

Mu'āwiyah narrated that God's Messenger (peace be upon him) said:

1

When God wishes to grant goodness to a person He gives him an insight into the religion.

2

I am only a distributor, but God is the Giver.

3

This community shall continue to adhere to the divine faith, unperturbed by those who oppose them until God's will is done.⁽¹⁾

From the Qur'an

﴿People of earlier revelations! Do not overstep the bounds [of truth] in your religious beliefs, and do not say about God anything but the truth. The Christ Jesus, son of Mary, was no more than a messenger from God and His word which He gave to Mary and a soul from Him. So believe in God and His messengers and do not say, '[God is] a trinity!' Desist, for that will be better for you. God is only One God. Infinite He is in His Glory! [To imagine] that He may have a son! To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth. Sufficient is God for a guardian.﴾ (4: 171)

﴿It is We Ourselves who have bestowed this reminder from on high, and it is We who shall preserve it intact.﴾ (15: 9)

﴿God will certainly defend those who believe. For certain, God does not love anyone who betrays his trust and is bereft of gratitude.﴾ (22: 38)

﴿How about one who devoutly worships God during the hours of the night prostrating himself or standing in prayer, ever mindful of the life to come, and hoping for his Lord's mercy? Say: 'Can those who know and those who do not know be deemed equal?' Only those who are endowed with insight will take heed'.﴾ (39: 9)

﴿How about one whose heart God has opened to Islam, and thus receives light from his Lord? Woe, then, betide those whose hearts harden at the mention of God. These are most obviously in error. (22) God has bestowed from on high the best of all teachings: a Book that is consistent within itself, repeating its statements [of the truth] in manifold forms. It causes the skins of those who stand in awe of their Lord to shiver, but then their skins and hearts soften at the mention of God. Such is God's guidance: He guides with it him that wills, whereas the one whom God lets go astray can never find any guide.﴾ (39: 22-23)

The Narrator

The Prophet (peace be upon him) encouraged people to acquire Islamic knowledge and to study the Islamic faith. He mentions that when God wants to grant goodness to a person, He will give him an insight into the religion. He then adds that he himself distributes whatever God gives him in accordance with God's will. He says this so that the Muslim community does not exaggerate his status, giving him a rank above that of a messenger of God. He concludes by giving his community the good news that this religion of Islam shall continue to flourish for the rest of time.

Summary

Mu'āwiyah ibn Abi Sufyān Sakhr ibn Ḥarb's mother was Hind bint 'Utbah. He embraced Islam when the Prophet and his companions performed the compensatory 'umrah (Year 7 AH, 629 CE), but he only made it public a year later, when his father converted to Islam at the time of the Prophet's takeover of Makkah. His sister was Umm Ḥabībah, the Prophet's wife. He became one of the scribes who wrote down the Qur'anic revelations as dictated by the Prophet. During his reign, 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb appointed him Governor of Syria. He became the caliph after the well-known events of strife within the Muslim community, referred to in Islamic history as 'the Great Strife'. Al-Ḥasan, the Prophet's grandson, pledged his allegiance to him as caliph. He died in Year 60 AH, 680 CE.

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 71; Muslim, 1037.



Message and Meaning



When God wishes to give someone a great favour in both this present life and in the life to come, He will facilitate for him a good understanding of Islam and its principles, commandments, prohibitions and purposes. This is further increased by learning the texts that are relevant to different questions, studying Qur'anic verses, hadiths and reports and acquiring knowledge of the disciplines that help to acquire such understanding and exerting efforts to have the right and correct knowledge.

The import of the hadith is that a person who does not seek Islamic knowledge deprives himself of goodness.⁽¹⁾ Islamic learning is mentioned in particular because it is the best area of learning. It is the discipline that leads to knowing God and worshipping Him doing His bidding and refraining from what He has prohibited. As such, it is the discipline that serves people's interests in this life and in the life to come, and saves them from what ruins them in both. All other disciplines are secondary to religious knowledge. They remain deficient unless complemented by religious learning.⁽²⁾



The Prophet (peace be upon him) then explains that he is in a position of trust, undertaking the task of distributing what God gives him, whether money and property or knowledge.

That he is a distributor of knowledge means that he delivers whatever he is commanded to convey to people, withholding nothing from anyone. As for understanding and insight, these are gifts granted by God, Mighty and Exalted, as determined by His wisdom.



The Prophet (peace be upon him) then gives his community the good news that it will continue to uphold its faith for the rest of time. It will never be wiped out by its enemies. Its status with God remains intact, no matter how fierce the intellectual and military wars its enemies launch against it.

This will be fulfilled if only a section of the Muslim community remains adhering to Islam in its pure form. Other sections may neglect to adhere to some of what God requires.



The Muslim community shall survive until the end of time. Perhaps what is meant here is the same as stated in the hadith narrated by Abu Hurayrah, quoting the Prophet (peace be upon him): 'God will send a wind from Yemen, which is softer than silk. It will gather every single one who has the weight of a seed of faith in his heart'. This confirms that the Last Hour will arrive when the world is populated by wicked people.

1 Ibn Hajar, *Fath al-Bārī*, Vol. 1, pp. 164-163.

2 Ibn Baṭṭāl, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhari*, Vol. 1, p. 154.



Implementation

1

If you wish to have a share of goodness, seek it at its sources, as indicated to us by God's Messenger (peace be upon him). God is the One who knows where goodness lies and who facilitates its acquisition for whomever He wills, namely through developing an insight into the divine faith.

2

A Muslim should always seek ways to acquire knowledge of the religion. Such is the pursuit of goodness in both the present life and the next.

3

It is important to seek the perfect insight through the Prophet's companions. Ibn 'Abbās, who was lower in rank than the rightly-guided caliphs, was one of his companions whom the Prophet prayed for saying: 'My Lord, grant him an insight into the religion'.⁽¹⁾ He said this prayer when Ibn 'Abbās served him with his water for ablution.

4

People's status is evaluated on the basis of the goodness they demonstrate. The practical effects of one's insight into the Islamic faith are some of the most important criteria for evaluating people. 'Āmir ibn Wāthilah narrated that 'Nāfi' ibn 'Abd al-Ḥārith met 'Umar at 'Usfān. 'Umar had appointed him Governor of Makkah. ['Umar] asked him: "Whom did you appoint over the people of this valley?" [Nāfi'] said: "Ibn Abzā". ['Umar] asked: "And who is Ibn Abzā?" He said: "One of our *mawlas*⁽²⁾". ['Umar] said: "You appointed a *mawla* as their ruler?" [Nāfi'] said: "He has learnt God's Book, the Mighty and Exalted, by heart and he is well versed in the discipline of division of inheritance". ['Umar] said: "Your Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'God elevates some people by means of this Book and brings down others'".



1 Related by al-Bukhari, 143; Muslim, 2477.

2 The Arabic word *mawla* has several meanings. In this sense, it means 'a person who is attached to a tribe. He is normally a freed slave'.

5

The pursuit of knowledge is a continuous act, and the more one seeks the better one gets. God did not order the Prophet to seek an increase except an increase in knowledge. He told him: 'Say: My Lord, increase my knowledge'. (20: 114) Therefore, we should never stop seeking further knowledge, at any point or any age.

6

The Prophet (peace be upon him) looked after people's interests with regard to knowledge, wealth, etc. Whoever is in a position of responsibility in respect of knowledge or wealth should know that he is merely a distributor of what God has entrusted to him. He should neither feel too proud nor neglect his responsibility. He should distribute what he is entrusted with as God wants him to do.

7

Do not worry about the future of the divine faith, and do not grieve for what may afflict the Muslim community in matters of its faith or worldly concerns. There will always be a group of the Muslim community undertaking the task of preserving and upholding Islam. They will not care what forces are ranked against them and how these forces use their might and knowledge to suppress them. Every Muslim should seek to be a member of this group, which has special status with God, its Lord.



