



Hadith 16: The Forbiddance of Anger

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عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ أَنَّ رَجُلًا قَالَ لِلنَّبِيِّ
صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَوْصِنِي، قَالَ: لَا تَغْضَبْ. فَرَدَّدَ
مِرَارًا؛ قَالَ: لَا تَغْضَبْ - رَوَاهُ الْبُخَارِيُّ.

On the authority of Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him):

“A man said to the Prophet, ‘Give me advice.’ The Prophet, peace be upon him, said, ‘Do not get angry.’ The man asked repeatedly and the Prophet answered each time, ‘Do not get angry.’”

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Commentary Summary

Written commentary compiled by volunteers utilizing Sh. Jamaal Diwan's audio commentary above and English translation of Ibn Daqiq Al-Id's commentary on The Forty Hadith of Imam al-Nawawi.

The Significance of this Hadith

Prophet Muhammad (sas) knew that if a person controlled his anger he would be able to control everything else. That is why the Prophet mentioned in another hadith: "The powerful man is not the one who can wrestle, but the powerful man is the one who can control himself at the time of anger." Controlling anger can be an indicator of the strength of one's personality.

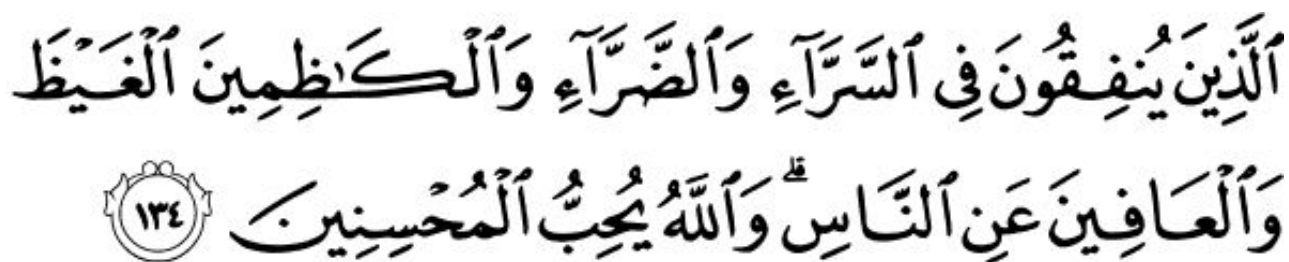
Background on the Hadith

This man recognized not only that the Prophet (sas) was the messenger of Allah, but that he was the best person to seek advice from. This shows you that the people used to come to the Prophet (sas) whenever they needed advice, even in personal issues. This time the Prophet's advice to this man was, "Don't get angry."

Some scholars say that the Prophet knew that this man specifically had a problem in controlling anger, hence this advice. However, this view may lead to narrowing the benefit of the hadith to just one individual. Because almost everyone struggles with anger at some time or another in their lives, this comprehensive and far-reaching advice should be applied to everyone.

Anger in the Quran and Hadith

Allah mentions as one of the qualities of the Muttaqeen, the God-conscious, that they control their anger:



“Those who spend (in Allah’s cause) in prosperity and in adversity, who repress their anger, and who pardon men, verily, Allah loves the al-Muhsinun (the good-doers).” (3:134)

“Don’t become angry” doesn’t mean that it is impermissible to have any sort of anger, because that would be outside human ability. There is a rule in Usul al-fiqh which states that it is not permissible for someone to be held accountable for that which he can’t control. Anger is part of human nature. The real question is, what is the permissible level of anger? How can we handle that anger when we do become angry?

When the Prophet (sas) insisted on not getting angry, he implied that controlling one’s anger is a comprehensive act. Anger opens the door to all bad qualities and staying away from it opens the door to all good qualities. One of the Prophet’s companions said, “Anger is the key to all evil.”

Anger Management Based on the Sunnah

There are different strategies for handling anger, depending on the person and situation. If a person gets angry, then he or she should exercise muhasabah (holding the self accountable) for the mistakes committed, what led to them, and how to overcome them in the future. Examining the self and holding ourselves accountable is important training and a source of discipline and self-improvement. In various hadiths, the Prophet (sas) teaches us methods to help with anger:

- Seeking refuge in Allah: The Prophet (sas) said, "I know a word, the saying of which will cause him to relax, if he does say it. If he says: 'I seek Refuge with Allah from Satan' then all his anger will go away." When we seek refuge in Allah, we should say the words with understanding and reflection, not simply recite the words.
- Changing your posture: The Prophet of Allah said, "When one of you becomes angry while standing, he should sit down. If the anger leaves him, well and good; otherwise he should lie down."
- Keeping quiet: The Prophet (sas) said, “If one of you becomes angry then he should stay silent.” This is an important practice because when we are angry our actions and speech may be disproportionate and unjust.
- Wudu can also be a shield against anger. The Prophet (sas) said, “Anger comes from the devil, the devil was created from fire, and fire is extinguished only with water. So when one of you becomes angry, he should make wudu.”

Praiseworthy Anger

Sometimes anger can be good. The Prophet never got angry except when the commandments of Allah

were violated. However, if we do feel anger for the sake of Allah, we should make sure that we are not actually getting angry for our own ego or interests. We should express the anger in the right way; just because the anger is for the right cause does not give anyone license to behave badly. There should also be some benefit in the anger. If expressing the anger leads to more harm than benefit, then it should be avoided based on the principle of weighing benefit and harm. For example, when giving advice: say it in a good way, use good words and the best manners, and be careful not to escalate into a quarrel.

Harmful Effects of Getting Angry

There are many harmful effects of getting angry. These effects can harm us physically, psychologically, socially or emotionally. It is well known today that anger causes many health problems and can be a symptom or cause of mental illness, especially if not controlled. There are wisdoms behind shariah injunctions, and improving overall well being is one of the many benefits of controlling anger.