

Anas narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

- 1 Three qualities: when combined by a person, ensure that that person will experience, through them, the sweetness of faith:
- 2 that God and His Messenger are dearer to him than anyone else;
- 3 that he loves a person for no reason other than for God's sake;
- 4 and that now that God has saved him from disbelief, he hates to return to it just as he hates to be thrown into the Fire.⁽¹⁾

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 16; Muslim, 43.

From the Qur'an

- ﴿Believers, if you renounce your faith, God will bring forth [in your stead] people whom He loves and who love Him, humble towards the believers, proud towards the unbelievers. They will strive hard for God's cause and will not fear to be censured by any critic. Such is God's favour which He grants to whom He wills. God encompasses all and knows all. (54) Your patron is only God, and His Messenger and those who believe - those who attend to their prayers, pay their zakat and bow down in worship. (55) Those who ally themselves with God and His Messenger and the believers [will find that] the party of God will be victorious.﴾ (5: 54-56)
- ﴿Believers, do not take your fathers and brothers for allies if they choose unbelief in preference to faith. Those of you who take them for allies are indeed wrongdoers. (23) Say: 'If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your spouses, your clan, and the property you have acquired, and the business in which you fear a decline, and the dwellings in which you take pleasure, are dearer to you than God and His Messenger and the struggle in His cause, then wait until God shall make manifest His will. God does not provide guidance to the transgressors.﴾ (9: 23-24)
- ﴿As for anyone who denies God after having accepted the faith – and this certainly does not apply to one who does it under duress, while his heart remains true to his faith, but applies to him who willingly opens his heart to unbelief: – upon all such falls God's wrath, and theirs will be a tremendous suffering. (106) This is because they love the life of this world better than the life to come. God does not bestow His guidance on those who reject the truth. (107) Such are those whose hearts and ears and eyes are sealed by God; such are the heedless. (108) Without doubt, in the life to come they will be the losers.﴾ (9: 106-109)

The Narrator

Abu Ḥamzah Anas ibn Mālīk ibn al-Nadr of the Anṣār, was a distinguished scholar, *mufīi*, excellent reciter of the Qur'an and a leading scholar of Hadith. He was the chronicler of Islam. He was the servant of God's Messenger and his household. Anas was the last of the Prophet's companions to die in Basrah. He was only ten years of age when the Prophet migrated to Madinah, and he was 20 when the Prophet (peace be upon him) passed away. He took part in several military expeditions with the Prophet, and he took part in the pledge given to the Prophet (peace be upon him) known as 'the pledge under the tree'. He died in Year 93 AH 712 CE.

Summary

The Prophet (peace be upon him) mentions three qualities which ensure that a person who combines them will experience the sweetness of faith. The first is that such a person loves God and His Messenger more than anyone and anything else. Secondly, that he should love others for God's sake, not for any personal interest of any type. Thirdly, that he hates to revert to disbelief more than he hates anything whatsoever. Such hate should be as much as hating to throw oneself into the Fire.



Message and Meaning

This hadith expresses some fundamentals of Islam and is one of the most concise and expressive of the Prophet's statements:



The Prophet (peace be upon him) states that whoever has these three qualities will experience the sweetness of faith. This is a feeling akin to what a person may feel when he eats delicious food. This hadith is similar to the other hadith in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) says: 'Whoever accepts God as his Lord, Islam as his faith and Muhammad as [God's] Messenger experiences the meaning of faith'.⁽¹⁾ This is the same as the feelings of happiness and enlightenment a believer experiences as he increases his knowledge of God and His Messenger (peace be upon him). He will feel the pleasure of doing what pleases God and he will be ready to bear hardship for God's sake, preferring it to life's luxuries.

Faith provides nourishment and strength to people's hearts in the same way as food nourishes and gives strength to the body. Needless to say, the human body enjoys food when it is in health. When a person is ill, he does not enjoy the food that benefits him. Indeed, he may fancy what harms him or what is tasteless. The same is the case with man's heart. It is denied the sweetness of faith when it is unhealthy. If a person's heart is free of erring desires and sinful actions, it will certainly experience the sweetness of faith. When it indulges in such actions and desires, such sweetness becomes out of reach. On the contrary, it will find sins attractive, although sinful deeds will inevitably send him into perdition. The one whose faith is sound will enjoy its sweetness and find abstention from sin very easy.⁽²⁾



The first of these qualities is "that God and His Messenger are dearer to him than anyone else". What is meant by loving God and His Messenger (peace be upon him) is a recognized feeling that makes a person mention his loved one very often, yearning for their meeting, doing what they like and refraining from what they dislike. This feeling of love continues to grow and increase until it becomes stronger than all feelings of love a person has. Indeed, it becomes so strong that it motivates a person to prefer what his love wants, even though it is contrary to what he himself prefers.

The love of God and His Messenger (peace be upon him) must be preferred to all other feelings and considerations, so that a Muslim will not incur God's displeasure and become liable to His punishment. God says: 'Say: If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your spouses, your clan, and the property you have acquired, and the business in which you fear a decline, and the dwellings in which you take pleasure, are dearer to you than God and His Messenger and the struggle in His cause, then wait until God shall make manifest His will. God does not provide guidance to the transgressors'. (9: 24) The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'None of you attains to faith unless I am dearer to him than his parents, children and all mankind'.⁽³⁾

1 Related by Muslim, 34.

2 Ibn Rajab, *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, Vol. 1, pp. 51-50.

3 Related by al-Bukhari, 15; Muslim, 44.

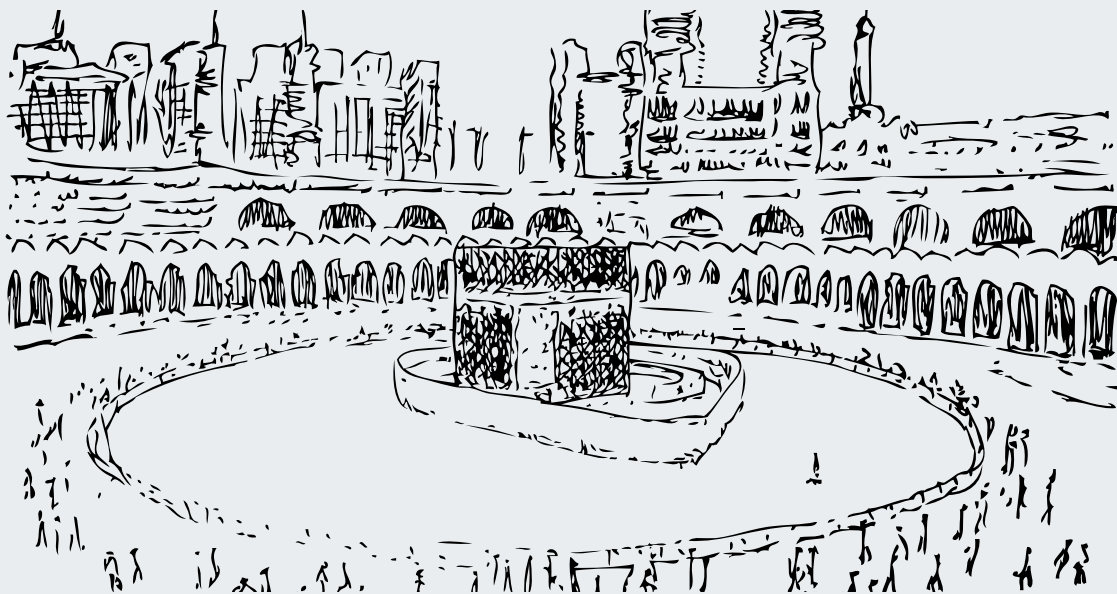
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The second quality is that God determines whom a person should love or not love. Thus, he will love someone for no reason other than that God loves that person or orders that he be loved. One hadith quotes the Prophet (peace be upon him): ‘The strongest bond of faith is that you love for God’s sake and hate for His sake’.⁽¹⁾ Thus a believer submits to God’s will in every feeling of love he entertains. God says: ‘You have a good example in Abraham and those who followed him, when they said to their people: “We disown you and what you worship instead of God. We reject you. The enmity and hate that have arisen between us and you will last until you believe in God alone”’. (60: 4) Another hadith mentions that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: ‘A person who loves and hates for God’s sake, gives and withholds for God’s sake, is one who has perfected his faith’.⁽²⁾

4

The third quality is to hate to disbelieve and indulge in sinful actions, whether a person used to do so in the past or not. A person who truly believes and truly loves God and His Messenger will feel that abandoning faith and disbelieving in God is as hateful a situation as that of being thrown onto a fire.

The essential aspect of hating sinful actions is that a believer should bring himself to dislike them and stay away from them. He should also resolve not to indulge in them because of his knowledge that God dislikes them. That one may entertain a desire for some sinful acts, without painting them in an alluring image or actually doing them is not punishable. In the Qur’an, God praises those who forbid themselves their base desires. This shows that a person may desire what is forbidden, but a believer will stop himself from such indulgences.⁽³⁾



1 Related by Ahmad, 18,524.

2 Related by Abu Dāwūd, 4681.

3 Ibn Rajab, *Fath al-Bārī*, Vol. 1, p. 58.

Implementation

1

Umm Sulaym took her son, Anas ibn Mālik, to the Prophet so that he would be the Prophet's servant. Her act was an indication of her great love for the Prophet (peace be upon him). She dearly loved her son who was a free person, not a slave. She was not seeking a paid job for her son, but rather volunteering a service. As Muslims we need to look at ourselves and think how we should serve God's Messenger's message, hadiths and Sunnah.

2

The Prophet (peace be upon him) often uses words and phrases that attract the attention of his audience. The hadith starts with stating a specific number of qualities to be highlighted, so that the listener is fully attentive and counts them. The Prophet also uses the word 'sweetness' so as to encourage people to acquire these qualities so that they can experience such sweetness. Advocates and preachers should follow the Prophet's example and use methods to attract people's attention.

3

Whenever you feel that your good deeds fall short of what is required, make careful to strengthen your love of God and His Messenger. Anas ibn Mālik narrated that 'a man asked God's Messenger (peace be upon him) about the Last Hour? He said: 'What have you prepared for it?' The man said: 'Nothing much, but I love God and His Messenger'. The Prophet said: 'You are with those you love'. Anas said: 'Having embraced Islam, nothing delighted us more than the Prophet's words: "You are with those you love". I love God, His Messenger, Abu Bakr and 'Umar, and I hope to be with them, even though I fall short of what they did'.⁽¹⁾

4

Whenever you hear of some fine deeds people do for their loved ones, try to do something better towards God and His Messenger (peace be upon him). Such love is of different grades. One grade of love motivates a person to do what is obligatory and refrain from what is forbidden. A higher grade of love further motivates a person to do what is recommended and voluntary and to steer away from what is doubtful.

5

It is important that we learn and teach others how to increase and strengthen our feelings of love of God and His Messenger (peace be upon him). The way to acquire such a loving of God, Mighty and Exalted, includes knowledge of His names and attributes as well as the perfection of His deeds, contemplation of His fine creation, remembrance of His great blessings and favours, as well as appreciation of His abounding grace and mercy which He bestows on us although we commit grave sins. Similar things may be said about acquiring the love of God's Messenger (peace be upon him), which is gathered through knowing him, studying his fine character and his tireless striving to establish God's message as a reality. Besides, we should always remember that he is the means to guide us along the way to God and His favours.

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 3688; Muslim, 2639.



Everyone can work to acquire the love of something or to dislike it. Therefore, it is important that we all examine and urge ourselves until we place the love of God’s Messenger (peace be upon him) above everything else. The Prophet held ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb by the hand. ‘Umar said to him: ‘Messenger of God, I love you better than everything else apart from myself’. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said to him: ‘No. By Him who holds my soul in His hand, not until you love me more than you love yourself’. ‘Umar said to him: ‘It is so now. By God, I love you more than I love myself’. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: ‘You have got it now, ‘Umar’.⁽¹⁾



When one Muslim loves another, he should let this love be reflected in such ways as come naturally and easily, such as through meetings, visits, gifts, etc. A hadith mentions that ‘A man went to visit a brother of his residing in a different village. God sent an angel on his route to watch him. When he passed by, the angel said: “Where are you going?” He said: “I am visiting a brother of mine in this village”. The angel asked him: “Does he owe you a favour and you seek its return?” He said: “No. I only love him for God’s sake”. The angel said: “I have been sent to you by God to tell you that God loves you because you love your brother for His sake”.⁽²⁾



When you love a friend for God’s sake, make sure to always keep such a bond purely for God’s sake. When love is for a particular purpose, it disappears when that purpose is fulfilled or deemed unobtainable. Love for God’s sake is perfect when it is neither increased by mutual kindness nor decreased by estrangement.⁽³⁾



Train yourself to see sinful actions as ugly and unbecoming, and to dislike them because they lead to what is repugnant. Beware of imagining them as fine or beautiful. Such thoughts are the key to willingness, and willingness is the key to action.



Abu Qays, an Anṣarī poet, refers to the Prophet’s migration to Madinah in the following lines:

He lived among the Quraysh for a score of years, reminding people and whoever was willing to listen.

When he came to us and settled among us, feeling comfortable and happy at Taybah;

We placed our wealth at his disposal, and we fought hard when called for battle.

We take his side against all who are hostile to him, even though they may be our sincere and close friends.

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 6632.

2 Related by Muslim, 2567.

3 Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥh al-Bārī*, Vol. 1, p. 62.

