



The Merits and Virtues of

Mu'awiyah

ibn Abi Sufyan



Muhammad ibn Shams al-Din

Translated by Taim Otah Bashi



Introduction

Abu Bakr al-Marwadhi said: I said to Abu Abd Allah - meaning Ahmad ibn Hanbal - "Which of the two is better: Mu'awiyah or Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz?" He said: "Mu'awiyah is better. We do not compare anyone with the Companions of the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him."

The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said: "The best of people are my generation, those among whom I was sent."^[R1]

Many Muslims may not know much about this Companion. Their ignorance of his virtue may leave them vulnerable to the doubts of the Rafidah, the Ibadis, other opponents, and the Ahbash. So, by Allah's permission, we will learn about him through authentic reports.

^[R1] Reported by al-Khallal, no. 660.

"May Allah Not Fill His Stomach!"

Before that, I will answer those who harm Mu'awiyah by using the hadith of the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him: "May Allah not fill his stomach."

Is this declaring him an unbeliever? Is it criticism of his religion? Is it an accusation of hypocrisy? Is it an attack on his trustworthiness? Glory be to Allah - how they fabricate!

It was only said to the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, "He is eating," so he said, "May Allah not fill his stomach."

This is like his saying: "May your mother lose you, O Mu'adh! Is anything that throws people on their faces into the Fire except the harvest of their tongues?" The phrase "may your mother lose you" literally means that she loses you. It is phrased as a supplication against him, but its literal meaning is not intended.

He also said to a young servant girl, "May you not grow old," and she cried. He then said to her caretaker:

"Do you not know the condition I made with my Lord? I said: I am only a human being. I am pleased as human beings are pleased, and I become angry as human beings become angry. So any member of my Ummah whom I supplicate against with a supplication he does not deserve, make it for him a purification, a growth, and a means of nearness by which You bring him near to You on the Day of Resurrection."^[R2]

^[R2] Muslim, no. 2603 (95).

He said to Aishah: "Let him in, for he is your paternal uncle. May your right hand be dusty."^[R3] The expression "may your right hand be dusty" is a supplication for poverty, but its literal meaning was not intended.

He said to Safiyyah: "May you be barren; may your throat be cut."^[R4] This too is phrased as a supplication against her, while its literal meaning was not intended.

And when one of the Companions did not mount the camel, he said to him: "Ride it, woe to you."^[R5]

So the supplication against Mu'awiyah is of this kind.

^[R3] Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 4796.

^[R4] Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 6157.

^[R5] Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 6159.

If They Were Fair, They Would Mention Mu'awiyah's Virtues

Imam Harb ibn Isma'il said: "Among the clear, evident, established, and well-known Sunnah is to mention the good qualities of all the Companions of the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, all of them, and to refrain from mentioning their faults and the disputes that occurred between them."^[R6]

I benefited from what Shaykh Abdullah ibn Faysal al-Ahdal collected and added to it.^[R6a]

^[R6] Harb ibn Isma'il, al-Sunnah.

^[R6a] Shaykh Abdullah ibn Faysal al-Ahdal's compilation, with additions.

1. His Character in Disagreement

There was a well-known dispute between him and Ali.

Abu Muslim al-Khawlani and some people with him came to Mu'awiyah and said, "Are you disputing with Ali? Are you his equal?" Mu'awiyah said: "No, by Allah. I know that Ali is better than me and that he is more entitled to the matter than I am. But do you not know that Uthman was killed wrongfully and that I am his cousin? I am only seeking justice for Uthman's blood. Go to him and tell him to hand over to me the killers of Uthman, and I will submit to him." They went to Ali and spoke to him about it, but he did not hand them over to him.^[R7]

Imam Ahmad also reported in Fada'il al-Sahabah:

Qays ibn Abi Hazim said: "A man came to Mu'awiyah and asked him about an issue. Mu'awiyah said: Ask Ali ibn Abi Talib about it, for he knows better. The man said: Commander of the Believers, your answer about it is dearer to me than Ali's answer. Mu'awiyah said: How bad is what you have said! You have disliked a man whom the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, filled with knowledge abundantly. The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said to him: You are to me in the position of Harun to Musa, except that there is no prophet after me. Whenever something became difficult for Umar, he would take from Ali. I witnessed Umar when something became difficult for him, and he said: Ali is here; Ali is here."^[R8]

Al-Mughirah said: "When news of Ali ibn Abi Talib's death came to Mu'awiyah, he said: Indeed we belong to Allah and to Him we return. What they have lost of knowledge, goodness, virtue, and understanding! His wife said: Yesterday you were criticizing him to his face, and today you say, Indeed we belong to Allah, for him! He said: Woe to you. You do not know what we have lost of his knowledge, virtue, and precedence."^[R9]

^[R7] Ibn Asakir, Tarikh Dimashq, 59/132. The editors of Siyar al-Dhahabi said its narrators are trustworthy.

^[R8] Ahmad, Fada'il al-Sahabah, no. 1153.

^[R9] Ibn Abi al-Dunya, Maqtal Ali, no. 106.

2. His Love of Reconciliation and His Fear of Muslim Bloodshed

Al-Hasan al-Basri said: "By Allah, al-Hasan ibn Ali met Mu'awiyah with battalions like mountains. Amr ibn al-As said: I see battalions that will not turn away until they kill their equals. Mu'awiyah said to him: O Amr, if these kill those and those kill these, who will take care of the people's affairs for me? Who will take care of their women for me? Who will take care of their dependants? He sent two men to al-Hasan and said: Go to this man, offer him terms, speak to him, and ask him for peace. They went to him, spoke to him, and he made peace with Mu'awiyah."

Al-Hasan al-Basri then said: I heard Abu Bakrah say:

"I saw the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, on the minbar with al-Hasan ibn Ali beside him. He would turn once toward the people and once toward al-Hasan and say: This son of mine is a leader, and perhaps Allah will reconcile through him two great groups of Muslims."^[R10]

[R10] Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 2704.

3. He Was a Scribe of the Prophet, Peace and Blessings Be upon Him

Ibn Abbas, may Allah be pleased with them both, said: "The Muslims did not look toward Abu Sufyan or sit with him. He said to the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him: O Prophet of Allah, grant me three things. He said: Yes. Abu Sufyan said: I have the most beautiful and lovely woman among the Arabs, Umm Habibah daughter of Abu Sufyan; I will marry her to you. He said: Yes. He said: And make Mu'awiyah a scribe before you. He said: Yes. He said: And appoint me so that I fight the disbelievers as I used to fight the Muslims. He said: Yes."^[R11]

This appears to show that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, intended that Abu Sufyan and his son Mu'awiyah have a virtue among the Muslims.

^[R11] Sahih Muslim, no. 2501.

4. He Is Included among Allah's Chosen Servants

Abdullah ibn Hawalah, may Allah be pleased with him, said: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said: "The matter will come to the point that you become organized armies: an army in al-Sham, an army in Yemen, and an army in Iraq." Ibn Hawalah said: "Choose for me, Messenger of Allah, if I live to see that." He said: "Take al-Sham, for it is Allah's chosen land. He selects for it His chosen servants. If you refuse, then go to your Yemen and drink from your water basins, for Allah has guaranteed al-Sham and its people for me."^[R12]

Mu'awiyah was the ruler of al-Sham, and Abdullah ibn Hawalah died in al-Sham during Mu'awiyah's caliphate in the year 58 AH.

5. He Had the Honor of Trimming the Prophet's Hair during Hajj

Mu'awiyah, may Allah be pleased with him, said: "I trimmed the hair of the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, with an arrowhead."^[R13]

^[R12] Abu Dawud, no. 2485, and others; authenticated by al-Albani.

^[R13] Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 1730; Sahih Muslim, no. 1246.

6. Ibn Abbas, the Great Scholar of the Ummah, Praised His Fiqh

Ibn Abi Mulaykah said: "It was said to Ibn Abbas: What do you say about the Commander of the Believers Mu'awiyah? He prayed with only one rak'ah. He said: He was correct. He is a faqih."^[R14]

7. Ibn Umar Praised Him

Ibn Umar said: "I did not see anyone after the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, greater in leadership than Mu'awiyah." It was said: "Not even your father?" He said: "My father Umar, may Allah have mercy on him, was better than Mu'awiyah, but Mu'awiyah had greater leadership than he did."^[R15]

^[R14] Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 3765.

^[R15] Al-Khallal, no. 680, with a sound chain.

8. His Quick Compliance with the Prophet's Command and His Concern for His Subjects

Abu Maryam al-Azdi, may Allah be pleased with him, said: "I entered upon Mu'awiyah and he said: What a welcome visit, Abu so-and-so! - an expression used by the Arabs to ask what blessing brought someone to visit them. I said: I will tell you a hadith I heard. I heard the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, say: Whoever Allah places in charge of any affair of the Muslims and he hides himself from their needs, hardship, and poverty, Allah will hide Himself from his need, hardship, and poverty. Mu'awiyah then appointed a man to handle the needs of the people - to look into them and fulfill them."^[R16]

Mujahid reported from Ibn Abbas that he performed tawaf around the House with Mu'awiyah. Mu'awiyah began touching all of the corners. Ibn Abbas said to him: "Why do you touch these two corners when the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, did not touch them?" Mu'awiyah said: "Nothing of the House should be abandoned." Ibn Abbas said: "Indeed, in the Messenger of Allah you have an excellent example." Mu'awiyah said: "You have spoken the truth."^[R17]

^[R16] Abu Dawud, no. 2950; al-Tirmidhi, no. 1332, and others; authenticated by al-Albani.

^[R17] Ahmad, no. 1877; authenticated by the editors.

9. Mu'awiyah's Protective Concern for Muslim Women and His Forbidding Wrong

Humayd ibn Abd al-Rahman heard Mu'awiyah ibn Abi Sufyan, during the year he performed Hajj, speaking on the minbar. He took hold of a hairpiece and said: "People of Madinah, where are your scholars? I heard the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, forbid this kind of thing and say: The Children of Israel were destroyed only when their women adopted it."^[R18]

In another report, Sa'id ibn al-Musayyib said: "Mu'awiyah ibn Abi Sufyan came to Madinah on his final visit and addressed us. He brought out a bundle of hair and said: I did not think anyone other than the Jews did this. The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, called it falsehood" - meaning attaching extra hair to the hair, like what is now known as a wig.^[R19]

^[R18] Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 3468; Sahih Muslim, no. 2127.

^[R19] Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 3488.

10. He Accepted His Subjects' Objection and Praised the One Who Objected

Abu Qabil said: "Mu'awiyah addressed us on a Friday and said: The wealth is our wealth and the public revenue is ours. We give to whomever we wish and withhold from whomever we wish. No one answered him. On the second Friday he said the same thing, and no one answered him. On the third Friday he said the same thing. A man who was present in the mosque stood and said: No! The wealth is our wealth and the public revenue is ours. Whoever comes between us and it, we will judge between us and him with our swords."

"After Mu'awiyah prayed, he ordered that the man be brought in. He seated him with himself on the couch, then allowed the people to enter. He said: People, I spoke on the first Friday and no one answered me. On the second, no one answered me. On the third, this man brought me to life - may Allah bring him to life. I heard the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, say: There will come people who speak and no one answers them; they will plunge into the Fire like monkeys plunge. I feared that Allah might make me one of them. When this man answered me, he brought me to life - may Allah bring him to life - and I hope that Allah will not make me one of them."^[R20]

^[R20] Abu Ya'la, no. 7382. The editor Husayn Salim Asad said its chain is sound.

11. Mu'awiyah Referred Matters to the Senior Companions and Did Not Insist on His Own Opinion

Zayd ibn Wahb said: "I passed by al-Rabadhah and found Abu Dharr, may Allah be pleased with him. I asked him: What brought you to this place? He said: I was in al-Sham and Mu'awiyah and I differed over the verse: Those who hoard gold and silver and do not spend it in the way of Allah. Mu'awiyah said: It was revealed about the People of the Book. I said: It was revealed about us and about them. There was a disagreement between us over that, so he wrote to Uthman, may Allah be pleased with him, complaining about me. Uthman wrote to me telling me to come to Madinah. I came, and people crowded around me until it was as though they had not seen me before. I mentioned this to Uthman. He said to me: If you wish, withdraw and stay nearby. That is why I settled in this place. Even if they put an Abyssinian over me, I would listen and obey."^[R21]

The point is that when Mu'awiyah differed with Abu Dharr, he did not force him to remain silent even though he was the ruler. Instead, he referred the matter to Uthman.

^[R21] Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 1406.

12. His Maintaining Ties with the Mothers of the Believers

Mu'awiyah wrote to Aishah, Mother of the Believers: "Write me a letter advising me, and do not make it long." Aishah wrote to Mu'awiyah: "Peace be upon you. To proceed: I heard the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, say: Whoever seeks Allah's pleasure through the displeasure of the people, Allah will suffice him against the people. Whoever seeks the people's pleasure through Allah's displeasure, Allah will leave him to the people. Peace be upon you."^[R22]

Urwah reported that Mu'awiyah ibn Abi Sufyan sent Aishah, may Allah be pleased with her, one hundred thousand.^[R23]

13. His Encouragement of Gatherings of Remembrance, Following the Prophet

Abu Sa'id al-Khudri said: "Mu'awiyah came out to a circle in the mosque and said: What made you sit here? They said: We sat to remember Allah. He said: By Allah, nothing else made you sit? They said: By Allah, nothing else made us sit. He said: I did not make you swear because I suspected you. The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, came out to a circle of his Companions and said: What made you sit? They said: We sat to remember Allah and praise Him for guiding us to Islam. He said: By Allah, nothing else made you sit? They said: By Allah, nothing else made us sit. He said: I did not make you swear because I suspected you, but Jibril came to me and told me that Allah, Mighty and Majestic, boasts of you before the angels."^[R24]

^[R22] Al-Tirmidhi, no. 2414; authenticated by al-Albani.

^[R23] Al-Hakim, no. 6745; al-Dhahabi authenticated it in Siyar A'lam al-Nubala', 2/186.

^[R24] Sahih Muslim, no. 2701.

14. Mu'awiyah Commanded What Is Right and Was Keen upon the Sunnah

Umar ibn Ata reported that Nafi' ibn Jubayr sent him to al-Sa'ib to ask him about something Mu'awiyah had seen him do in prayer. He said: "Yes. I prayed Friday with him. When the imam gave salam, I stood in my place and prayed. When Mu'awiyah went inside, he sent for me and said: Do not do again what you did. When you pray Friday, do not join it immediately to another prayer until you speak or leave, for the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, commanded us not to connect one prayer to another until we speak or leave."^[R25]

On another occasion he said: "You are praying a prayer which, when we accompanied the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, we never saw him pray, and he forbade those two rak'ahs" - meaning the two rak'ahs after Asr.^[R26]

Humayd ibn Abd al-Rahman also heard Mu'awiyah ibn Abi Sufyan, may Allah be pleased with them both, on the Day of Ashura during the year he performed Hajj, speaking on the minbar: "People of Madinah, where are your scholars? I heard the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, say: This is the Day of Ashura. Its fast has not been prescribed for you, and I am fasting. Whoever wishes may fast, and whoever wishes may break the fast."^[R27]

Mu'awiyah, may Allah be pleased with him, paid attention to these matters of fiqh and taught them to the people.

^[R25] Sahih Muslim, no. 883.

^[R26] Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 587.

^[R27] Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 2003; Sahih Muslim, no. 1129.

15. He Did Not Carry Resentment or Hatred toward Those Who Wronged Him

Wa'il ibn Hujr was a leader among his people. It is reported that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, gave him some land and sent Mu'awiyah with him to show him its boundaries.

Mu'awiyah said to him: "Let me ride behind you" - meaning, let me ride on the camel behind you. Wa'il said: "Who are you that you should ride behind kings?" Mu'awiyah said: "Give me your sandal so I can wear it." Wa'il said: "Walk in the camel's shade" - meaning, it is enough for you to walk in the camel's shade.

Wa'il ibn Hujr said: "When Mu'awiyah later became caliph, I came to him. He seated me with him on the throne and reminded me of the story. I said to myself: I wish I had carried him myself."^[R28]

16. His Generosity

Marwan sent his son Abd al-Malik to Mu'awiyah. He entered upon him and said: "We have property beside your property at such-and-such a place in the Hijaz. Our property cannot be put right except with yours, and yours cannot be put right except with ours. Either leave us your property so we can improve ours with it, or we will leave you our property so you can improve yours with it." Mu'awiyah said to him: "Son of Marwan, I am not deceived by a small amount, and giving up a large amount is not too great for me. I have left our property to you, so improve your property with it."^[R29]

^[R28] Ahmad, no. 27239, and others; the editors graded it hasan, and Ibn Hibban reported it in his Sahih.

^[R29] Reported by Ibn Abi al-Dunya with a good chain.

17. Prophetic Glad Tidings for Him

In the hadith of Umm Haram, she heard the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, say: "The first army of my Ummah to campaign by sea has earned Paradise."^[R30]

Al-Firyabi said: "The first person to lead a sea campaign was Mu'awiyah during the time of Uthman ibn Affan, may Allah have mercy on them both."^[R31]

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said: "O Allah, teach Mu'awiyah the Book and calculation, and protect him from the punishment."^[R32]

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said concerning Mu'awiyah: "O Allah, make him guided and a guide, and guide others through him."^[R33]

^[R30] Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 2924.

^[R31] Al-Ajurri, al-Shari'ah, 5/2441.

^[R32] Ibn Khuzaymah, no. 1938, and Ibn Hibban, no. 3544, in their Sahih collections. Its chain contains al-Harith ibn Ziyad, for whom no explicit declaration of reliability is mentioned; according to the criteria of those two works, it is sound.

^[R33] Al-Tirmidhi, no. 3842; Ibn Hibban, no. 3535; authenticated by al-Albani.

18. His Forgiveness, Good Manners, and Not Abusing His Authority

Al-Miswar ibn Makhramah had spoken critically about Mu'awiyah. One day al-Miswar entered upon him. Mu'awiyah said to him:

"I have been told that you criticize me. What is it that you hold against me? Do you not know that I fight the enemy of the Muslims, collect their public revenue, attend to their affairs, and receive their delegations?" Al-Miswar said: "Indeed, yes." Mu'awiyah said: "I ask you by Allah: do you sin?" He said: "Yes." Mu'awiyah said: "Then what makes you more entitled to hope for forgiveness than I am?" Al-Miswar said: "May Allah forgive you, Commander of the Believers."^[R34]

Abd al-Razzaq added that Mu'awiyah said: "I am upon a religion in which Allah accepts good deeds and pardons bad deeds. By Allah, whenever I had to choose between Allah and anyone else, I chose Allah above everything else." Al-Miswar said: "I thought about what he said to me and found that he had established the argument against me." After that, whenever al-Miswar mentioned Mu'awiyah, he prayed for good for him.

^[R34] Al-Baladhuri, al-Ansab, no. 132; Abd al-Razzaq, no. 21794, with a sound chain.

May Allah have mercy on him and be pleased with him.

Muhammad ibn Shams al-Din