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عَنْ أَبِي الْعَبَّاسِ سَهْلِ بْنِ سَعْدِ السَّاعِدِيِّ رَضِيَ
اللهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: جَاءَ رَجُلٌ إِلَى النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ،
فَقَالَ: يَا رَسُولَ اللهِ دُلَّنِي عَلَى عَمَلٍ إِذَا عَمِلْتُهُ أَحَبَّنِي اللهُ
وَأَحَبَّنِي النَّاسُ. فَقَالَ: آزْهَدْ فِي الدُّنْيَا يُحِبَّكَ اللهُ وَأَزْهَدْ
فِيمَا عِنْدَ النَّاسِ يُحِبَّكَ النَّاسُ. حَدِيثٌ حَسَنٌ. رَوَاهُ ابْنُ
مَاجَهَ وَغَيْرُهُ بِأَسَانِيدٍ حَسَنَةٍ.

On the authority of Abu al-'Abbas Sahl bin Sa'd al-Sa'idi, (رضي الله عنه), who said: A man came to the Prophet, (ﷺ), and said: "O Messenger of Allah, direct me to an act which if I do it, [will cause] Allah to love me and people to love me." He, (ﷺ), answered: "Be indifferent to the world and Allah will love you; be indifferent to what people possess and they will love you." [A fine hadith related by Ibn Majah and others with good chains of authorities]

Background

This hadith is a weak hadith as pointed out by many scholars. Ibn Rajab gave a detailed argument about the weakness of this hadith. However, later scholars still recorded their commentaries on the text of the hadith for several reasons. The major two reasons are:

1. Sometimes the chain of the narrators (sanad) is not strong and the hadith consequently is not an authentic hadith. But the meaning of the text of the hadith is correct and acceptable. In this case the scholars still give their comments on the hadith.
2. The hadith is related to one of the major concepts in Islam which is al-zuhd. Unfortunately, many Muslims misunderstand and misinterpret this concept due to the influence of other cultures. We need to remove this misunderstanding or misinterpretation which is linked to this concept.

Ibn Rajab says that this hadith contains some great advice:

- ? Prophet Muhammad, (ﷺ), said the renouncing of this world will lead to the love of Allah. In other words, the one who practices this zuhd will be loved by Allah.
- ? To renounce what people possess and that will cause the love of people to the person who practices zuhd. Al-zuhd has been emphasized in the Qur'an and hadiths especially zuhd in this world. In Surah al-Nisa' Ayah 77, Allah says:

Brief is the enjoyment of this world whereas the life to come is best for all who are muttaqun or conscious of Allah.

In Surah al-Ra'd Ayah 20, Allah says:

The life of this world is nothing but a flitting pleasure.

In Surat al-A'la Ayah 16-17, Allah says:

But may you prefer the life of this world although the life to come is better and more enduring.

In Sahih Muslim, on the authority of Jaber Ibn 'Abdullah, radiyallahu 'anhu, that the Prophet, (ﷺ), one day was passing through the market and he passed by a dead goat, which had its ears cut. He held the goat by the ear and asked who would like to have it for one derham (which was a very low price of currency at that time). The people said they wouldn't take it even if it was free. What could they do with it? He, sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam, asked if they liked it if it was theirs. They said even if it was alive they would still not buy it because of its cut ears. So how

could they buy it now especially since it was dead. The Prophet, (ﷺ), said: "This worldly life is so little in the sight of Allah as this dead animal or goat is so little in your sight".

- ? There are many other hadiths where the Prophet, (ﷺ), commanded Muslims to avoid asking others for anything, especially money, and to do the best not to indulge in the act of asking others.

Lessons

One of the early scholars, Abu Muslim Al-Hawlani, says zuhd in this world does not mean forbidding what is permissible or wasting wealth. Zuhd with respect to this world is only where a person puts more trust in Allah, more than what was in his own hands. If he was afflicted with calamity by losing something of this world, he is more hopeful for its reward and what is in store for him in the Hereafter than if it were to have remained with him.

Based on this, Ibn Rajab states that zuhd can be interpreted as three actions of the heart:

1. The Muslim should realize that all provisions come from Allah and not simply the result of his own acts. He should trust Allah and what Allah has more than what he has in his hands.
2. If he loses anything in this world, this should not bother him because he is looking for its reward.
3. The Muslim should not care whether he is going to be blamed or praised by others. He will not look for praise. In his heart, he is not touched by such praise. And if he is blamed, he will not be offended by being blamed. If the accusation is not true, he has nothing to worry about; if it is true then he has to face it and try to be a better Muslim.

We can also try to see and compare what was narrated by Al-Imam Abu Muslim Al-Hawlani and what has been narrated by other scholars. Al-Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal was asked one day if someone owns one thousand dinar, can he still be a zahid? He replied yes, he can be still a zahid if he does not feel rejoice if the money increases and he does not become sad if it decreases. We must not become slaves to money or our worldly possessions. We can be wealthy and zahid if we are still thankful to Allah and use wealth in the right way (provided also that we obtained this wealth in the right way). This meaning has been emphasised by Sufian Ibn 'Uyainah, one of the great scholars, when he was asked who is to be considered as zahid. He said whoever Allah bestowed a bounty on him then he is thankful and then when he is under trial, he is patient.

Sufian Al-Thawri - another scholar - said: Al-zuhd in this world is that you are ready in your heart and think of the Hereafter - you think of death. We should be prepared for the next world. This is a definition of zuhd. Zuhd means a status of the heart where a person fears he will not live a long life. This will motivate every one to be a good Muslim. If we have this feeling that we are going to leave this world at any time, this will lead us to be closer to Allah and fulfill our obligations and also to get away from disobedience.

This is why some scholars point out that there are different types of zuhd:

- ? Al-zuhd in disobedience and sin
- ? Not to be misled by our desires.

- ? Not to exceed the limits of the permissible or the allowable acts (mubah). For example, we should not exceed the limits of sleeping (i.e. sleeping unnecessarily long hours) or eating (i.e. eating too much) which is permissible.

Ibn Rajab said the one who is hopeless of living a long life, then he is looking forward to meeting Allah and he is eager for the Hereafter - this is the maximum level of zuhd. Ibn Rajab then says that looking at this worldly life as blameworthy is not because of the day or night, which are signs of Allah, and not the place and not what He planted in the land, or the animals He created. All of these are bounties from Allah and beneficial to us. The blameworthy is actually with regards to the actions of the people in this life because most of these actions are not done in accordance to the guidance of revelation in a way that will lead to good consequences. Usually the consequences will be bad ones. People will not be able to do good things.

What should be done then is to be like the righteous and good people who used their lives as a means of getting them to the final destination. They were satisfied and contented by whatever they got. Even permissible acts and desires are treated in the same way. Sleeping and eating are good for us because this will help us to perform our obligations. That is why Ibn Rajab says all the early scholars looked for these permissible actions as means of fulfilling their obligations. He quoted al-Hasan al-Basri who said: Doing whatever is beneficial for you is not considered as the love of this world. So we should not belittle some professions and consider them as part of worldly life.

Some Muslims misunderstand zuhd. This will lead the Muslim community to become backward. Since we are entrusted for the establishment of Islamic civilization, this requires that we have professionals, and different fields of specializations. All these take effort and time. But what we do here is for the betterment of the community where there is a great need for professional people. If we do it with good intentions and for the sake of Allah we will be rewarded - this is the real zuhd.

Zuhd does not mean that we stay in one place and worship Allah. Worshiping Allah is a broad concept. The betterment of the community is considered as a form of worship. So asceticism or zuhd does not clash with any of the worldly affairs that the community needs. The zuhd here becomes that we do it in the right way, with a good intention and for the sake of Allah. This should not keep us from fulfilling the obligations towards Allah.

Ibn Rajab mentions that the worldly life is cursed because it keeps people away from Allah. They will be deprived from fulfilling the obligations. This life is a test for us, as stated in Surah al-Kahf Ayah 7. We either use it in the right way and be rewarded or we use it in the wrong way which will cause us to fail the test - we will go astray and indulge in disobedience.

Conclusion

One thing that brings us closer to Allah and to be loved by Him is al-zuhd. There are other actions that make Allah love us:

- ? To love Allah much. If we love Allah, He will love us.

- ? The love of meeting Allah (as stated in another hadith).
- ? The love of the Prophet, (ﷺ), more than we love ourselves and our family and to love his sunnah and to follow his model.
- ? Remembrance of Allah, and all forms of dzikr.
- ? To practice the preferable good deeds.

If we claim that we love Allah, we should test ourselves by taking the above points as criteria. By loving Allah, we will be successful in this life and the Hereafter.