

Abu Hurayrah narrated that God's Messenger (peace be upon him) said:

- 1 A strong believer is better and dearer to God than a weak believer,
- 2 but there is goodness in both.
- 3 Make sure to have what benefits you.
- 4 Seek God's help and do not feel helpless.
- 5 If something happens to you, do not say: had I done this, such-and-such would have happened.
- 6 Rather, say: This is God's will and whatever God wills shall happen.
- 7 Expressions of regret open the gate for Satan's work.⁽¹⁾

1 Related by Muslim, 2664.

From the Qur'an

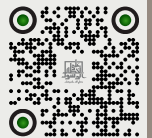
- ﴿Make ready against them whatever force and war mounts you can muster, so that you may strike terror into the enemies of God who are also your own enemies, and others besides them of whom you may be unaware, but of whom God is well aware.﴾ (8: 60)
- ﴿Those of the believers who remain passive, other than the disabled, are not equal to those who strive hard in God's cause with their possessions and their lives. God has exalted those who strive hard with their possessions and their lives far above the ones who remain passive. To each God has promised the ultimate good, yet God has preferred those who strive hard over those who remain passive with a mighty reward.﴾ (4: 95)
- ﴿Do good, so that you may be successful.﴾ (22: 77)
- ﴿You alone do we worship and to You alone do we turn for help.﴾ (1: 5)
- ﴿Many a prophet has fought with many devout men alongside him. They never lost heart on account of what they had to suffer in God's cause, and neither did they weaken nor succumb. God loves those who are patient in adversity.﴾ (3: 146)
- ﴿They say: 'Had we had any say in the matter, we should not have been slaughtered here'. Say: 'Had you stayed in your homes, those of you who were destined to be killed would have gone to their deathbeds'.﴾ (3: 154)
- ﴿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 – (22) so you need not grieve for what you miss or be overjoyed at what you gain.﴾ (57: 22-23)

The Narrator

Abu Hurayrah is best known by this appellation. It is reported that his name was 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Şakhr al-Dawsī, a Yemeni from a branch of the Azd. He embraced Islam in the year in which the Battle of Khaybar took place, i.e. Year 7 of the Hijri calendar. He migrated to Madinah to join the Prophet (peace be upon him). He requested that the Prophet pray for his mother, and he did. She, thus, embraced Islam. Then he requested the Prophet to pray for both of them, and the Prophet said: 'My Lord, endear this little servant of Yours and his mother to believers, and endear the believers to them'. He remained close to the Prophet (peace be upon him). He was very keen to learn and memorize the Prophet's hadiths. He was the companion who narrated the largest number of the Prophet's hadiths. He died in Madinah in Year 58 AH, 678 CE.

Summary

A person who is firm and strong in his faith and learns what is good is better than one who is weak. Therefore, a Muslim should be keen to acquire what will be of benefit to him. He should pray to God to help him in this, and not be lazy or feel helpless. When a Muslim does or obtains something good, he should thank God. If not, he should not wish to have a second chance. Instead, he should say: 'This is God's will and whatever God wills is done'.



Message and Meaning



1 The Prophet (peace be upon him) tells us that a strong believer is dearer to God than a weak believer. Strength in this context means strength of faith and what complements it and helps achieve its goals, such as physical and spiritual strength, solid learning, etc. When these are combined in a person, they help him to attend to worship and to fulfil what is required of man in life, jihad and the fulfilment of life's duties as well as attending to his personal interests and the interests of others. God says: 'Make ready against them whatever force and war mounts you can muster, so that you may strike terror into the enemies of God who are also your own enemies, and others besides them of whom you may be unaware, but of whom God is well aware'. (8: 60) These strengths enable a person to persevere in the fulfilment of whatever earns God's pleasure, steering away from sin and unlawful temptations. They urge him to enjoin what is right and stand against what is evil, and they enable him to bear the harm caused by other people and life's adversities.⁽¹⁾



2 That a strong believer is better than a weak one does not mean that the latter is devoid of goodness. He is certainly good, but he misses out on a greater status.



3 Having stated that the strong believer is better, the Prophet explains the goal to which such a believer should direct his strength. This is an example of the Prophet's unique style of concise wording and broad meaning. He tells a strong believer to devote his ability to all that will benefit him in both this life and the life to come, focusing his attention on this, and not allowing distractions to take him away from it.



4 When a Muslim is keen to have what benefits him concerning his religion and his life, he should pray for God's help, relying on Him, to achieve what he hopes for. He must not be complacent or allow himself to fail, protesting that it is God's will, or that he lacks what is needed, when in fact he has not tried hard enough.



5 If a believer exerts his best efforts but the result turns out to be different from what he hoped for, he should not regret what he did. Nor should he lament, saying: 'Had I done this, such-and-such would have happened'. This is an expression of dissatisfaction with what God has willed for him. Alternatively, it indicates that he thinks that had he acted differently, matters would be different. This is incorrect, because what happens to us is according to what God has written well before He created the universe. However, man is required to take every necessary measure and leave the results to God to determine.

1 Al-Nawawi, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Vol. 16, p. 215. (paraphrased)



What a believer should say in this case is: ‘This is God’s will and whatever God wills shall happen’. In other words, he should attribute matters to God, accepting whatever happens, knowing that it happens by God’s will which is always done.

This does not mean that anyone may attribute his sin to God and persist in it, saying that he only committed it by God’s will. When the unbelievers claimed that they worshipped other deities by God’s will, God rejected their argument. He says: ‘Those who associate partners with God will say: “Had God so willed, neither we nor our fathers would have associated any partners with Him; nor would we have declared anything as forbidden”. In like manner did those who have lived before them deny the truth, until they came to taste Our punishment. Say: “Have you any certain knowledge which you can put before us? You follow nothing but conjecture, and you do nothing but guess”’. (6: 148)



The Prophet (peace be upon him) urges us not express such regrets because it opens the way for Satan and his whisperings. A person’s thoughts may tend to deny the divine decree and express displeasure with it. A person may also start to blame himself and consider himself unworthy or useless. This ushers in depression which weakens a person, wastes time and lets good opportunities go astray.

This does not mean that it is forbidden to say, ‘if only’, or similar phrases, at any time. It is forbidden as an expression of regret, blame or the like. If it is said to explain what went wrong, or to state a religious ruling, or in reference to the future, then it is perfectly permissible. Prophet Lot said: ‘Would that I had the strength to defeat you, or that I could lean on some mighty support’. (11: 80) Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: ‘Were it not that I would make things hard for my community, I would have ordered them to use a toothbrush’.⁽¹⁾ Abu Bakr al-Şiddīq said when he and the Prophet were hiding in the cave: ‘Were any of them to look where his foot was, he would see us’.⁽²⁾

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 7240.

2 Related by al-Bukhari, 3653; Muslim, 2381.