

Fast 24

Holy Prophet's generous treatment of the enemy

“You (O Prophet) have no concern in the matter whether He turns to them (mercifully) or punishes them; surely they are wrongdoers. And to Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. He forgives whom He pleases and punishes whom He pleases. And Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.” — 3:128–129

Notes: As a mortal the Holy Prophet might have sometimes desired a severe punishment for his enemies; but he is told that it was not his concern, for Allah might as well forgive them, even though they deserved punishment. The all-comprehensiveness of the Divine mercy expressed in this verse is unapproached in sacred literature.

The words “He forgives whom He pleases and punishes whom He pleases” mean that no human being whosoever, whether a prophet or not, can claim to know that certain people will be forgiven by God and certain other people will be punished. We can only mention the *ways* which lead to forgiveness and those which lead to punishment.

“O Prophet, say to those of the captives who are in your hands: If Allah knows anything good in your hearts, He will give you better than what has been taken from you, and will forgive you. And Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.” — 8:70

Notes: This refers to the seventy prisoners taken by the Muslims at the battle of Badr. “what has been taken from you” is the amount some of them were required to pay the Muslim community for their release, brought by their relatives from Makkah. The Holy Prophet released all these prisoners of war in the following ways: Any of them who could read and write could earn his freedom by teaching ten Muslim children to read and write, others had to make a payment if they could afford it, and those who were poor were just released. This battle, the first one, was the only occasion when the Holy Prophet sought such compensation for the Muslim community. In later battles, the prisoners were released without anything being demanded in return. They were not punished or tortured or enslaved by the Holy Prophet.

Among the prisoners captured at Badr was one Suhail ibn Amr, a spokesman of the Quraish and a skilful orator who used to make speeches against the Holy Prophet by means of his public speaking talents. He was brought before the Holy Prophet and someone suggested that his front teeth should be pulled out “so that he would never be able to exercise his oratory against you.” The Holy Prophet replied without hesitation:

“Certainly not. I will not mutilate anyone, for God would mutilate me as a punishment even though I am His Prophet.”

“He said: There is no reproach against you this day. Allah may forgive you, and He is the most Merciful of those who show mercy.” — 12:92

Notes: The above words were uttered by the prophet Joseph to his brothers. They had conspired against him and removed him from his father when he was yet young, and now he had reached the position of being a minister of the king in the neighbouring country of Egypt and could punish them.

When the Holy Prophet conquered Makkah, after eight years spent in exile at Madinah, he had before him, in his power, those people who had persecuted him and other Muslims for years, and tortured and killed many of them, driven them out from Makkah, and waged war against them repeatedly. They had tried to murder him many times. He now addressed them and asked them: “What treatment do you expect from me?” They replied that they hoped for good because he was of a noble character. The Holy Prophet declared:

“I say as my brother Joseph said: ‘There is no reproach against you this day’.”

This act of unconditional forgiveness of your blood-thirsty foes when they are completely in your power and submitting before you has no parallel in the history of the world.
