

Sura 4, an-Nisa [The Women], Medina 92 [Hijra 4]

The Quran's Text & Yusuf Ali's Translation:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا ضَرَبْتُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَتَبَيَّنُوا ...

4: 94. O ye who believe! when ye go abroad in the Cause of God, investigate carefully,

... وَلَا تَقُولُوا لِمَنْ أَلْقَى إِلَيْكُمُ السَّلَامَ لَسْتَ مُؤْمِنًا...

and say not to anyone who offers you a salutation: "Thou art none of a believer!"

... تَبْتَغُونَ عَرَضَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا فَعِنْدَ اللَّهِ مَغَانِمُ كَثِيرَةٌ...

Coveting the perishable goods of this life: with God are profits and spoils abundant.

... كَذَلِكَ كُنْتُمْ مِّن قَبْلُ فَمَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمْ فَتَبَيَّنُوا ...

Even thus were ye yourselves before, till God conferred on you His favors: therefore, carefully investigate,

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا ﴿٩٤﴾

for God is well aware of all that ye do.

Ya_ ayyuhal lazina a_manu_ iza_ darabtum fi sabililla_hi fa
tabayyanu_ wa la_ taqu_lu_ liman alqa_ ilaikumus salama
lasta mu'mina_(n), tabtagu_na'aradal haya_tid dunya_,
fa'indalla_hi maga_nimu kasirah(tun), kaza_lik kuntum
min qablu fa mannalla_hu 'alaikum fa tabayyanu_,
innalla_ha ka_na bima_ ta'malu_na khabira_(n).

[Ali's Comments: 613. Go abroad: dharaba: to travel, to go for jihad, or for honest trade or other service, which if done with pure motives, counts as service in the cause of God. The immediate occasion was in connection with jihad, but the words are general, and can be applied to similar circumstances. In war (or in peace) we are apt to catch some worldly advantage by pluming ourselves on our superiority in Faith. In war perhaps we want to gain glory or booty by killing a supposed enemy. This is wrong. The righteous man, if he is really out in God's service, has more abundant and richer gifts to think of in the spiritual world.]

Muhammad Asad's Translation:

[Hence,] O you who have attained to faith, when you go forth [to war] in God's cause, use your discernment, and do not - out of a desire for the fleeting gains of this worldly life – say unto anyone who offers you the greeting of peace, "You are not a believer" [note 119]: for with God there are gains abundant. You, too, were once in the same condition [note 120] – but God has been gracious unto you. Use, therefore, your discernment: verily, God is aware of what you do.

[Asad's Comments: 119 Sc, "and therefore one of the enemies". **This verse prohibits the treating of noncombatants as enemies and using their supposed unbelief as a pretext for plundering them.** The injunction

"use your discernment" (tabayyanu) imposes on the believers the duty of making sure, in every case, whether the persons concerned are actively engaged in hostilities or not.

120 Lit., "thus have you [too] been aforetime". Since the preceding injunction refers to the whole community, it would seem that the above clause, too, bears the same implication: namely, a reference to the time when the Muslim community was, because of its weakness and numerical insignificance, at the mercy of enemies endowed with greater power. Thus, the believers are told, as it were: "Remember your erstwhile weakness, **and treat the peacefully-minded among your enemies** with the same consideration with which you yourselves were once hoping to be treated."]

Muhammad Pickthall's Translation:

O ye who believe! When ye go forth (to fight) in the way of Allah, be careful to discriminate, and say not unto one who offer you peace: "You are not a believer;" seeking the chance profits of this life (so that ye may despoil him). With Allah are plenteous spoils. Even thus (as he now is) were ye before; but Allah hath since then been gracious unto you. Therefore take care to discriminate. Allah is ever informed of what ye do.