

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

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By Him who holds Muhammad's soul in His hand,

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anyone in this nation who hears of me,

3

whether Jew or Christian,

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and then dies without believing in what I have been sent with, shall be among the dwellers in the Fire.⁽¹⁾

From the Qur'an

﴿The only true faith acceptable to God is Islam [i.e. man's self-surrender to Him]. Disagreements spread, through mutual aggression, among those who were given revelations only after knowledge had been granted to them. He who denies God's revelations will find that God is indeed swift in reckoning.﴾ (3: 19)

﴿He who seeks a religion other than Islam [i.e. self-surrender to God], it will not be accepted from him, and in the life to come he will be among the lost. (85) How shall God guide people who have lapsed into disbelief after having accepted the faith and having borne witness that this messenger is true, and after having received clear evidence of the truth? God does not guide the wrongdoers. (86) Of such people the punishment shall be the curse of God, the angels and all men. (87) Under it they shall abide. Neither their suffering shall be lightened, nor shall they be granted respite.﴾ (3: 85-88)

﴿As for him who, after guidance has been plainly conveyed to him, puts himself in contention with God's Messenger and follows a path other than that of the believers – him shall We leave to that which he himself has chosen, and shall cause him to endure Hell. How evil a journey's end.﴾ (4: 115)

The Narrator

'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ṣakhr belonged to the Daws tribe, a branch of the major Arabian tribe of Azd. The Daws used to live at Ma'rib, but later dispersed and lived in different areas. He embraced Islam in Year 7 AH, 629 CE, moving to Madinah and remaining close to the Prophet (peace be upon him). He was very keen to acquire Islamic knowledge and memorize the hadith. He narrated the largest number of the Prophet's hadiths. He died in Madinah in Year 58 AH, 678 CE.

Summary

The Prophet states an oath that no one who is his contemporary or lives later and hears of him and his message, but who still refuses to believe in him will be accepted by God. Whoever consciously disbelieves in Prophet Muhammad is destined to Hell, even though such a person be a Jew or a Christian.

1 Related by Muslim, 250.



Message and Meaning



The Prophet (peace be upon him) states an oath emphasizing a very serious matter, saying: By God, who holds my soul in His hand and who will give me life or cause my death by His will.



The purport of the oath is that belief in his message is obligatory to all those who receive the Prophet's message. This applies to every individual belonging to the nations addressed by his message, namely, mankind and the jinn, Arabs and non-Arabs, from his own generation and all succeeding generations, up to the Day of Judgement.

Receiving the message means that the individual understands that Muhammad (peace be upon him) declared that he was a messenger of God, calling on people to believe in God's oneness and prohibiting the association of partners with Him, explaining all this. This applies to everyone who receives the message, whether they are convinced of the same or not. It is sufficient for the obligation to be binding on any person that such a person receives a proper understanding of the existence of such a messenger. A person who does not receive the message correctly is not one whom we consider to have such an obligation. God says: 'We would never inflict punishment [on anyone] until We have sent a Messenger [to give warning]'. (17: 15)



The Prophet (peace be upon him) mentions the Jews and Christians in particular because they are the ones who are best aware of the Prophet (peace be upon him). They were foretold about his prophethood. Moreover, mentioning them in particular shows that nothing is acceptable as a substitute to believing in Prophet Muhammad's message, not even the claim that a person follows a divine religion. Needless to say, this applies more clearly to polytheists and atheists. The hadith thus provides evidence confirming that the message of Islam supersedes all earlier messages.



All those who receive the message of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and who are rational adults, yet die unbelievers, having refused to believe in him and the message he delivered from God, will be among the permanent dwellers of Hell. They will not benefit by any good deed they do, or by anything such as line of descent, nobility or position. God says: 'He who seeks a religion other than Islam [i.e. self-surrender to God], it will not be accepted from him, and in the life to come he will be among the lost'. (3: 85)

Implementation



Abu Hurayrah travelled a very long distance from his place of residence to migrate and join the Prophet (peace be upon him), even though it would have been good enough for him to embrace Islam and continue to live with his own people in his own town. He became the Prophet's companion who narrated the largest number of hadiths, despite the fact that he was a relative latecomer to Islam. We should learn from his example how much we can give for God's sake, and how close we are to the Prophet's Sunnah, which is his heritage.



Let us give due importance to the question of faith and accept what God's Messenger (peace be upon him) says, whether it coincides with what we desire or not. In this hadith, he swears by the One who controls his own life and death to confirm a certain principle of faith.



Whoever has a Jewish or Christian relative or friend should do that person a favour, calling on him gently to accept Islam, because continuing with his own religion will not benefit him on the Day of Judgement. If he accepts Islam, both he and the one who calls on him to do so receive double rewards. The Prophet (peace be upon him) says: 'Three categories of people are given double reward: a person who belonged to the people of earlier revelations and believed in his prophet, but lived to the time of Prophet [Muhammad (peace be upon him)] and believed in him and followed him. He has double reward...'.⁽¹⁾



A Muslim should be more proud of his faith than anyone else. People may take pride in their cultures, civilizations or faith, but the followers of all other faiths will end up losers unless they follow Islam, if they receive its message. We praise and thank God for having made us Muslims and guided us to the truth, although people hold great differences about it.



The greatest act of mercy is that a person endeavours to save himself, his family and other people from everlasting punishment. The point is that no one will enter Heaven until they believe in Prophet Muhammad and his message and implement his guidance. Those who advocate the divine faith are the most merciful to all people. They strive with their advocacy, wealth and knowledge in order to save them from God's punishment. There is a high position which behoves every Muslim to join by advocating God's message.



Believers understand well that they should follow the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), the best of mankind, because this is the way to ensure a person's safety on the Day of Judgement.

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 97; Muslim, 154.

