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عَنْ أَبِي ذَرِّ جَنْدَبِ بْنِ جُنَادَةَ وَأَبِي عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ مُعَاذِ
بْنِ جَبَلٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ
وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: اتَّقِ اللَّهَ حَيْثُمَا كُنْتَ وَأَتَّبِعِ السَّيِّئَةَ الْحَسَنَةَ
تَمَحُّهَا وَخَالِقِ النَّاسَ بِخُلُقِ حَسَنٍ. رَوَاهُ التِّرْمِذِيُّ،
وَقَالَ: حَدِيثٌ حَسَنٌ. وَفِي بَعْضِ النُّسخِ حَسَنٌ
صَحِيحٌ.

Abu Dhar Jundub bin Junadah and Abu Abdul Rahman Mu'adh bin Jabal, radiyallahu anhuma, reported that the Messenger of Allah, (ﷺ), said: "Fear Allah wherever you may be; follow up an evil deed with a good one which will wipe (the former) out, and behave good-naturedly towards people." [Al-Tirmidhi relates it, saying: It is a good (hasan) Tradition. In some copies he says: It is a good and genuine (hasan and sahih) Hadith.]

Background

Taqwa is one of the most important and comprehensive Islamic concepts. The term is derived from its root "waqayya" which means "to protect." Taqwa therefore means to protect one own self from the severe punishment of Allah by following His guidance.

Some translate Taqwa as "to fear Allah". However, fearing Allah is only one aspect of this comprehensive concept. Ali ibn Abi Talib, radiyallahu anhu, defines it as: "Fearing Allah, adhering to His commandments, being content with what He provides one with, and getting ready for the Day of Judgement."

Mohammad Asad translates it as "to be conscious of Allah." It might be better according to some Muslim linguist to use the transliteration of this Qur'anic term and keep it as it is.

The term has been mentioned many times both in Qur'an and Sunnah. Allah the Almighty says:

"O believers! Have Taqwa of Allah as is His right to have Taqwa. And die not except while you are Muslims" [Surah Al-Imran (3): ayat 102]

By realization of Taqwa a Muslim is granted many bounties and blessings which he/she may gain. Among them are: the Love of Allah, a criterion by which to judge and distinguish between right and wrong, a way out of difficulties, matters will be made easier for him/her, sins will be remitted, guidance, help to acquire beneficial knowledge, prosperity and success.

Lessons

According to Ibn Rajab's view as well as other scholars, Taqwa is to fulfill obligations and avoid prohibitions and doubtful matters. It is the advice of Allah to all humankind, and it is the advice of all prophets, alayhim al-salam, to their people. Prophet Mohammad, (ﷺ), used to advise and continuously remind his Companions about Taqwa in all his talks and on different occasions.

Those who define Taqwa as "fearing Allah" look at the concept as a motive, because according to early scholars the minimum level of fearing Allah is what motivates a Muslim to fulfill obligations and keeps him/her away from prohibitions.

Taqwa does not imply perfection. Those who have Taqwa are subject to commit sins. However, if they do so, they repent right away and follow up the bad deed they have done with a good deed to wipe the bad one out as mentioned in this hadith. This clarifies the debatable issue between some scholars: whether or not avoiding minor sins is considered an aspect of Taqwa.

Allah the Almighty and all Merciful has left the door of forgiveness opened to many means by which the punishment for a sin might be removed. To do good deeds right after bad ones to wipe them out is one mean. This is mentioned in Surah Hud, ayat 114: "Verily, the good deeds remove the evil deeds."

There are other ways and means by which sins are forgiven as stated in the Qur'an and Sunnah such as:

- ? Istighfar (seeking forgiveness by supplication)
- ? Tubah (repentance)
- ? Du'a' of Muslims for one another
- ? The intercession by the Prophet, sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam
- ? The intercession of pious Muslims
- ? Performing the daily five prayers regularly and on time
- ? Afflictions
- ? The torment in the grave
- ? The horrible scenes and events of the Last Day
- ? The mere Mercy and Forgiveness from Allah

If we do a good deed, Allah will reward us by guiding us to do another good deed. Hence, doing a good deed will lead to doing another good deed. Doing a bad deed without regretting it or without istighfar or wiping it out by doing a good deed will most likely lead to doing another bad deed, whether of the same type or of a different type. By doing a bad deed with that attitude makes the person subject to repeat it again and again and doing other bad deeds becomes possible until the heart of that person is "sealed" and the person turns into a transgressor.

It is an obligation that every Muslim should treat others, deal with them, and interact with them in a good manner. Ibn Rajab says in his commentary: "Having good character is a characteristic of Taqwa. Taqwa cannot be complete without it. It was mentioned here by itself due to the need for explicitly explaining that point. Many people think that Taqwa implies fulfilling the rights of Allah without fulfilling the rights of humans. Therefore, the Prophet, (ﷺ), explicitly stated that he/she must deal with people in a kind manner." This ruling is stressed in many other hadiths, of which the following are some:

"Piety and Righteousness is being of good character." [Recorded by Imam Muslim]

"The believer with the most complete Iman (faith) is the one with the best behavior." [Recorded by Imam Ahmad and Abu Dawud]

"There is nothing heavier in the scales than good character." [Recorded by Imam Ahmad and Abu Dawud]

The Prophet, (ﷺ), made Iman (faith) and good character as the main basic criterion whether or not to accept a man for marriage.

Conclusion

To fear Allah the Almighty, to adhere to His commandments, to follow doing a bad deed with a good deed to wipe it out, and to deal with others in a good manner and good character are all aspects of the concept of Taqwa.