8034 - The meaning of “The bonds of Islam will be undone one by one”

the question

The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said, “The bonds of Islam will be undone one by one. Each time one bond is undone, the people will move to the next one (and adhere to that). The first bond to be undone will be ruling (al-hukm) and the last one will be prayer (al-salaah).” What does this hadeeth mean? And what is meant by the undoing of ruling (al-hukm)?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The hadeeth mentioned was narrated by Imaam Ahmad in his Musnad, al-Tabaraani in al-Mu’jam al-Kabeer, and Ibn Hibbaan in his Saheeh, with a jayyid isnaad from Abu Umaamah al-Baahili (may Allaah be pleased with him) from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), who said:

“The bonds of Islam will be undone one by one. Each time one bond is undone, the people will move to the next one (and adhere to that). The first bond to be undone will be ruling (al-hukm) and the last one will be prayer (al-salaah).”

The meaning of this hadeeth is apparent, which is that the more Islam becomes “strange”, the more people will go against its teachings and will undo its bonds, which is a reference to its obligations and commandments. As the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Islam began as a stranger and will go back to being a stranger as it started, so give glad tidings to the strangers.” (Narrated by Muslim in his Saheeh).

The meaning of the phrase “the first bond to be undone will be ruling (al-hukm)” is apparent; it refers to the failure to rule according to the sharee’ah of Allaah. This is what is happening today in most of the so-called Muslim countries. It is known that what is obligatory upon all is to rule according to the sharee’ah of Allaah in all things, and to beware of ruling according to laws and

customs which go against the sharee’ah, because Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“But no, by your Lord, they can have no Faith, until they make you (O Muhammad) judge in all disputes between them, and find in themselves no resistance against your decisions, and accept (them) with full submission [al-Nisaa’ 4:65]

“And so judge (you O Muhammad) among them by what Allaah has revealed and follow not their vain desires, but beware of them lest they turn you (O Muhammad) far away from some of that which Allaah has sent down to you. And if they turn away, then know that Allaah’s Will is to punish them for some sins of theirs. And truly, most of men are Faasiqoon (rebellious and disobedient to Allaah).

Do they then seek the judgement of (the days of) Ignorance? And who is better in judgement than Allaah for a people who have firm Faith [al-Maa’idah 5:49-50]

“And whosoever does not judge by what Allaah has revealed, such are the Kaafiroon (i.e. disbelievers — of a lesser degree as they do not act on Allaah’s Laws [al-Maa’idah 5:44]

“And whosoever does not judge by that which Allaah has revealed, such are the Zaalimoon (polytheists and wrongdoers — of a lesser degree). [al-Maa’idah 5:45]

“And whosoever does not judge by what Allaah has revealed (then) such (people) are the Faasiqoon [the rebellious i.e. disobedient (of a lesser degree)] to Allaah [al-Maa’idah 5:47]

The scholars (may Allaah have mercy on them) explained that the rulers of the Muslims are obliged to rule according to the sharee’ah of Allaah in all the Muslims’ affairs and in all the conflicts that arise among them, in obedience to these verses. They explained that the one who rules by anything other than that which Allaah revealed, if he believes that it is permissible for him to do so, is guilty of major kufr which puts him beyond the pale of Islam… But if he believes that this is not permissible, but he rules by something other than that which Allaah revealed for a bribe or for some other purpose, although he believed that that is not permissible, and that it is obligatory to rule according to that which Allaah revealed, then he is guilty of lesser kufr, lesser

zulm and lesser fisq.

We ask Allaah, may He be glorified, to make all the Muslim rulers rule and judge according to the sharee'ah and to make their people adhere to it, and to cause them to beware of whatever goes against it, for He is the Most Generous, Most Kind. Undoubtedly ruling according to sharee'ah and acting in accordance with it is in our best interests in this world and in the Hereafter, and will be a source of pride in this world and in the Hereafter. It will keep us safe from the plots of our enemies and help us to be victorious over them, as Allaah says (interpretation of the meanings):

"O you who believe! If you help (in the cause of) Allaah, He will help you, and make your foothold firm" [Muhammad 47:7]

"and (as for) the believers, it was incumbent upon Us to help (them)" [al-Room 30:47]

"Verily, Allaah will help those who help His (Cause). Truly, Allaah is All-Strong, All-Mighty.

Those (Muslim rulers) who, if We give them power in the land, (they) enjoin Iqaamat-as-Salaah [i.e. to perform the five compulsory congregational Salaah (prayers) (the males in mosques)], to pay the Zakaah and they enjoin Al-Ma'roof (i.e. Islamic Monotheism and all that Islam orders one to do), and forbid Al-Munkar (i.e. disbelief, polytheism and all that Islam has forbidden) [i.e. they make the Qur'aan as the law of their country in all the spheres of life]. And with Allaah rests the end of (all) matters (of creatures) [al-Hajj 22:40-41]

"Verily, We will indeed make victorious Our Messengers and those who believe (in the Oneness of Allaah Islamic Monotheism) in this world's life and on the Day when the witnesses will stand forth, (i.e. Day of Resurrection)

The Day when their excuses will be of no profit to Zaalimoon (polytheists, wrongdoers and disbelievers in the Oneness of Allaah). Theirs will be the curse, and theirs will be the evil abode (i.e. painful torment in Hell-fire)" [Ghaafir 40:51-52]

And there are many similar aayaat.

With regard to the words of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), “and the last one will be prayer (al-salaah)”, this refers to large numbers of people who do not pray and who are negligent with regard to salaah. This is what is happening today in many Muslim countries. We ask Allaah to put the Muslims’ affairs right and to help them to adhere strongly to His religion and to be steadfast.