

الأربعون من درر الحديث النبوي

Forty Gems

from the Prophet's Teachings



Muhammad ibn Shams al-Din

Translated by

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Introduction

In the name of Allah. Praise be to Allah. May blessings and peace be upon the Messenger of Allah and his family.

These are forty hadiths that I selected from the teachings of the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him. They deal with broad principles that every Muslim needs in life.

I left out some hadiths that would have suited this collection because they are already widely known through al-Nawawi's Forty Hadiths, and there was no need to repeat them.

I have tried to ensure that the reports I selected are authentic.

I ask Allah Most High to make this work sincerely for His sake, to help its writer and reader act upon it, and to reward them on the day we meet Him. Allah is our Protector.

Muhammad ibn Shams al-Din

1

Mercy for those on earth

Narrated by Abd Allah ibn Amr ibn al-As

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “Those who show mercy will be shown mercy by the Most Merciful. Show mercy to those on earth, and the One above the heavens will show mercy to you.”^{[E1][E2][E3][1]}

Explanations

[E1] This mercy includes Muslims, non-Muslims and animals. Mercy does not mean allowing oppression or refusing to protect someone who is wronged. A lawful punishment may protect both the offender and society.

[E2] This wording shows that Allah is above His creation in a way that suits His majesty. We accept this without comparing Him to creation, changing the meaning, denying it or asking how.

[E3] This hadith is often the first hadith a student hears from a teacher. Each teacher says that it was the first hadith heard from his own teacher. In this way, the study of hadith begins with mercy.

References

[1] Abu Dawud (4941). Al-Tirmidhi (1924), who called it a sound and authentic report.

2

Ask Allah for useful knowledge

Narrated by Jabir ibn Abd Allah

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “Ask Allah for knowledge that benefits you, and seek Allah’s protection from knowledge that does not benefit you.”^{[E4][2]}

3

The people of Paradise and the people of Hell

Narrated by Iyad ibn Himar al-Mujashi'i

One day, during a sermon, the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “Listen. My Lord has commanded me to teach you some of what He taught me today and which you did not know.”

Allah said: “Every kind of wealth I have given a servant is lawful for him. I created all My servants naturally inclined towards the truth, but the devils came to them and turned them away from their religion.”^[E5] They forbade them what I had made lawful and ordered them to associate with Me things for which I had given no authority.”

Explanations

[E4] Useful knowledge should be sought sincerely and put into practice. It should not be used to gain fame or titles such as scholar, reciter, imam or jurist. A subject may be useful but fail to benefit someone who does not act on it. Some subjects may also be useless or harmful. Sincerity, honest reflection and action make knowledge useful.

[E5] People are created with a natural tendency towards the truth. Devils and false teachings turn them away from it.

References

[2] Ibn Majah (3843). Ibn Hibban (83).

“Allah looked at the people of the earth and was deeply displeased with the Arabs and non-Arabs among them, except for small groups from the People of the Book.”

Allah also said to the Prophet: “I sent you to test you and to test others through you. I sent down to you a Book whose words water cannot wash away. You recite it while asleep and awake.”^[E6]

“Allah commanded me to fight Quraysh. I said, ‘My Lord, they will split my head open and leave it like a flat loaf.’ He said, ‘Drive them out as they drove you out. Fight them and We will support you. Spend and We will provide for you. Send an army and We will send five times as many. Fight, with those who obey you, against those who disobey you.’”

He then said, “The people of Paradise are three. The first is a ruler who is fair, charitable and guided. The second is a man who is merciful and soft-hearted towards every relative and every Muslim. The third is a man with a family who remains chaste and does not beg.”

Explanations

[E6] “A Book whose words water cannot wash away” means that the Qur’an is preserved in people’s hearts as well as in writing. Destroying written copies cannot remove it from the Muslim community.

“The people of Hell are five. The first is a weak-minded person who merely follows others and seeks neither a family nor a living.^[E7] The second is a traitor whose greed, however small, leads him to betray. The third is a man who spends every morning and evening trying to deceive you about your family and wealth. The fourth is the miser or liar. The fifth is the person who is harsh, abusive and foul-mouthed.”^[3]

4

The straight path

Narrated by Abd Allah ibn Masud and Jabir ibn Abd Allah

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, drew a straight line for us and said, “This is Allah’s straight path.” He then drew lines to its right and left and said, “These are separate paths. On every path is a devil calling people towards it.”

He then recited: “This is My straight path, so follow it. Do not follow other paths, for they will separate you from His path.” [al-An‘am 6:153]^[E8]

[4]

Explanations

[E7] The weak-minded follower is someone with no firm principles who simply follows whoever influences him.

[E8] The straight path is the Qur’an and Sunnah as understood and followed by the Prophet and his Companions. The side paths include beliefs, methods and organised groups that leave that path or put loyalty to a group above the truth.

References

[3] Muslim (2865, report 63). Ibn Hibban (654).

[4] The narration of Ibn Masud: Ahmad (4142). Al-Darimi (208). Ibn Hibban (6). Al-Hakim (2938). The narration of Jabir: Ahmad (15277). Ibn Majah (11).

5

Beware of following unclear verses

Narrated by A'ishah

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, recited: “It is He who sent down the Book to you. Some of its verses have a clear meaning and form the foundation of the Book, while others may be understood in more than one way. Those whose hearts are crooked follow what is unclear, seeking to cause confusion and searching for an interpretation of those verses. No one knows its full meaning except Allah. Those firmly grounded in knowledge say, ‘We believe in it. All of it is from our Lord.’ Only people of understanding take heed.” [Aal Imran 3:7]^[T1]

A'ishah said that the Messenger of Allah then said, “When you see people following the verses whose meaning is unclear, they are the people Allah has named, so beware of them.” And in another narration, he said, “When you see people arguing about them, they are the people Allah has named, so beware of them.”^{[E9][5]}

Explanations

[E9] Verses whose meaning is unclear must be understood by using the clear parts of the Qur'an and Sunnah. They must not be taken alone or forced to support a belief chosen beforehand.

Translator's notes

[T1] The Arabic can be read in two ways. In the first reading, the sentence stops after “except Allah”. This means that only Allah knows the full truth of the unclear verses, and those firmly grounded in knowledge say, “We believe in it.” In the second reading, the sentence continues without stopping. This means that Allah and those firmly grounded in knowledge know their meaning. Both readings are accepted. Those firmly grounded in knowledge accept everything Allah has revealed and leave to Allah anything they do not understand.

References

[5] Ahmad (26197, 24210). Al-Darimi (147). Al-Bukhari (4547). Muslim (2665, report 1). Abu Dawud (4598). Al-Tirmidhi (2994). Ibn Majah (47). Ibn Hibban (73, 77).

6

The reward of guiding others

Narrated by Abu Hurayrah

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “Whoever calls people to guidance receives a reward like the rewards of those who follow him, without reducing their rewards in any way. Whoever calls people to misguidance carries a sin like the sins of those who follow him, without reducing their sins in any way.”^{[E10][6]}

7

The Prophet's sermon and warning

Narrated by Jabir ibn Abd Allah

When the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, gave a sermon, his eyes became red, his voice rose and his warning became intense, as though he were warning of an army about to attack. He would say, “The enemy may reach you this morning or this evening.”

He would also say, “The Final Hour and I were sent as close as these two,” and he joined his index and middle fingers together.

Explanations

[E10] Whoever teaches or spreads guidance shares in the reward of those who follow it. Whoever teaches or spreads misguidance shares in the sin of those who follow it. This warning is about leading people into misguidance. It does not mean that every honest mistake is misguidance. A scholar with the needed knowledge who reaches a wrong conclusion after carefully studying the evidence is not, for that reason, someone who calls people to misguidance. This includes what a person teaches, publishes, posts or forwards to others.

References

[6] Ahmad (9160). Al-Darimi (530). Muslim (2674, report 16). Ibn Majah (206). Abu Dawud (4609). Al-Tirmidhi (2674). Ibn Hibban (112).

He would say, “The best words are the Book of Allah, and the best guidance is the guidance of Muhammad. The worst matters are those newly introduced into the religion. Every newly introduced matter is an innovation, every innovation is misguidance, and every misguidance is in the Fire.”^[E11]

He would also say, “Whoever leaves wealth, it belongs to his family. Whoever leaves a debt or a family needing support, they are my responsibility.”^{[E12][7]}

Explanations

[E11] “Newly introduced matters” means new practices added to the religion. It does not mean new technology, transport, tools or other normal developments in worldly life.

[E12] The final sentence means that the Prophet took responsibility for unpaid debts and for family members left without support when a Muslim died without enough wealth.

References

[7] Ahmad (14984). Muslim (867, report 43). Ibn Majah (45-46). Al-Nasa'i (1578). Ibn Khuzaymah (1785). Ibn Hibban.

8

People are safe from a Muslim's words and actions

Narrated by Abu Hurayrah, Anas ibn Malik and Fadalah ibn Ubayd

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "A Muslim is someone from whose tongue and hand people are safe. A believer is someone people trust with their lives and their wealth."^[E13]^[8]

9

Four signs of hypocrisy

Narrated by Abd Allah ibn Amr

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "Whoever has all four of these qualities is a hypocrite through and through. Whoever has one of them has a trait of hypocrisy until he leaves it."^[E14] When he speaks, he lies. When he makes an agreement, he breaks it. When he makes a promise, he fails to keep it. When he argues, he becomes abusive and unfair."^[E15]

Explanations

[E13] This describes the character expected of a Muslim. It does not mean that a Muslim leaves Islam simply because he has harmed someone.

[E14] These are forms of hypocrisy in a person's actions. They are not hypocrisy in the heart, which takes a person out of Islam.

[E15] Becoming abusive in a dispute includes lying, insulting others and acting unfairly when a disagreement begins.

References

[8] Ahmad (8931, 12561, 23958). Al-Tirmidhi (2627), who called it a sound report.

In a separate narration from Abu Hurayrah, he said, “The signs of a hypocrite are three. When he speaks, he lies. When he promises, he breaks his promise. When he is trusted, he betrays that trust.”^{[E16][9]}

10

Truthfulness leads to Paradise

Narrated by Abd Allah ibn Masud

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “Truthfulness leads to goodness, and goodness leads to Paradise. A person continues to speak the truth until Allah records him as a truthful person.”

“Lying leads to wrongdoing, and wrongdoing leads to the Fire. A person continues to lie until Allah records him as a great liar.”^[10]

Explanations

[E16] The words about betraying a trust come from the separate three-trait narration from Abu Hurayrah. They have not been added to the four-trait narration.

References

[9] Ahmad (6768, 8685). Al-Bukhari (33, 2459). Muslim (58-59, reports 106-107). Abu Dawud (4688). Al-Tirmidhi (2631-2632). Al-Nasa'i (5021). Ibn Hibban (254, 257).

[10] Malik (3627). Ahmad (3638). Al-Darimi (2757). Al-Bukhari (6094). Muslim (2607). Ibn Majah (46). Abu Dawud (4989). Al-Tirmidhi (1971). Ibn Hibban (273).

11

Charity, forgiveness and humility

Narrated by Abu Hurayrah

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “Charity does not reduce wealth. When a servant forgives, Allah only increases him in honour. No one humbles himself for Allah except that Allah raises him.”^{[E17][11]}

12

Lying about the Prophet

Reported through numerous Companions

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “Whoever deliberately tells a lie about me should prepare his place in the Fire.”^{[T2][E18][12]}

Explanations

[E17] Charity may reduce the money in a person’s hand, but Allah blesses what remains and keeps the reward for the Hereafter. Forgiveness is especially good when a person could take revenge but chooses to forgive. Humility means avoiding pride. It does not mean putting oneself down.

[E18] This warning is about making up words on purpose and saying that the Prophet said them. A person must also check a report with proper care before passing it on, especially when it can easily be checked. An honest mistake is not the same as making something up on purpose.

Translator’s notes

[T2] Another narration says, “Whoever says about me what I did not say should prepare his place in the Fire.”

References

[11] Ahmad (9008). Al-Darimi (1718). Muslim (2588, report 69). Al-Tirmidhi (2029). Ibn Khuzaymah (2438). Ibn Hibban (3248).

[12] Reported through many chains in Ahmad, al-Darimi, al-Bukhari, Muslim, Ibn Majah, Abu Dawud, al-Tirmidhi and Ibn Hibban. The report is considered mutawatir.

13

The rights of the road

Narrated by Abu Sa'īd al-Khudri

The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “Do not sit in the roads.” The Companions said, “Messenger of Allah, we need places where we can sit and talk.”

He said, “When you have no choice but to sit there, then give the road its rights.” They asked, “What are the road’s rights, Messenger of Allah?”

He replied, “Lower your gaze, do not harm anyone, return greetings, encourage what is right and discourage what is wrong.”^{[E19][13]}

Explanations

[E19] Sitting in a shared public place is not wrong in itself when its rights are respected. These rights also apply to shops, schools, workplaces, public transport and other shared spaces. A Muslim must avoid causing harm and should help stop harm caused by others.

References

[13] Ahmad (11309). Al-Bukhari (6229). Muslim (2121). Abu Dawud (4815). Ibn Hibban (595).

14

Secret listening, false dreams and making images

Narrated by Ibn Abbas

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “Whoever secretly listens to people who do not want him to hear will have molten lead poured into his ears.”^[E20]

“Whoever claims to have seen a dream that he did not see will be ordered to tie a barley grain into a knot, but he will never be able to do so.”^[E21]

“Whoever makes an image will be ordered to breathe life into it, but he will not be able to do so.”^{[E22][T3][14]}

Explanations

[E20] Secret listening includes listening on purpose to a private conversation when the people involved have not given permission.

[E21] Making up a dream to praise oneself, support a person or influence people in a religious or political matter is included in this warning.

[E22] Image-making here means drawing or making the shape of a living being, especially the face. Ordinary photography is not included because it records an image that already exists instead of drawing a new one. Landscapes, plants and objects are not included.

Translator's notes

[T3] Al-Darimi reports only the section about secret listening. Abu Dawud and al-Tirmidhi omit the section about falsely claiming to have seen a dream.

References

[14] Ahmad (2213). Al-Bukhari (7042). Ibn Hibban (5685). Al-Darimi (2750). Abu Dawud (5024). Al-Tirmidhi (1751).

15

Allah's beloved servants

Narrated by Abu Hurayrah

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said that Allah said:^[E23] “Whoever shows hostility to a devoted servant of Mine, I declare war against him.”^[T4]

“My servant does not draw near to Me with anything more beloved to Me than the duties I have required of him. My servant continues to draw near to Me through extra acts of worship until I love him.”^[E24]

“When I love him, I am his hearing with which he hears, his sight with which he sees, his hand with which he acts and his foot with which he walks.”^[E25] If he asks Me, I will surely give him. If he seeks My protection, I will surely protect him.”

Explanations

[E23] A hadith qudsi is a statement from Allah reported by the Prophet that is not part of the Qur'an.

[E24] Required worship comes before optional worship. Optional worship should not be done in a way that causes a required duty to be missed.

[E25] “I am his hearing...” does not mean that Allah becomes part of the servant. It means that Allah guides, protects and supports the devoted servant in what he hears, sees and does.

Translator's notes

[T4] The Arabic word translated as “devoted servant” is wali. Here it means a believing, God-fearing servant who draws near to Allah by obeying Him. It does not always mean someone who performs miracles.

“I do not hesitate over anything I am going to do as I hesitate over taking the soul of a believer. He dislikes death, and I dislike causing him pain.”^{[E26][15]}

16

What to do when good becomes mixed with evil

Narrated by Hudhayfah ibn al-Yaman

People used to ask the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, about good, but I used to ask him about evil because I was afraid that it might reach me.

I said, “Messenger of Allah, we lived in ignorance and evil, then Allah brought us this good. Will there be evil after this good?” He said, “Yes.”

I asked, “Will there be good after that evil?” He said, “Yes, but it will be mixed with something impure.” I asked, “What will make it impure?” He said, “People will follow guidance other than mine. You will recognise some of what they do and reject some of it.”

Explanations

[E26] The words about Allah’s hesitation are accepted as they appear in the authentic report, in a way that suits Him. It is not like human doubt, and we do not describe how it is.

References

[15] Ahmad (26193). Al-Bukhari (6502). Ibn Hibban (347).

I asked, “Will there be evil after that good?” He said, “Yes. There will be callers at the gates of Hell. Whoever answers their call will be thrown into it.” I said, “Messenger of Allah, describe them to us.” He said, “They will be from our people and will speak our language.”^[E27]

I asked, “What do you command me to do if I live to see that?” He said, “Stay with the united body of the Muslims and their leader.”^[E28]

I asked, “What if they have no united body and no leader?” He said, “Keep away from all those groups, even if you have to hold on to the root of a tree until death reaches you while you remain in that state.”^[16]

17

Stay away from civil conflict

Narrated by Abu Hurayrah

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “There will be times of civil conflict. The person sitting will be better than the person standing, the person standing will be better than the person walking, and the person walking will be better than the person running towards it.”

Explanations

[E27] People who call others to misguidance may appear to be part of the Muslim community and may use familiar words such as Qur'an, Sunnah, reform and support for Islam. Names and slogans do not prove that a teaching is correct. It must be judged by the Qur'an and Sunnah.

[E28] Staying with the united Muslims and their leader does not mean following a ruler or group in beliefs or actions that go against the Qur'an and Sunnah.

References

[16] Ahmad (23425). Al-Bukhari (7084). Muslim (1847, report 51). Ibn Majah (3979). Abu Dawud (4244). Ibn Hibban (5963). Al-Hakim (386).

“Whoever exposes himself to it will be caught up in it. Whoever finds a place of safety or protection should take refuge there.”^{[E29][17]}

18

Two of the best ways to live

Narrated by Abu Hurayrah

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “One of the best lives a person can have is that of a man holding the reins of his horse in Allah’s cause. Whenever he hears an alarm or a call for help, he mounts quickly and heads swiftly towards the fighting, seeking death where it is most likely to be found.”^[E30]

“Another is a man with a few sheep on a mountain top or in a valley. He keeps up the prayer, gives zakah and worships his Lord until death comes to him. His dealings with people bring nothing but good.”^[18]

Explanations

[E29] This warning is about civil fighting in which truth and falsehood cannot be clearly told apart. It does not mean staying neutral when the truth is clear.

[E30] The first description is about lawful military service under lawful authority. It does not allow private violence or joining an unlawful group.

References

[17] Al-Bukhari (3601). Muslim (2886, report 10).

[18] Malik (3558). Ahmad (9723). Muslim (1889, report 125). Ibn Majah (3977). Ibn Hibban (4600). Al-Hakim (2379).

19

Abandoning the prayer

Narrated by Jabir ibn Abd Allah

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “What stands between a person and disbelief, or in another wording associating partners with Allah, is abandoning the prayer.”^{[E31][19]}

20

Responding to rulers' wrongdoing

Narrated by Umm Salamah

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “Rulers will be placed over you. You will recognise some of their actions as right and reject others as wrong. Whoever hates their wrongdoing is free of blame. Whoever rejects their wrongdoing is safe. The blame is on the person who accepts it and follows them.”

The Companions asked, “Messenger of Allah, should we fight them?” He replied, “No, not as long as they continue to pray.”^{[E32][20]}

Explanations

[E31] Leaving the prayer on purpose as a regular practice takes a person outside Islam and is disbelief and shirk.

[E32] The report forbids armed rebellion against Muslim rulers who continue to pray. It does not forbid advising them, rejecting wrongdoing or speaking against injustice.

References

[19] Ahmad (14979). Al-Darimi (1269). Muslim (82, report 134). Ibn Majah (1078). Abu Dawud (4678). Al-Tirmidhi (2618).

[20] Ahmad (26528). Muslim (1854, report 64).

21

Stop wrongdoing when you see it

Reported by Qays ibn Abi Hazim from Abu Bakr

Abu Bakr stood, praised Allah and said, “People, you recite this verse: ‘Believers, take care of yourselves. Those who go astray cannot harm you if you are rightly guided.’ [al-Ma’idah 5:105]”

But we heard the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, say: “When people see wrongdoing and do not change it, Allah may soon include all of them in His punishment.” In another wording, he said: “When they see an oppressor and do not stop him, Allah may soon include all of them in His punishment.”^{[E33][21]}

Explanations

[E33] “Take care of yourselves” does not mean ignoring wrongdoing around you. When people can oppose oppression or wrongdoing but remain silent, punishment may affect the whole community. Speaking publicly against a ruler’s wrongdoing is not by itself armed rebellion.

References

[21] Ahmad (1, 30). Ibn Majah (4005). Abu Dawud (4338). Al-Tirmidhi (2168).

22

Gentleness makes things better

Narrated by A'ishah

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "Gentleness is not present in anything except that it makes it better, and it is not removed from anything except that it makes it worse."^{[E34][22]}

23

Do not support lying and oppression

Narrated by Ka'b ibn Ujah

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "After me there will be rulers who lie and act unjustly. Whoever goes to them, confirms their lies and helps them in their injustice is not of me, and I am not of him. He will not come to me at the Pool."^{[E35][E36]}

"Whoever does not confirm their lies and does not help them in their injustice is of me, and I am of him. He will come to me at the Pool."^[23]

Explanations

[E34] Encouraging what is right and opposing wrongdoing should normally be done with gentleness, sincere advice and a clear wish for the other person's good. It should not become abuse or personal insults. Firmness may sometimes be needed, but gentleness is the normal starting point.

[E35] Supporting unjust rulers includes spreading their lies, defending their injustice, or giving religious excuses for their actions, even from a distance. Rejecting their wrongdoing is not the same as armed rebellion.

[E36] "The Pool" means the Prophet's Pool on the Day of Resurrection.

References

[22] Ahmad (24938). Muslim (2594, report 78). Abu Dawud (2478). Ibn Hibban (2478).

[23] Ahmad (18126). Al-Tirmidhi (2259). Al-Nasa'i (4208). Ibn Hibban (279).

24

The servant of money

Narrated by Abu Hurayrah

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “May the servant of gold, the servant of silver and the servant of fine clothes perish. If he is given something, he is pleased. If he is not given it, he becomes angry. May he fall and fail, and if a thorn pricks him, may it not be removed.”^[E37]

“Blessed is a servant who holds the reins of his horse in Allah’s cause, with uncombed hair and dusty feet. If he is placed on guard duty, he remains on guard. If he is placed at the rear, he remains at the rear. If he asks permission to go in, he is not allowed in, and if he intercedes, his intercession is not accepted.”^{[T5][E38][24]}

25

Injustice and greed

Narrated by Jabir ibn Abd Allah

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “Protect yourselves from injustice, for injustice will become layers of darkness on the Day of Resurrection.”

Explanations

[E37] A person becomes a servant of wealth or status when these things control his loyalty and come before obedience to Allah. This does not always mean physically prostrating to money. It may be minor shirk and may become major shirk when a person knowingly changes Allah’s rulings or opposes the religion to protect wealth, influence or office.

[E38] The sincere servant accepts a duty that brings no attention, without demanding leadership, praise or reward in this world.

Translator’s notes

[T5] Tuba means blessing or glad tidings. It has also been explained as something in Paradise.

References

[24] Al-Bukhari (2887). Ibn Majah (4136). Ibn Hibban (3218).

“Protect yourselves from extreme greed,^[T6] for it destroyed those who came before you. It drove them to shed one another’s blood and to violate one another’s sanctities.”^{[E39][25]}

26

Love of wealth and status

Narrated by Ka'b ibn Malik

The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “Two hungry wolves let loose among sheep do not cause as much damage as a person’s hunger for wealth and status^[T7] causes to his religion.”^{[E40][26]}

Explanations

[E39] Avoiding injustice includes refusing to take part in another person’s oppression or help it continue. Extreme greed can lead people to violate the protected life, property and honour of others.

[E40] A desire for wealth and public status that is not controlled harms a person’s religion more than hungry wolves harm a flock. It may lead to unlawful income, interest, dishonesty, seeking favour from powerful people or using religious knowledge to gain status.

Translator’s notes

[T6] The Arabic word translated as “extreme greed” is shuhh. It means a very strong greed that is worse than ordinary stinginess.

[T7] The Arabic word translated as “status” means public position, fame or reputation. It does not mean personal honour or chastity.

References

[25] Ahmad (5662, 6206). Muslim (2578, report 56). Al-Hakim (27).

[26] Ahmad (15784). Al-Darimi (2772). Al-Tirmidhi (2376), who called it a sound report. Ibn Hibban (3228). Al-Hakim (5771).

27

Everyone is responsible

Narrated by Abd Allah ibn Umar

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “Each of you is responsible, and each of you will be asked about those in your care.”^[E41]

“A ruler is responsible for the people and will be asked about them. A man is responsible for his household and will be asked about them. A woman is responsible for her husband’s home and children and will be asked about them. A servant is responsible for his master’s property and will be asked about it.”

“So each of you is responsible, and each of you will be asked about those in your care.”^[27]

28

A believer does not insult others or use foul language

Narrated by Abd Allah ibn Masud

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “A believer does not insult people, curse others, use obscene words or speak foully.”^{[E42][28]}

Explanations

[E41] Being responsible is not only a position of authority or honour. A person will be questioned and made to answer for the people, duties and property placed in his care.

[E42] This describes the normal character of a believer. One sinful act does not by itself mean that a person has left the faith. The warning is about making insults, curses and foul language part of one’s usual behaviour.

References

[27] Malik, through al-Zuhri (2121). Ahmad (4495). Al-Bukhari (2554). Muslim (1829, report 20). Abu Dawud (2928). Al-Tirmidhi (1705). Ibn Hibban (4490).

[28] Ahmad (3948). Al-Tirmidhi (1977). Ibn Hibban (192). Al-Hakim (29).

29

What backbiting means

Narrated by Abu Hurayrah

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, asked, “Do you know what backbiting is?” The Companions replied, “Allah and His Messenger know best.”

He said, “It is to mention your brother in a way that he dislikes.” Someone asked, “What if what I say about him is true?”

He replied, “If it is true, you have backbitten him. If it is not true, you have made a false accusation against him.”^[29]

30

Helping your Muslim brother

Narrated by Abd Allah ibn Umar

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “A Muslim is the brother of another Muslim. He does not wrong him or leave him without help. Whoever takes care of his brother’s need, Allah takes care of his need. Whoever relieves a Muslim of a hardship, Allah relieves him of a hardship on the Day of Resurrection. Whoever hides a Muslim’s fault, Allah hides his faults on the Day of Resurrection.”^{[E43][30]}

Explanations

[E43] Hiding a private fault does not mean hiding abuse, danger, serious wrongdoing or anything that must be reported. It also does not stop a person from warning others about public error or harm when there is a real need.

References

[29] Ahmad (7146). Muslim (2589, report 70). Abu Dawud (4874). Ibn Hibban (5758).

[30] Ahmad (5646). Muslim (2580, report 58). Abu Dawud (4893). Al-Tirmidhi (1426).

31

Things Allah has forbidden and disliked

Narrated by al-Mughirah ibn Shu'bah

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "Allah has forbidden you to disobey your mothers, ^[E44] to bury daughters alive, and to refuse what you owe while demanding what is not yours."

"He dislikes for you gossip and repeating everything people say, asking too many questions, and wasting wealth."^[31]

32

The greatest sins

Narrated by Abd Allah ibn Masud

I asked the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, "Which sin is greatest in the sight of Allah?" He replied, "To set up a rival beside Allah even though He created you."

I said, "That is truly a great sin. What comes next?" He said, "To kill your child because you fear that he will share your food."

Explanations

[E44] Disobeying either parent is forbidden. Mothers are mentioned especially because of their very great rights over their children.

References

[31] Al-Bukhari (2408). Muslim (593, report 12). Ibn Hibban (5555).

I asked, “What comes next?” He replied, “To commit adultery with your neighbour’s wife.”^{[E45][32]}

33

Six rights of one Muslim over another

Narrated by Abu Hurayrah

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “A Muslim has six rights over another Muslim.” He was asked, “What are they, Messenger of Allah?”

He replied, “When you meet him, greet him with peace. When he invites you, accept. When he asks your advice, advise him sincerely. When he sneezes and praises Allah, say, ‘May Allah have mercy on you.’ When he is ill, visit him. When he dies, join his funeral procession.”^[33]

Explanations

[E45] Killing one’s child combines murder with betraying the duty to protect and provide for the child. Adultery with a neighbour’s wife combines adultery with betraying the neighbour’s special right to safety and trust.

References

[32] Ahmad (4131). Al-Bukhari (4477). Muslim (86, report 141). Abu Dawud (2310). Al-Tirmidhi (3182). Al-Nasa’i (4013). Ibn Hibban (4416).

[33] Ahmad (8845). Muslim (2162, report 5). Abu Dawud (5031).

34

Keeping family ties

Narrated by Anas ibn Malik

I heard the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, say, “Whoever would like his provision to be increased and his lifespan to be extended^[E46] should maintain close ties with his relatives.”^{[E47][34]}

35

The strong believer

Narrated by Abu Hurayrah

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “The strong believer is better and more beloved to Allah than the weak believer, though there is good in both.”

“Work hard for what benefits you, ask Allah for help and do not give up. If something happens to you, do not say, ‘If only I had done this, then such and such would have happened.’ Instead say, ‘This was Allah’s decree, and He did what He willed.’ The words ‘if only’ open the door to Satan.”^{[E48][35]}

Explanations

[E46] The final phrase has two accepted meanings. It may mean that the person’s life is extended, or that he continues to be remembered well after his death.

[E47] This means blood relatives on both the mother’s and father’s sides. Closer relatives normally have a stronger claim. Family ties may be kept through visits, calls, messages, gifts, financial help and other suitable forms of care.

[E48] “Strong” here means able, active and brave in useful matters, not only physically strong. The warning about “if only” is about regret that objects to Allah’s decree. It does not forbid every use of “if” or “if only”.

References

[34] Ahmad (13585). Al-Bukhari (2067). Muslim (2557, report 21). Ibn Hibban (438).

[35] Ahmad (8791). Muslim (2664, report 34). Ibn Majah (79). Ibn Hibban (5721).

36

Real strength is self-control

Narrated by Abu Hurayrah

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “The strong person is not the one who defeats others in wrestling. The truly strong person is the one who controls himself when angry.”^[36]

37

Excellence in all things

Narrated by Shaddad ibn Aws

I remembered two teachings from the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him. He said, “Allah has prescribed excellence in all things.”^[T8]

“If you must kill, do it in the best way. When you slaughter an animal, do it in the best way. Sharpen the blade and spare the animal suffering.”^{[E49][37]}

Explanations

[E49] The following words apply only when killing or slaughter is lawful. They require care and forbid cruelty. They do not give permission for violence.

Translator's notes

[T8] The Arabic word is *ihsan*. It means doing something well, with care and mercy.

References

[36] Malik (3363). Ahmad (10702). Al-Bukhari (6114).

[37] Ahmad (17128). Al-Darimi (1991). Muslim (1955, report 57). Ibn Majah (3170). Abu Dawud (2815). Al-Tirmidhi (1409). Al-Nasa'i (4405). Ibn Hibban (5883).

38

Avoid needless questions

Narrated by Abu Hurayrah

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “Do not keep asking me about matters I have left unmentioned. The people before you were destroyed by their many questions and their disagreements with their prophets.”

“When I forbid you from something, keep away from it. When I command you to do something, do as much of it as you are able.”^[E50]

[38]

39

Knowledge is lost when scholars die

Narrated by Abd Allah ibn Amr

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “Allah does not take knowledge away by pulling it out of people. He takes knowledge away by taking the scholars.”

“When no scholar remains, people choose ignorant leaders. They are asked questions and answer without knowledge. They go astray and lead others astray.”

Explanations

[E50] The warning is about stubborn questions based on guesses or argument that create needless difficulty. It does not discourage sincere questions needed for learning and practice. What is forbidden must be completely avoided. A command must be carried out as far as a person is able.

References

[38] Ahmad (7492). Al-Bukhari (7288).

In another wording, he said, “After Allah has given you knowledge, He does not pull it away from you all at once. He removes it as the scholars die with their knowledge. Ignorant people remain, and they are asked for religious answers. They give answers based on personal opinion, so they go astray and lead others astray.”^{[E51][39]}

40

Seeing Allah, crossing the bridge and intercession

Narrated by Abu Hurayrah and Abu Sa’id al-Khudri

We asked, “Messenger of Allah, will we see our Lord on the Day of Resurrection?” He replied, “Do you have any trouble seeing the sun and the moon when the sky is clear?” We said, “No.” He said, “You will have no more trouble seeing your Lord on that day than you have seeing them.”^[E52]

He then said, “A caller will announce, ‘Let every people go to what they used to worship.’ Those who worshipped the cross will go with their cross, those who worshipped idols will go with their idols, and the followers of every false god will go with what they worshipped. They will fall into the Fire.”

Explanations

[E51] Religious knowledge is not proved by a title, public position or popularity. A person must have real knowledge, sound understanding and the ability to use the evidence correctly. Access to books, websites and short quotations does not by itself make someone able to give religious rulings.

[E52] The believers will truly see Allah in the Hereafter. The comparison with seeing the sun and moon is about how clear and certain the vision will be. It does not compare Allah to the sun, the moon or any created being.

References

[39] Ahmad (37590). Al-Darimi (245). Al-Bukhari (100, 7307). Muslim (2673, report 14). Ibn Majah (52). Al-Tirmidhi (2652).

“Those who worshipped Allah will remain, whether they were righteous or sinful, together with some from the People of the Book. Hell will be shown to them like a mirage.”

40. Seeing Allah, crossing the bridge and intercession - continued

“The Jews will be asked, ‘What did you worship?’ They will reply, ‘We worshipped Uzayr, the son of Allah.’ They will be told, ‘You have lied. Allah has no wife and no child. What do you want?’ They will say, ‘We want you to give us water.’ They will be told, ‘Drink,’ and they will fall into Hell.”

“The Christians will then be asked, ‘What did you worship?’ They will reply, ‘We worshipped the Messiah, the son of Allah.’ They will be told, ‘You have lied. Allah has no wife and no child. What do you want?’ They will say, ‘We want you to give us water.’ They will be told, ‘Drink,’ and they will fall into Hell.”

“Those who worshipped Allah, whether righteous or sinful, will remain. They will be asked, ‘Why are you still here when everyone else has gone?’ They will say, ‘We separated ourselves from them, although today we need them more than they need us. We heard a caller say that every people should join what they worshipped, and we are waiting for our Lord.’”

“Allah will come to them in a form different from the form in which they first saw Him and will say, ‘I am your Lord.’ They will repeat two or three times, ‘We seek Allah’s protection from you. We do not associate anything with Allah.’”

“Only the prophets will speak to Him. He will ask, ‘Is there a sign by which you know Him?’ They will say, ‘The shin.’ He will reveal His shin, and every believer will fall in prostration.^[E53] Those who used to prostrate only to be seen and praised will try to prostrate, but their backs will become stiff and unable to bend.”^[E54]

40. Seeing Allah, crossing the bridge and intercession - continued

“Then a bridge will be laid across Hell.” We asked, “Messenger of Allah, what is the bridge?” He replied, “It is slippery and hard to stand on. It has hooks, iron claws and broad thorns with bent points, like the thorny sa’dan plant found in Najd.”^[T9]

“People will be caught according to their deeds. Some will be destroyed by their deeds, while others will be scratched and then saved. The believers will cross it as quickly as the blink of an eye, lightning, the wind, and the fastest horses and riding camels. Some will cross safely, some will be scratched but escape, and some will be thrown into the Fire. The last of them will be dragged across.”^[E55]

“By the One in whose hand is my soul, none of you pleads more insistently for a right than the believers will plead with Allah on the Day of Resurrection for their brothers in the Fire.”

Explanations

[E53] The words about Allah’s coming, the form in which He is known, and His shin are accepted as they appear in the authentic report. We accept them in a way that suits Allah, without comparing Him to creation, changing their meanings, denying them or asking how.

[E54] This scene shows the difference between sincere worship and worship done only to be seen and praised by people. The hypocrites try to prostrate but cannot.

[E55] People cross the bridge at different speeds according to their faith and deeds. Some pass safely. Some are injured but escape. Others fall into the Fire.

Translator’s notes

[T9] The bridge is commonly called the Sirat. The sa’dan is a thorny Arabian plant.

“They will say, ‘Our Lord, our brothers used to pray, fast and do good deeds with us.’^[E56] Allah will say, ‘Go, and bring out anyone in whose heart you find faith equal to the weight of a dinar.’^[T10] Allah will protect their bodies from the Fire. They will find some people covered by the Fire up to their feet and others up to the middle of their legs, and they will bring out those they recognise.”

“They will return, and Allah will say, ‘Go, and bring out anyone in whose heart you find faith equal to half a dinar.’ They will bring out those they recognise. They will return again, and He will say, ‘Go, and bring out anyone in whose heart you find even the weight of a tiny speck of faith.’ They will bring out those they recognise.”

Abu Sa’id then said, “If you do not believe me, read: ‘Allah does not wrong anyone even by the weight of a tiny speck. If there is a good deed, He multiplies it.’ [al-Nisa’ 4:40]”

40. Seeing Allah, crossing the bridge and intercession - continued

“The prophets, angels and believers will plead for others. Allah will then say, ‘My intercession remains.’ He will take a group from the Fire who have been burnt black and place them in a river at the gates of Paradise called the Water of Life.”

“They will grow along its banks like seeds carried by floodwater. You have seen such seeds beside rocks and trees. The side facing the sun is green and the side in the shade is white. They will come out looking like pearls, and marks will be placed on their necks.”

Explanations

[E56] True Muslim brotherhood continues to benefit believers in the Hereafter. The saved believers plead for people they knew through shared prayer, fasting and good deeds.

Translator’s notes

[T10] The dinar was a coin and a well-known measure of weight. Here it describes an amount of faith, not money carried in the heart.

“They will enter Paradise. The people of Paradise will say, ‘These are the people freed by the Most Merciful. He brought them into Paradise without any deed they had done or any good they had sent ahead.’ They will be told, ‘You have what you see, and the same again with it.’”^{[E57][T11][40]}

This completes the intended collection. Praise be to Allah, Lord of all worlds.

Explanations

[E57] The prophets, angels and believers intercede only with Allah’s permission. Allah then brings others out of the Fire by His own mercy. Those brought out of the Fire are made whole again before entering Paradise.

Translator’s notes

[T11] The main wording follows al-Bukhari. Additions from Muslim that were in brackets in the Arabic edition have been included in the English text. One passage comes from the related narration of Abu Hurayrah.

References

[40] Ahmad (11127). Al-Bukhari (7439). Muslim (183, report 302). Related narration: Ahmad (7717). Al-Bukhari (806). Muslim (182, report 299).