

عَنْ مُعَاذِ بْنِ جَبَلٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ، قُلْتُ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَحْبَبْتَنِي بِعَمَلٍ يُدْخِلُنِي الْجَنَّةَ وَيُبَاعِدُنِي عَنِ النَّارِ. قَالَ: لَقَدْ سَأَلْتَ عَنْ عَظِيمٍ، وَإِنَّهُ لَيْسِيرٌ عَلَى مَنْ يَسْرَهُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ. تَعْبُدُ اللَّهَ لَا تُشْرِكُ بِهِ شَيْئًا، وَتَقِيمُ الصَّلَاةَ، وَتُؤْتِي الزَّكَاةَ، وَتَصُومُ رَمَضَانَ، وَتَحُجُّ الْبَيْتَ. ثُمَّ قَالَ: أَلَا أَدُلُّكَ عَلَى أَبْوَابِ الْخَيْرِ؟ الصَّوْمُ جَنَّةٌ، وَالصَّدَقَةُ تُطْفِئُ الْخَطِيئَةَ كَمَا يُطْفِئُ الْمَاءُ النَّارَ وَصَلَاةُ الرَّجُلِ فِي جَوْفِ اللَّيْلِ. ثُمَّ تَلَا: تَتَجَافَى جُنُوبُهُمْ عَنِ الْمَضَاجِعِ... حَتَّىٰ بَلَغَ... يَعْمَلُونَ. ثُمَّ قَالَ: أَلَا أَحْبَبْتُكَ بِرَأْسِ الْأَمْرِ وَعَمُودِهِ وَذِرْوَةِ سَنَامِهِ. قُلْتُ: بَلَى يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ. قَالَ: رَأْسُ الْأَمْرِ الْإِسْلَامُ، وَعَمُودُهُ الصَّلَاةُ، وَذِرْوَةُ سَنَامِهِ الْجِهَادُ. ثُمَّ قَالَ: أَلَا أَحْبَبْتُكَ بِمِلَاكِ ذَلِكَ كُلِّهِ. قُلْتُ: بَلَى يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ. فَأَخَذَ بِلِسَانِهِ. وَقَالَ: كُفَّ عَالِيكَ هَذَا. قُلْتُ: يَا نَبِيَّ اللَّهِ وَإِنَّا لَمُؤَاخِذُونَ بِمَا نَتَكَلَّمُ بِهِ. فَقَالَ: تَكَلَّمْتُكَ أُمَّكَ، وَهَلْ يَكُفُّ النَّاسُ فِي النَّارِ عَلَى وُجُوهِهِمْ. أَوْ قَالَ: عَلَى مَنَاخِرِهِمْ إِلَّا حَصَائِدُ السِّنْتِهِمْ - رَوَاهُ التِّرْمِذِيُّ. وَقَالَ: حَدِيثٌ حَسَنٌ صَحِيحٌ.

From Mu'adh bin Jabal, (رضي الله عنه), who said: I said: "O Messenger of Allah, tell me of a deed which will take me into Paradise and will keep me away from the Hell-fire." He said: "You have asked me about a great matter, yet it is, indeed, an easy matter for him to whom Allah Almighty makes it easy. (It is) that you worship Allah without associating anything with Him, that you perform the prayers, that you pay the zakat, that you fast during Ramadan, and that you make the pilgrimage to the House."

Then he said: "Shall I not guide you to the gates of goodness? Fasting is a shield; charity extinguishes sin as water extinguishes fire; and a man's prayer in the middle of the night." Then he recited: "Who forsake their beds to cry unto their Lord in fear and hope, and spend of that We have bestowed on them. No soul knoweth what is kept hid for them of joy, as a reward for what they used to do". [Qu'ran, Surah al-Sajdah (32): Ayah 16-17]

Then he said: "Shall I not also tell you of the peak of the matter, its pillar, and its topmost part?" I said: "Yes, O Messenger of Allah." He said: "The peak of the matter is Islam (submission to Allah), the pillar is prayer; and its topmost part is jihad." Then he said: "And shall I not tell you of the controlling of all that?" I said: "Yes, O Messenger of Allah". So he took hold of his tongue and said: "Restrain this." I said: "O Prophet of Allah, will we be held accountable for what we say?" He said: "May your mother be bereft of you! Is there anything that topples people on their faces (or he said, on their noses) into the Hell-fire other than the jests of their tongues?" [Related by Al-Tirmidhi, who said it was a fine and sound hadith]

Background

Many other companions have asked similar questions like the ones in this hadith. In general, the Prophet Muhammad, (ﷺ), gave the same answers. Ibn Rajab highlights another narration of the hadith recorded by Imam Ahmad which states that Mu'adh came to the Prophet, (ﷺ), and said: "O Messenger of Allah, I want to ask you about a matter that has made me ill and burning from inside." The Prophet, (ﷺ), said: "Ask whatever you wish." He said: "Inform me about a deed which will make me enter Paradise."

This shows, as Ibn Rajab continues to say, Mu'adh's eagerness to know about good deeds.

Lessons

This hadith is evidence that doing good deeds facilitates and leads to entering Paradise as it has been mentioned in the Qur'an: "This is the Paradise that you have made to inherit because of your good deeds which you used to do" (Surah al-Zuhkruf: Ayah 72). However, a person's good deeds are part of Allah's mercy and grace. Allah says: "But Allah who caused faith to be dear to you and have given it beauty in your heart, and has made hateful to you denial of the truth and all inequity and all rebellion against what

is good" (Surah al-Hujarat (49): Ayah 7). So the meaning of this verse has been emphasized by this hadith. The performing of good deeds is a cause of entering paradise but they are themselves a gift from Allah.

There are debates among some scholars about the actions and whether we deserve to enter Paradise because of these actions. They raise the questions: Is it like a contract? Is it a deal? Or is this actually just a cause but entering Paradise is Allah's Mercy? If we just look at the matter as a deal or a contract, we would not be able to pay for even one of Allah's mercies.

The deeds that have been mentioned in this hadith have been emphasized in previous hadiths collected by Imam An-Nawawi, mainly Hadith 2, 3, 15 and 23. However, there are two additional good deeds mentioned in this hadith:

1. A man's prayer in the middle of the night. This includes, according to Ibn Rajab, three types of people:
 - a. Those who wake up during the night for dhikr, du'a, or praying tahajud.
 - b. Those who wait for the Isha' prayer and do not go to sleep until they perform Isha'.
 - c. Those who wake up for the Fajr prayer.

All these three groups have been mentioned in the Qur'an. People who stay awake throughout the night (busy in entertaining themselves) miss these blessed deeds. The three types of people are guaranteed and promised with the blessing from Allah in the Hereafter where there are unpredictable and unimaginable rewards.

2. Jihad where and when it becomes an obligation (this deed is not stated clearly in other hadiths). It is a great blessing that gets Muslims closer to Allah. Scholars say that jihad is the greatest act of worship and the most important deed after the obligatory acts. Through jihad, Islam is protected and preserved and became dominant, where other nations lived under its rule peacefully with their rights maintained.

In Hadith 15, the Prophet, (ﷺ), quoted the importance of saying good things or keeping silent. In this hadith the Prophet, (ﷺ), says it is because of the tongue saying bad things that people are thrown into the Hell-fire. Ibn Rajab states that this indicates that restraining and controlling our speech is the crucial matter of all good things. The one who controls his tongue controls all his affairs.

In this hadith, we see the emphasis is on the negative side of the tongue, whereas in the previous hadiths, the emphasis is on the positive side of the tongue. This means that the tongue can be used in two ways: to say good things or to say bad things. Most people have the tendency to be lenient about this issue. Though Muslims know that saying bad things is prohibited, they still do so, saying things that displease Allah such as backbiting, slandering and spreading rumours. We will be held accountable for what we say. We will be rewarded for saying good things and we may be punished for saying bad things. Being cynical to others and saying things just for fun is something that a person is going to be accountable for. Even if a Muslim says things in the form of a cynical du'a (e.g. "May Allah guide him") or a joke to make fun of other Muslims and put him down, he will be held against this action. Even using gestures or attributes in a cynical way that can be interpreted that he is belittling a Muslim is considered a sinful act that displeases Allah.

The Muslim should have control over his tongue; otherwise his tongue can create a lot of problems for the community. In the fitnah (troubles) during Caliphate Othman, radiyallahu 'anhu, the Companions said they were considering saying bad things in that critical situation as a way of helping those who

killed him. Consequently, the Muslim is always a good person who says only good things and for the benefit of his community. He should not say anything that may lead to any disputes among the Muslim community.

Another thing that is related to this and is mentioned by the scholars is the story of a man (from an Israel tribe) that the Prophet, (ﷺ), narrated: "There were two relatives or brothers. One of them was pious and righteous and the other one used to commit sins. The pious person always tried to remind the sinful one, but he did not do so in the appropriate way of making da'wa. One day while he was passing by the sinner he said: 'I swear by Allah that He will not forgive you!' Upon this Allah said: 'Who is putting himself higher than My Authority?!' So Allah forgave the sinner and held the pious one accountable for what he said even though he was righteous."

This teaches us that we have to watch what we say especially when we are angry. That's why the Prophet, (ﷺ), made the du'a : "I ask Allah to enable me to say the truth whether I am angry or pleased." Controlling ourselves needs training and effort. That's why we need al-tarbiyyah and al-tazkiyyah. This will be difficult in the beginning. But when we show Allah that we are serious, Allah will give us help and al-tawfiq (guidance) to the right path. Muslims need to make sincere efforts to reach a high degree of tarbiyyah and tazkiyyah. This will be part of their akhlaq. Muslims need ilm (knowledge) because if they are not aware of this, they may misinterpret things and get into sinful acts. Ibn Rajab says if the Muslim can control his tongue, he can control his other affairs. That is the wisdom that Muslims can get from this hadith.

Regarding the methodology of teaching and learning, this hadith sets forth a good example for Muslims to learn from. Mu'adh starts by asking a question, saying that he wants to ask about a matter that has him 'burning inside'. As a result of his question, he gets the reply. The Prophet, (ﷺ), said: "Ask whatever you wish." He was open to any kind of questions. If someone has an inquiry regarding any matter, he should ask, and the person who has been consulted has to be open-hearted. The Prophet, (ﷺ), later on in this hadith, guides Mu'adh in the form of questions: "Shall I not tell you...?" Asking questions from both sides (from Mu'adh, as a means to learn, and from the Prophet, (ﷺ), as a means to teach) is one of the effective ways in the methodology of teaching and learning. If we want to learn we have to ask questions. If we want to teach, we have to communicate in this style and also ask questions. Asking questions will attract the attention of the listeners and will make them think about what is being said.

Conclusion

The central idea in Islam is tawhid and taqwa (submission to Allah). All other deeds can be looked at as part of taqwa and tawhid. Without proper tawhid there would be no fear of Allah. If we fear Allah, and love Him the most, this should lead us to be closer to Him. Otherwise, our claim is not valid or incomplete. Our taqwa and fear should be up to the level. So tawhid is the essence of the message of Allah. He sent the Prophet, (ﷺ), with this message and made him an example for us to emulate and follow. Consequently, tawhid (almutab'a) by following the Prophet, (ﷺ), is part of submission to Allah.

