

The Prophet (p) Prayed over Abdullah Bin Ubayy Bin Salul

It was reported that when the arch-opponent of the Prophet (p) and “leader of the hypocrites” in Medina, Abdullah bin Ubayy, was dying, he sent his son to the Prophet (p) with the request that the Prophet (p) should give him his shirt, so that he might be buried in it, and that the Prophet (p) should pray over him after his death. The Prophet (p) took this request as a sign of Ibn Salul’s repentance, and gave him his shirt and later led the funeral prayers over his body.

When 'Umar bin al-Khattab vehemently protested against this clemency of the Messenger (p) towards the man whom all the believers had regarded as "God's enemy", the Prophet (p) answered, *"God has granted me a choice in this matter (a reference to Qur'an 9:80 below), and so I shall pray [for him] more than seventy times."*¹

Supporting Text

"Ask forgiveness for them, [O Muhammad], or do not ask forgiveness for them. If you should ask forgiveness for them seventy times - never will Allah forgive them. That is because they disbelieved in Allah and His Messenger, and Allah does not guide the defiantly disobedient people." (Qur'an 9:80)

Comments

Muhammad Asad in his commentary on the verse above said, *"Since Abdullah bin Ubayy died sometime after the Prophet's return from Tabuk, while verse 84 - like most of this surah - was revealed during the campaign, it is clear that the prohibition expressed in this verse relates only (as the sequence shows) to those who "were bent on denying God and His Apostle, and [who] died in this their iniquity" - that is, to unrepentant sinners."*²

¹Several variants of this Tradition are to be found in Bukhari, Tirmidhi, Nasa'i, Ibn Hanbal, on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas; Bukhari and Muslim, on the authority of Ibn 'Umar; Muslim, on the authority of Jabir ibn 'Abd Allah; and in various other hadith compilations.

² Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an*, The Book Foundation, England, 2003, p.309, n.116 to Qur'an 9:84.

The Prophet (p) therefore regarded Ibn Salul's request as a sign of his repentance and therefore did not count him among those unrepentant hypocrites that the verse prohibits the Prophet (p) from praying for.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. From the narrations in this section (Theme 5) and some other sections, it appears to have been the Prophet's way to lean more towards forgiveness, tolerance, controlling anger, etc. Even when the behaviour of someone clearly angered or bothered him, he controlled himself. *What benefits arose from this Sunnah? What objectives was he trying to accomplish?* Carefully consider the various narratives.
2. In what circumstances (consider current and past events; consider trends/events in your local community or national/global contexts) would Muslims benefit from following the Sunnah of forbearance exemplified by the Prophet (p) in this theme?