

YAQEEN INSTITUTE FOR ISLAMIC RESEARCH

40 HADITHS ON SOCIAL JUSTICE

LECTURE NOTES

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Chapter Five You will be asked about your Potential

This is the third hadith narrated by Abu Dhar (Jundub) Al-Ghifari (ra).

This hadith is mentioned in several different books of hadith and has different *riwayat* (variations).

عَنْ مَالِكِ بْنِ مَرْثَدٍ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، قَالَ: قَالَ أَبُو ذَرٍّ: قُلْتُ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ مَاذَا يُنَجِّي الْعَبْدَ مِنَ النَّارِ؟ قَالَ: الْإِيمَانُ بِاللَّهِ، قُلْتُ: يَا نَبِيَّ اللَّهِ، إِنَّ مَعَ الْإِيمَانِ عَمَلًا. قَالَ: يُرْضَخُ مِمَّا رَزَقَهُ اللَّهُ، قُلْتُ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَرَأَيْتَ إِنْ كَانَ فَقِيرًا لَا يَجِدُ مَا يُرْضَخُ بِهِ؟ قَالَ: يَأْمُرُ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ، وَيَنْهَى عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ، قُلْتُ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، أَرَأَيْتَ إِنْ كَانَ عَيْبًا لَا يَسْتَطِيعُ أَنْ يَأْمُرَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ، وَلَا يَنْهَى عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ؟ قَالَ: يَصْنَعُ لِأَخْرَقٍ، قُلْتُ: أَرَأَيْتَ إِنْ كَانَ أَخْرَقَ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُ أَنْ يَصْنَعَ شَيْئًا؟ قَالَ: يُعِينُ مَغْلُوبًا، قُلْتُ: أَرَأَيْتَ إِنْ كَانَ ضَعِيفًا، لَا يَسْتَطِيعُ أَنْ يُعِينَنَّ مَظْلُومًا؟ فَقَالَ: مَا تُرِيدُ أَنْ تَتْرَكَ فِي صَاحِبِكَ مِنْ خَيْرٍ، تُمْسِكُ الْأَذَى عَنِ النَّاسِ، قُلْتُ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ إِذَا فَعَلَ ذَلِكَ دَخَلَ الْجَنَّةَ؟ قَالَ: مَا مِنْ مُسْلِمٍ يَفْعَلُ حَصلَةً مِنْ هَؤُلَاءِ، إِلَّا أَخَذَتْ بِيَدِهِ حَتَّى تُدْخِلَهُ الْجَنَّةَ.

Narrated by Malik ibn Murthad from his father who said: Abu Dhar said, "I said, Oh Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), 'What are the things that protect a person from the Hell-Fire?' He said, 'Faith in Allah.' I said, 'What are the actions that accompany faith?' He said, 'He should spend from [the small amount] that Allah has provided him.' I said, 'What if that person is too poor and he cannot find anything to give?' He said, 'Then he should enjoin good and forbid evil.' I said, 'Oh Messenger of Allah, what if that person is in a position in society where they are too vulnerable to be able to enjoin good and forbid evil?' He (ﷺ) said, 'Assist someone who is skilled or do something for the one who has no skill.' I said, 'Oh Messenger of Allah, what if this person has no skill and knowledge?' He said, 'He should support someone who is oppressed.' I said, 'What if that person is weak and oppressed himself?' He said, 'You aren't going to leave any good for your brother to do? The prophet then said, 'He should restrain his evil from people.' I said, 'If that is all he does then will he enter into *jannah*? The prophet (ﷺ) said: There is no believer that pursues any one of these things except that on the day of judgment it grabs his hand until it enters him into *jannah*."

Protection from hell-fire starts with faith in Allah. Abu Dhar (ra) didn't get the answer the prophet gave the Bedouin about the 5 pillars because the prophet knew that Abu Dhar was at a different level. This was the simple answer but he (ﷺ) knew that Abu Dhar would have a follow-up question.

Charity

The word (رضخايرضخ) is different from the word (ينفق) which both mean to spend. Usually when we speak about spending we talk about نفق (to spend) however this word (رضخ) means to spend a small amount from what Allah has given you.

Why does the Prophet (ﷺ) use this particular word instead of the other?

He knew that Abu Dhar (ra) didn't have much to give and at the end of the day it's not about giving a lot of money. The command to give charity is not only for the rich but for everyone as a means of purification and bringing oneself closer to Allah SWT.

This is a consistent trend in the *ahadith* and *ayaat* about charity.

- For example there are many *ahadith* about simple people who do simple deeds like giving a dog water and the woman who split her date between her children, rather than about rich people giving tons of money to tons of people.
- People like Uthman (ra) who gave large amounts are the exception.

Poverty is discussed in the hadith by the Prophet (ﷺ) as a form of injustice because poverty is often an inflicted condition. It's not "natural." It usually involves exploitation, stealing, oppression, racism, etc. This is why poverty is discussed in the context of *dhulm*; it is economic injustice.

Often it is a small charitable deed that is most appreciated by Allah SWT. One of the reasons small deeds are so appreciated is because the person doing such a deed doesn't think much of the deed itself, but is thinking highly of the One (Allah) for whom the deed is done. Also there is an expectation of the wealthy to give charity; we usually don't have such expectations of those who have less to give. The question is what is your expectation of yourself. More importantly, what is Allah's expectation of you?

" اتَّقُوا النَّارَ وَلَوْ بِشِقِّ تَمْرَةٍ "

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Save yourself from the fire even by giving half a date in charity."

When Allah speaks about the people of *ihsaan*, He (swt) says,

الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ فِي السَّرَّاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ

[Those] who spend [in the cause of Allah] during ease and hardship [3:134]

When the expectation is not there (in times of hardship), then it is even better. Society doesn't expect it of you, but you place the expectation on yourself to give even when you are in a difficult situation, preferring others to yourself. The best charity is the small amount given when one fears poverty.

Nothing causes a person's lifespan to be expanded more than *sadaqah*. These people serve such a benefit to the people around them that Allah allows them to live on the earth longer.

Enjoining good & forbidding evil

Abu Dhar (ra) then asks what if someone is too poor and cannot find anything to give. If you are incapable of physically changing a situation, using your tongue is free; *da'wah*, enjoining good, forbidding evil, leading by example - all are free forms of *sadaqah*.

Ibn Hajr said, "The Prophet (ﷺ) even mentioned that within charity itself a person can insert themselves in the process of that charity and get the same exact reward as the one giving that charity." For example you can be the one who delivers it, facilitates the means, or even invites someone to that good.

Which is more beloved to Allah ? Enjoining good or forbidding evil?

According to Abdullah ibn Mas'ud (ra) it is more difficult to forbid the evil and for that reason it is greater in the sight of Allah and more beloved to Him.

1. Good is often done as a reaction to some form of evil. Removing the root cause/evil is better.
2. A person will face more opposition for forbidding evil than doing good, so this makes it more difficult and therefore better.

Every command of good and forbidding of evil is *sadaqah* - hadith.

What do you do if you are too vulnerable to enjoin good or forbid evil?

Third question of Abu Dhar (ra): "What if that person is in a position in society where they are too weak/vulnerable to be able to enjoin good and forbid evil?"

The Prophet (ﷺ) understood that not everyone in society carries the same burdens and level of vulnerability. For example he was okay with some people publicly announcing their Islam while for others he advised that they should keep it hidden.

The answer to Abu Dhar's question: **يَصْنَعُ لِأَخْرَقَ**

If you are not in a position to enact change yourself:

- Assist someone who is not as skilled as you in a certain domain; e.g., they are a better public speaker but you have more knowledge then you should share your knowledge with them.
- Another way is to go to policy makers and try to influence them and give them what they need to enact change. Many people in leadership positions (whether

- political or not) aren't evil but they don't have all the facts and need to be educated.
- Ibn Hajar (ra): "Sometimes the injustices that those who are laborers (working class) face are less obvious than those who are overtly disadvantaged." The Prophet (ﷺ) is saying not to assume that just because someone has a skill doesn't mean that they aren't facing injustice. The working class is often overlooked, but they might be suffering.
 - Teaching a man to fish vs. giving a hungry man a fish. Help someone learn a skill that they don't know. Teach someone who is disadvantaged so they can start to provide for themselves long term. This is better than bandage-style charity that only offers temporary solutions.

الدَّالُّ عَلَى الْخَيْرِ كَفَاعِلِهِ

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Whoever leads to good, he is like the one who does it."

What if you don't have skills or knowledge?

Abu Dhar (ra) then says: what if the person has no skills whatsoever. The prophet (ﷺ) said: you should support someone who is oppressed/defeated (مظلوماً أو مغلوباً).

- Stand with the oppressed in their misfortune. Solidarity.
- Ibn Abbas (ra) was sitting in the masjid of the Prophet (ﷺ) during the last 10 nights of Ramadan and saw a person who was visibly distressed. He said to them, what's wrong? The person replied by saying they had a debt but no means to pay it off. Ibn Abbas didn't have the funds either, however he said that he would speak to the lender to see if they could extend the period for payment.

What do we learn from this?

- Ibn Abbas (ra) wasn't able to pay off the debt for his brother, but he did what he could.
- Even if he was unsuccessful in his attempt, it still meant a lot to the debtor to know that his brother noticed his pain and tried to help him.

The Prophet (ﷺ) was teaching Abu Dhar (ra) that the least you can do in enjoining good or forbidding evil is assisting/supporting the oppressed.

مَنْ حَمَى مُؤْمِنًا مِنْ مُنَافِقٍ بَعَثَ اللَّهُ مَلَكًا يَحْمِي لَحْمَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ مِنْ نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "If anyone protects a believer from a hypocrite, Allah will send an angel who will guard his flesh on the Day of Resurrection from the fire of Jahannam." [Abu Dawud]

من رد عن مسلم بظهر الغيب كان حقاً على الله أن يعتقه من نار

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, “Whoever responds on behalf of a believer when he is not present, Allah has made it a right upon Him to protect him from the fire.”

Protecting those severely disadvantaged in this world earns you the greatest protection from Allah.

What if you yourself are weak/oppressed?

Then Abu Dhar (ra) said: what if that person is weak or oppressed and cannot help the oppressed (in another narration: cannot do anything). The prophet (ﷺ) said: O Abu Dhar, you aren't going to leave any form of good for your companion to do? Then prophet then said: He should restrain his evil from people.

If you can't do any good for people, then the least you can do is to refrain from harming them in any way.

If you have nothing good to say, be quiet.

Hadith: من كان يؤمن بالله واليوم الآخر فليقل خيراً أو ليصمت.

- Includes typing.

If you cannot support people then don't contribute to their suffering.

If people are backbiting and you cannot stop them then leave.

Abu Dujanah (ra) was an amazing sahabi and participated in many battles; on his deathbed he said that the only thing I am depending on with Allah is that I never used my tongue to curse a believer.

This was very significant for Abu Dhar. He was harsh with people and found it difficult to be around them because of their materialism. He eventually withdrew himself from society on the recommendation of Uthman ibn Affan (ra). He realized what he was saying was not productive/helpful so he withdrew.

At the end of this hadith Abu Dhar said: If that is all he does then will he enter into Jannah? The prophet (ﷺ) said: There is no believer that pursues any one of these things except that on the day of judgment it grabs his hand until it enters him into *jannah*. (Your charity or word of truth will come and take you by the hand and walk you into *jannah*.)

Lessons:

Abu Dhar also narrates another Hadith: the poor Muhajireen complained that the rich companions pray and fast like them but they have money to give charity and we don't so they are beating us in good deeds. The prophet said: didn't Allah give

you something to give in charity too? Abu Dharr said: what is it? The prophet said: the *tasbeeh* after *salah*. The rich people eventually started doing that too. The prophet then said: *ذلك فضل الله يؤتيه من يشاء*.

Our issue isn't the impossible things we wish we could do. It is the things within our reach that we fail to do. Allah has given us many opportunities to do good. We have to look to our potential to do good and use it.

Abdullah ibn Mubarak (ra) said that to cover a child from the cold at night is more beloved to Allah than fighting in the battlefield. **Small acts of kindness are actually bigger than we think.**

Little things like teaching people to read Quran, driving people places, helping elderly people, etc. should not be neglected. You don't have to in a leadership position to do good.

The prophet is telling Abu Dhar (ra) and the rest of the ummah to look at what you have and Allah will ask you regarding that. It is a sign of insincerity if we don't do what we are capable of. **Don't neglect the good you have at your disposal.**

The prophet taught us not to look at the easier or more convenient option if we are capable of doing the harder option. We need to live up to the potential Allah SWT has given us.

Fatima bint Malik, Omar ibn Abdul Aziz's wife said: I once entered upon Omar and he was laying down after his *salah*. He started to cry so I went to him and said: O commander of the believers, why are you crying? He said: I was given this position without any interest for it on my part. So I started to think about the hungry orphan, the direly destitute, the widow, the ... and I realized that my Lord will ask me about them on the day of judgment and their defender will be the prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم)....

We need to do whatever is within our capacity to do good.