

Holy Prophet Muhammad — Success did not change him

Friday Khutba by Dr Zahid Aziz, for Lahore Ahmadiyya UK, 11 September 2020

وَالصُّحَىٰ ۖ وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا سَجَىٰ ۗ مَا وَدَّعَكَ رَبُّكَ وَمَا قَلَىٰ ۗ ﴿٩٣﴾ وَلَا حِزَّةٌ خَيْرٌ لَّكَ مِنَ الْأُولَىٰ ۗ ﴿٩٤﴾ وَلَسَوْفَ
يُعْطِيكَ رَبُّكَ فَتَرْضَىٰ ۗ ﴿٩٥﴾ أَلَمْ يَجِدْكَ يَتِيمًا فَآوَىٰ ۖ وَوَجَدَكَ ضَالًّا فَهَدَىٰ ۖ ﴿٩٦﴾ وَوَجَدَكَ عَائِلًا فَأَغْنَىٰ ۗ ﴿٩٧﴾
فَأَمَّا الْيَتِيمَ فَلَا تَقْهَرْ ۗ ﴿٩٨﴾ وَأَمَّا السَّائِلَ فَلَا تَنْهَرْ ۗ ﴿٩٩﴾ وَأَمَّا بِنِعْمَةِ رَبِّكَ فَحَدِّثْ ۗ ﴿١٠٠﴾

“By the brightness of the day! And the night when it is still! —Your Lord has not forsaken you, nor is He displeased. And surely the later state is better for you than the earlier. And soon will your Lord give you so that you will be well pleased. Did He not find you an orphan and give (you) shelter? And find you groping, so He showed the way? And find you in want, so He enriched you? Therefore the orphan, do not oppress. And him who asks, do not rebuke. And the favour of your Lord, do proclaim.” (ch. 93)

This is a complete chapter, revealed to the Holy Prophet very near to the start of his mission. It informs him that he will pass through difficult circumstances which would make it look as if God has forsaken him or is displeased with him, but his later condition would be better than this earlier condition. His Lord would grant him things which will make him happy. In other words, his mission will be successful and he will achieve his aims. It reminds him that God has already helped him out of his state of orphanhood, of trying to find the right path, and of lacking resources. At the time when this chapter was revealed, this had happened only partially. It is a prophecy that his emergence from the state of helplessness, both material and spiritual, will in the end be as apparent and clear as the brightness of the day.

In the last three verses the Holy Prophet is told that, after emerging from that state, he must remember his earlier state and show care and concern for those still languishing in the conditions that he was in. And he must proclaim that the success he

attained, and the position he acquired, is a favour of his Lord. He must never forget his condition in the beginning.

In accordance with this prophecy, the Holy Prophet, at the end of his life, reached the peak of his triumph: he was the furthest from being an orphan without shelter, he had obtained all the guidance that he required by means of revelation, and he had wealth and resources at his feet. The question is: Did the Holy Prophet change in character and behaviour as a result of his success and acquisition of leadership and power?

In 1874, a scholar, author and school master at the famous Harrow public school, Reginald Bosworth Smith, delivered four lectures on Islam in London at the Royal Institution. These were published in the same year as a book under the title *Mohammed and Mohammedanism*. In one of these lectures he draws this conclusion:

“On the whole the wonder is to me not how much, but how little, under different circumstances, Mohammed differed from himself. In the shepherd of the desert, in the Syrian trader, in the solitary of Mount Hira, in the reformer in the minority of one, in the exile of Medina, in the acknowledged conqueror, in the equal of the Persian Chosroes and the Greek Heraclius, we can still trace a substantial unity. I doubt whether any other man, whose external conditions changed so much, ever himself changed less to meet them: the accidents are changed, the essence seems to me to be the same in all.

Power, as the saying is, no doubt put the man to the test. It brought new temptations and therefore new failures, from which the shepherd of the desert might have remained free. But happy is the man who ... can stand the test as well as did Mohammed.” (p. 93–94)

This is just what we find when we look at the Holy Prophet’s life after he had become the leader of a community and state at Madinah. In his private life and way of living, there was no change in its utter simplicity. It is related in two separate reports in Bukhari, one by the Companion Abu Hurairah (hadith 5374) and one by the Holy

Prophet's wife Aishah (hadith 5416) (may God be pleased with them), that after settling in Madinah the Holy Prophet and the people of his household never got to eat fully for more than three days continuously throughout the rest of his life. In his appearance before other people and in his dealings with them, there was no change. Once Hazrat Umar presented the Holy Prophet with a silken garment and said that he could wear it when delegations come to visit him and also on Eid days. But the Holy Prophet replied that those men wear such clothes who have no share in the hereafter. When he sat with his Companions he was indistinguishable from them and had no special seat. Once, in the year after the conquest of Makkah, a man representing a tribe from another place came to see the Holy Prophet in his mosque to confirm what are the pillars of Islam. He had to ask the people in the mosque, "Which one of you is Muhammad?", because there was no special seat or position to distinguish him from the others. When people pointed him out, the man said: "I am going to ask you some questions and I am going to be hard on you in asking them, so be not offended with me." He (the Holy Prophet) said: "Ask whatever occurs to you." (Bukhari, hadith 63).

Once in a graveyard he saw a woman wailing by a graveside. He said to her: "Fear Allah and be patient." She did not recognise him and said to him: "Go away, for you have not been struck by a calamity like mine." The Holy Prophet quietly went away, not telling her: Do you know who you are talking to? Later she found out that it was the Holy Prophet, so she went to his house to apologise. The report says: "she did not find any guard at his door" (Bukhari, hadith 1283).

It is alleged that the reason why the Holy Prophet married several women after moving to Madinah was that he was now the head of state and in a position to marry many women to satisfy his carnal desires. It was a time when Muslims were becoming prosperous and successful in material life. However, his revelation in those days directed him to say to his wives: "If you desire this world's life and its adornment, then I will give you a provision of those and allow you to depart cordially, and if you desire Allah and His Messenger and the Hereafter, there is a great reward for the doers of good among you" (33:29). He wanted his wives to live the same simple life that he

led. So it was not only that he himself did not change after acquiring worldly power, resources and rule, he set an example to his wives as well.

In terms of courage and reliance on Allah, not reliance on worldly resources, he did not change in the least. Near the end of his life the eastern Roman empire was threatening to attack Arabia. So the Holy Prophet was raising an army to go on what is called the Tabuk expedition to the northern border of Arabia. Many Muslims were reluctant to make the necessary personal sacrifice for this expedition. The following was revealed to him in this connection: “If you do not help him, Allah certainly helped him when those who disbelieved expelled him — he being the second of the two; when they were both in the cave, when he said to his companion: Do not grieve, surely Allah is with us. So Allah sent down His tranquillity on him and strengthened him with forces which you did not see” (9:40). His followers are here told that if they do not help the Prophet, still Allah will help him as He did when he was fleeing from Makkah to Madinah with just one helper with him, being pursued by their murderous enemies. He did not cease to rely on Allah because he now had a great number of followers and possessions and resources. He considered himself to be in the same position now as he was when he was a solitary refugee. This shows that his aim and purpose was never to make worldly gains because he doesn't think that they matter at all or that without them he has nothing.

If an imposter or pretender had succeeded in the way that the Holy Prophet did, he would be desperately worried about losing his power and rule, because he would know that his pretence and deception worked once but would not work again.

The Quran itself tells us about how to handle success and victory in ch. 110, *The Victory*. The Holy Prophet is addressed as follows:

“When Allah's help and victory comes, and you see people entering the religion of Allah in companies, celebrate the praise of your Lord and ask His protection. Surely He is ever Returning (to mercy).”

In other words, instead of being jubilant and out of control with joy and regarding yourself as supreme, you must give praise to Allah for your success and ask for His protection against being misled by that success, and turn to Him for mercy.

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