242264 - Commentary on the verse “And insult not those whom they (disbelievers) worship besides Allah, lest they insult Allah wrongfully without knowledge” [al-An‘aam 6:108]

the question

Explanation of the Quran chapter 6 verse 108

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And insult not those whom they (disbelievers) worship besides Allah, lest they insult Allah wrongfully without knowledge. Thus We have made fair-seeming to each people its own doings; then to their Lord is their return and He shall then inform them of all that they used to do”

[al-An‘aam 6:108]”.

Allah, may He be glorified, forbade the Muslims to insult or revile the gods of the polytheists whom the latter worshipped besides Allah, even though they are false, lest that be a cause of the polytheists reviling the True God, may He be glorified, in support of their false gods and in retaliation against the Muslims for what they said.

Then Allah tells us that He, may He be glorified, has made fair-seeming to each nation its deeds, then they will all be brought back to Him on the Day of Resurrection, and He will inform them of what they did and bring them to account for their deeds: if they were good then the outcome will be good, and if they were evil then the outcome will be bad.

Ibn Katheer (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Allah, may He be exalted, forbade His Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and

the believers to revile the gods of the polytheists, even though there was an interest to be served by that, lest that result in a greater evil, namely the polytheists' responding by reviling the God of the believers, namely Allah besides Whom there is no other god.

As 'Ali ibn Abi Talhah said, narrating from Ibn 'Abbaas, concerning this verse: They said: O Muhammad, either you stop reviling our gods or we will speak ill of your Lord. So Allah forbade them to revile their idols, "lest they insult Allah wrongfully without knowledge."

Qataadah said: The Muslims used to revile the idols of the disbelievers, so the disbelievers would revile Allah, wrongfully and without knowledge. So Allah revealed the words interpretation of the meaning): "And insult not those whom they (disbelievers) worship besides Allah" [al-An'aam 6:108].

Similar to this principle – which is refraining from pursuing one interest so as to avoid an evil that is greater than it – is the report in as-Saheeh according to which the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "Cursed is the one who reviles his parents."

They said: O Messenger of Allah, how could a man revile his parents? He said: He reviles the father of a man, so (that man) reviles his father; and he reviles (that man's) mother, so (that man) reviles his mother" – or words to that effect.

The words of Allah, may He be exalted, "Thus We have made fair-seeming to each people its own doings" mean: just as We made fair-seeming to those people the love of their idols and of standing up for and supporting them, so too We made fair-seeming to each of the past, misguided nations the deeds that they used to do. And there is great and perfect divine wisdom in all that Allah wills and chooses.

"then to their Lord is their return" that is, their ultimate destination.

"and He shall then inform them of all that they used to do" that is, He will requite them for their deeds; if they were good then the outcome will be good, and if they were evil then the outcome will be bad.

End quote from Tafseer Ibn Katheer (3/314)

Al-Qurtubi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Allah, may He be glorified, forbade the believers to revile the idols (of the polytheists), because He knew that if they reviled them, the disbelievers would be put off and would increase in disbelief.

The scholars said:

This ruling remains in effect among this ummah in all circumstances. So when the disbelievers are in a position of strength and it is feared that they will revile Islam, or the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), or Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, it is not permissible for the Muslim to revile their crosses or their religion or their churches, and he should not do anything that would lead to that (i.e., their insulting Islam), because that comes under the heading of provoking others to sin. End quote.

Tafseer al-Qurtubi (7/61)

As-Sa'di (may Allah have mercy on him) said;

Allah forbade the believers to do something that had been permissible and, in fact, is basically prescribed, which is to revile the gods of the polytheists which were taken as idols and gods alongside Allah, and this is a means of drawing closer to Allah by disrespecting them and reviling them.

But because reviling them is a means that may lead to the polytheists reviling the Lord of the Worlds – Who should be declared to be far above all faults, defects, insults and aspersions – Allah forbade reviling the gods of the polytheists, because they would seek to protect their religion and show fanatical devotion to it. That is because Allah has made fair-seeming to every nation its deeds, so they regard them as something good and defend them by all possible means, to the extent that they would revile Allah, the Lord of the Worlds – Whose greatness is something instilled in the hearts of all people, righteous and evildoers alike – if the Muslims were to revile their gods.

But the return and ultimate destination of all people is to Allah on the Day of Resurrection, when they will appear before Him and their deeds will be exposed, and he will inform them of what they used to do, both good and evil.

This verse offers proof for the shar‘i principle which says that means are to be judged by the outcomes to which they lead, and that the means that lead to something haraam, even if they are permissible (in and of themselves), become haraam, if they lead to evil. End quote.

Tafseer as-Sa‘di (p. 268)

And Allah knows best.