

My son, whereas I find myself having reached old-age, and I find myself increasingly feeble, I have sought to preempt with this exhortation [certain] events [beyond my control]<sup>41</sup> among which are [the following]: that death may come to me before I am able to communicate to you what is in my soul; or that my mind may deteriorate as has my body; or that some overwhelming desire and trial of the temporal world may reach you before I do, such that you become like a recalcitrant, flighty steed.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Imām ‘Alī rushed to compose this exhortation to Imām al-Ḥasan while he returned from the battle of Ṣiffīn despite the turmoil by which he was undoubtedly surrounded. In his urgency is a lesson for us: we must not procrastinate with the assumption that we will see another day. Rather, we must hurry to do what is best and most important while life’s circumstances permit. To remind us of the transience of life he says, “Many who greet a day do not bid it farewell; and many who are admired early in the night are surrounded by mourners by its end” (*Nahj al-balāghah* saying 380).

<sup>42</sup> That Imām ‘Alī’s mental capacity might deteriorate or that Imām Ḥasan might be overwhelmed by desire are, of course, not fitting attributes for an immaculate imam. These phrases strengthen the opinion that this exhortation was written with the fallible in mind. It is written from a father to a son, not from one immaculate imam to another.