e. those who believed and accepted Prophet Eesa’s call] and He will make us prevail over our enemies [Sa’di]
- c. In the end, the true believers of Prophet Eesa prevailed but it was after Prophet Eesa left this world. This shows us that sometimes we may not see the fruits of our struggle in our own time
- d. We also learn from this verse that there will always be people who believe and those who disbelieve, sometimes it could even be people from our own ranks so we should always be mentally prepared