

Ibn 'Abbās narrated: One day I was riding behind God's Messenger (peace be upon him) when he said to me:

- 1 Young man, I shall teach you some words [of advice]:
- 2 Be mindful of God,
- 3 and God will protect you.
- 4 Be mindful of God and you will find Him in front of you.
- 5 If you ask, ask of God;
- 6 If you seek help, seek God's help.
- 7 Know that if the entire community collaborates to benefit you with anything, they shall benefit you only with something God has already willed for you; and if they collaborate to harm you with anything, they shall harm you only with something God has already willed for you.
- 8 All pens have been lifted and all scrolls have dried.<sup>(1)</sup>

1 Related by al-Tirmidhī, 2516.

#### From the Qur'an

- ﴿You alone do we worship and to You alone do we turn for help.﴾ (1: 5)
- ﴿Fulfil your covenant with Me and I will fulfil Mine with you.﴾ (2: 40)
- ﴿Should God afflict you with any hardship, none other than He can remove it; and if He wills any good for you, none can withhold His bounty.﴾ (10: 107)
- ﴿Thus We averted from him [i.e. Joseph] evil and indecency. He was truly one of Our faithful servants.﴾ (12: 24)
- ﴿Your Lord says: 'Call on Me, and I shall answer you'.﴾ (40: 60)
- ﴿No incident can take place, either on earth or in yourselves, unless it be recorded in a decree before We bring it into being – that is easy for God.﴾ (57: 22)

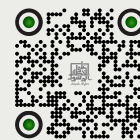
#### The Narrator

Abu al-'Abbās 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib belonged to the Hāshim branch of the Quraysh and resided mostly in Madinah. He was born in the Hāshimī quarter in Makkah three years before the Prophet's migration. He was the leading scholar of the Muslim community and the one who explained the Qur'an best. The Prophet (peace be upon him) included him in his prayers, saying: 'My Lord, grant him insight into the religion'.<sup>(1)</sup> He was one of the Prophet's companions who narrated a large number of hadiths. He embraced Islam at a young age and he remained very close to the Prophet after the takeover of Makkah. He lost his eyesight when he became old. He died at Taif in Year 68 AH 688 CE.

#### Summary

The Prophet (peace be upon him) gives his young cousin, 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās, concise and comprehensive advice, telling him to have a clear aim. Therefore, whatever he needs, he should ask it of God only, and whatever help he requires, he should appeal to God for it. He should be clear in his mind that all matters are in God's hand. Therefore, no one will ever cause him benefit or harm except by what God has willed for him.

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 143 (his text); Muslim, 2477.



# Message and Meaning

Ibn 'Abbās was riding behind the Prophet (peace be upon him) on the same mount.



The Prophet (peace be upon him) wanted to teach his young cousin, Ibn 'Abbās, the real meaning of faith. Therefore, he wanted him to focus his attention on what was to come. He started by addressing him as was suitable for his age, as Ibn 'Abbās was at the time between eleven and fourteen years of age. He then told him that he was about to teach him some words of advice. He was to learn, understand and implement these words.



The first thing the Prophet (peace be upon him) taught him was to 'be mindful of God'. This means that he should be fully aware of God's commands and the bounds He has set for His servants. He must fulfil what God bids and refrain from what He forbids. God describes his devout servants as those 'who keep within the limits set out by God'. (9: 112) God says: 'This is what you have been promised; this is for everyone who used to turn to God and to keep Him in mind, (32) who used to stand in awe of the Lord of Grace although He is beyond the reach of human perception, and who comes before Him with a heart full of devotion'. (50: 32-33)



When man observes the limits God has set for him and fulfils what He commands, he will be rewarded in ways that mirror his own actions. Just like he is mindful of God and His orders, God will protect him. Such protection is total, including the protection of his body, organs, senses, mind and his whole being. God says: 'Each has guardian angels before him and behind him, who watch him by God's command'. (13: 11) God's protection is not limited to the person himself, but is rather extended to his family. God says: 'Let those who, if they themselves had to leave behind weak offspring, would feel fear on their account, be afraid [to wrong the orphans in their charge], let them fear God and speak in a just manner'. (4: 9)

In the story of Moses and al-Khaḍir mentioned in Surah 18, they are denied hospitality by the people of a village, yet they find a collapsing wall there and al-Khaḍir builds it back up to prevent its further collapse. He later explains his action to Moses saying that the wall belonged to two orphan boys and beneath it there was a treasure that belonged to them. 'Their father had been a righteous man. So your Lord has willed it that when they come of age they should dig up their treasure by your Lord's grace. I did not do any of this of my own accord.' (18: 82)

The most perfect manifestation of God's protection is that He protects a believer's faith, shielding him from Satan's whispering and prompting. In reference to Prophet Joseph, God says: 'Thus We averted from him [i.e. Joseph] evil and indecency. He was truly one of Our faithful servants'. (12: 24) God also says: 'Know that God comes in between a man and his heart'. (8: 24) Explaining this statement, Ibn 'Abbās said: 'God thus stops a believer from committing a sin that drags him into Hell'.



The Prophet (peace be upon him) then mentions another aspect of the reward granted to a person who is mindful of God and stays within the limits marked by Him. Such a person will find that God is with him in all situations: He supports, strengthens and defends him, accepts his deeds and answers his prayers. In a *qudsī* or sacred hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) quotes God: ‘My servant does not draw near to Me with anything I love more than the religious duties I have made obligatory on him. My servant continues to draw near to Me with voluntary worship so that I love him. When I love him, I am his hearing with which he hears, his eyesight with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes and his foot with which he walks. If he asks something of Me, I will certainly give it to him, and if he seeks refuge with Me, I will certainly grant him that’.<sup>(1)</sup>



The Prophet (peace be upon him) then points out to Ibn ‘Abbās a very important aspect of proper belief in God’s oneness, which is to address all one’s requests to God only. Supplication is an act of worship which should always be addressed only to God. The Prophet said: ‘Supplication is worship’, and then recited: ‘Your Lord says: ‘Call on Me, and I shall answer you. Those who are too proud to worship Me shall enter Hell humiliated’. (40: 60) Supplication demonstrates the supplicant’s need and humility, as well as his recognition that the One he addresses is able to give him what he desires and prevent harm. Humility and the need for help should only be shown to God, because this is the essence of worship.<sup>(2)</sup>



The Prophet (peace be upon him) also orders Ibn ‘Abbās to seek help only from God. This is an act that requests assistance so that one can achieve one’s objective. Seeking God’s help demonstrates one’s reliance on God. That help is to be sought from God alone is based on the verse that says: ‘You alone do we worship and to You alone do we turn for help’. (1: 5) As God commands His servants to obey Him, He instructs them to supplicate to Him alone and to seek His assistance in the fulfilment of their obligatory duties and in refraining from what He has forbidden.

However, seeking people’s help in what they can do is perfectly permissible. A person may ask someone else’s help to carry a heavy load, or to attend to some other task that is within people’s ability. Islam urges Muslims to help their brethren in whatever way they can. The Prophet (peace be upon him) says: ‘To help a man with his mount, lifting him onto it or hoisting up his belongings onto it is a charity’.<sup>(3)</sup> What is forbidden in this area is to seek help in what belongs to God, as when people supplicate to some dead person, or at graves for help, or when they appeal to dead people for recovery from illness, success in their lives, or to grant them children, etc.



The Prophet (peace be upon him) then teaches his young cousin the essence of true submission

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 6502.

2 Ibn Rajab, *Jāmi’ al-‘Ulūm wal-Ḥikam*, Vol. 1, p. 481.

3 Related by al-Bukhari, 2989; Muslim, 1009.

# Message and Meaning

to God, acceptance of His will and true reliance on Him. Everything is in God's hand, and whatever happens to any person, whether good or bad, is by God's will. He determined all this long before He created the universe. Were all creation to collaborate in preventing what God has willed, they cannot do so. Were they to put all their efforts together in trying to cause someone any benefit or harm God has not willed for that person, they will never achieve such purpose. God says: 'Should God afflict you with any hardship, none other than He can remove it; and if He wills any good for you, none can withhold His bounty'. (10: 107)

This sentence sums up the message the Prophet teaches us in this hadith. When a person is convinced that nothing will ever happen to him other than what God has willed for him, and that whatever people may do contrary to that is of no use whatsoever, he will then truly rely on God. He will fear none but Him, and will seek help from none other than God. He will submit to Him and give priority to what God says, ahead of all others. This necessarily means doing what He bids and refraining from what He forbids.



The Prophet then states that the pens which wrote the fortunes of all people have been lifted and stopped writing. The records in which people's events have been written are now complete. There shall be no amendment in these scrolls or in the Imperishable Tablet. God says: 'No incident can take place, either on earth or in yourselves, unless it be recorded in a decree before We bring it into being – that is easy for God'. (57: 22) The Prophet (peace be upon him) says: 'God recorded the destiny of His creation fifty thousand years before He created the heavens and earth'.<sup>(1)</sup>

1 Related by Muslim, 2653.



# Implementation

1

The Prophet (peace be upon him) utilized all his time and his companions' time, even when traveling on his mount, in what earns God's pleasure.

2

The Prophet (peace be upon him) was keen to teach this hadith to Ibn 'Abbās, young as he was, so that he would learn these great values related to behaviour, God's will and His oneness. It is important not to ignore teaching young people, particularly those who show clear intelligence. Everyone should be addressed in the style suited to them, particularly when we try to strengthen their belief in the fundamentals of faith. They are the young men and women of the near future, and they will be the ones who look after people's interests.

3

The Prophet (peace be upon him) starts with an address that alerts the attention of his addressee, using words that are few in number, broad in meaning. They attract attention and formulate good understanding. Whoever wants to give important advice should start with some words that make his listener eager to learn.

4

The Prophet kept his teaching short, expressed in a few, short sentences. As such, they are more likely to be fully understood and acted upon, even by young people.

5

If you want to look after yourself, then be mindful of God and He will protect you. One of the early scholars said: 'Whoever is God-fearing protects himself, and whoever does not fear God is lost, and God is in no need of him'.<sup>(1)</sup> Even if you want to look after your health, be mindful of God. A scholar still retained his physical strength in old age. He was more than 100 years old when he was walking with some of his students. They came across a stream with no crossing place in sight. The old scholar made a great jump which amazed his students. He said to them: 'We protected our limbs from sin when we were young, and God has kept them safe for us in our old age'.<sup>(2)</sup>

6

A woman joined a Muslim army on a jihad mission, leaving behind her twelve goats and her weaving needle. When she returned home, she discovered that one goat and her weaving needle were missing. She said: 'My Lord, You have guaranteed Your protection for whoever joins an expedition for Your cause. One of my goats and my weaving needle are missing'. She kept appealing to God, Mighty and Exalted. One morning, she found her missing goat with another like it, and her weaving needle and another like it.

7

If a person wants God to protect him, his family and property, he must remain God-fearing. Ibn al-Munkadir said: 'For a pious person, God protects his children, grandchildren and those around him, and they will continue to enjoy God's care'.<sup>(3)</sup> Sa'īd ibn al-Musayyib said to his son: 'I increase my prayer for your sake, hoping that God will protect you. He recited from the Qur'an: 'Their father had been a righteous man'.<sup>(4)</sup> (18: 82)

1 Ibn Rajab, *Nūr al-Iqtibās fī Waṣīyyat al-Nabī li Ibn 'Abbās*, p. 54.

2 Ibn Rajab, *Jāmi' al-'Ulūm wal-Hikam*, Vol. 466 ,1.

3 Ibid, Vol. 1, p. 467.

4 Ibid.



New forms of appealing to people and other creatures occur at different times. In our time, such new forms include appealing to universal forces and deceased parents. Such forms are often used in films, children's books, training courses related to the universe. We should be careful lest some aspect of attributing partners to God creeps into our lives, but under some other name.



Avoid asking other people even for a small thing, but train yourself to attend to whatever you need. The Prophet (peace be upon him) accepted a pledge of allegiance from a group of people, stating certain things and he included: 'and that you do not ask of people anything'. The narrator adds: 'I have seen some of these people and any of them might drop his whip but he would not ask anyone to pick it up and hand it to him'.<sup>(1)</sup> Requesting people's help in normal situations like these is definitely permissible. 'However, the Prophet wanted to teach us the best of good manners, and that we do not ask other people for favours, undertake whatever we need even though it may be inconvenient, preferring always that we ourselves attend to what we need. When the Prophet stipulated this condition for those people, they implemented it in all situations, including those which people are ready to do for others without hesitation.'<sup>(2)</sup>



It is important to seek God's help in attending to whatever you need, whether this pertains to religion or to life's affairs, including night worship, improving one's manners, study, seeking a job, etc. Nothing is more effective than seeking God's help. The Prophet gives us this great advice: 'Make sure to have what benefits you, seeking God's help. Do not feel helpless'.<sup>(3)</sup> Every Muslim should always pray to God for help. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said to Mu'adh ibn Jabal: 'I urge you, Mu'adh. Do not ignore saying after every prayer: My Lord, help me to remember You, thank You and to worship You well'.<sup>(4)</sup>



How much do we look up to people, and how much do we look up to God? Wahb ibn Munabbih said to a man who used to visit rulers: 'How come that you go to those who shut their doors before you, who show you that they are poor and hide their riches? Yet you ignore the One who opens His gate to you in the middle of the night and the middle of the day, showing you His boundless treasures, and says to you: "Pray to Me and I will answer you"'.<sup>(5)</sup>



It behoves us all to learn this hadith and implement it. Teach its message to your family, children and other people, using with each the language that suits their age and understanding. The hadith includes great wisdom. A scholar said that when he contemplated the meanings of this hadith, he was overwhelmed with its message. How poor those who ignore learning it are!<sup>(6)</sup>

1 Related by Muslim, 1043.

2 Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Mufhim*, Vol. 3, p. 86.

3 Related by Muslim, 2664.

4 Related by Abu Dāwūd, 1522; al-Nasā'ī, 1303.

5 Ibn Rajab, *Jāmi' al-'Ulūm wal-Ḥikam*, Vol. 1, p. 481.

6 Ibid, Vol. 1, p. 462.

