



## Hadith 18: Follow Up a Bad Deed with a Good Deed

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عَنْ أَبِي ذَرٍّ جُنْدُبِ بْنِ جُنَادَةَ وَأَبِي عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ مُعَاذِ  
 بْنِ جَبَلٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ  
 وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: اتَّقِ اللَّهَ حَيْثُمَا كُنْتَ وَأَتَّبِعِ السَّيِّئَةَ الْحَسَنَةَ  
 تَمْحُهَا وَخَالِقِ النَّاسَ بِخُلُقٍ حَسَنٍ. رَوَاهُ التِّرْمِذِيُّ،  
 وَقَالَ: حَدِيثٌ حَسَنٌ. وَفِي بَعْضِ النُّسخِ حَسَنٌ  
 صَحِيحٌ.

On the authority of Abu Dharr Jundub ibn Junadah, and Abu 'Abd-ir-Rahman Mu'adh bin Jabal (may Allah be pleased with them) that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) said:

**"Be conscious of Allah wherever you are. Follow the bad deed with a good one to erase it, and engage others with beautiful character."**

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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.*

In this hadith, the Prophet (sas) teaches us that we must have God-consciousness in every possible scenario: "wherever you may be." Whether you are alone, in public, in a position of leadership, weakness, or strength, you should be aware and fearful that Allah is watching. This consciousness, keen awareness, and fearfulness of God at every time and in every place is called taqwa.

### Visualizing Taqwa

Some of the companions explained the concept of taqwa as the following: "If you were to walk through a thorny patch wearing long clothing, how would you walk through that patch?" Someone answered that they would gather their clothes together and step over the thorns to avoid tearing their clothing; such is taqwa. This level of consciousness of Allah, knowing that He is watching us and having this awareness of Him in every moment is something that we should seek to instill in all aspects of our life.

There is a story about a teacher who preferred a student over the rest. The students would ask why and he would answer, "You'll understand." He did an experiment where he gave all of his students food and told them to go somewhere where no one could see them and eat it. They all went to different places and ate the treat, except for the one student. He was asked why he did not eat, and he answered, "You told us to go eat somewhere where we cannot be seen, and there is no where I can go where Allah will not see me. So, I didn't eat." The Sheikh told the students, "This is why I prefer him over the rest of you." This awareness of Allah's presence is an example of taqwa.

It may not be easy to build and deepen taqwa within ourselves, so we should actively call upon Allah (swt) for help. Imam Ash-Shafi said, "Three things are very difficult: to be generous when you have little, to be fearful of Allah when you are alone, and to say the truth in front of someone whom you fear or hope for their good opinion." The Prophet (sas) used to make dua saying, "Oh Allah, I ask of You to bestow upon me taqwa." He also used to say, "I ask you that I fear You at times when I am seen and the times when I am not seen (by people)." We can learn from this sunnah of the Prophet (sas) to make dua that Allah inspires us and blesses us with taqwa.

## A Follow-up to Bad Deeds

This part of the hadith is proactive, an aspect that many Muslims don't practice. Our understanding of sin should be mobilizing, not debilitating. Too often, we respond to a sin by putting ourselves in a figurative corner and abusing ourselves psychologically until we get over that sin. This is not what Allah wants from us. Yes, we should feel guilty and have a level of regret, but it should not stop us from moving forward in good deeds. People use their sins as an excuse to stay behind, but do not stop yourself from all the other good that you could be involved in.

The response to a sin should not be to wait, but rather to race to do something good so the sin can be erased. Our attitude should be proactive and positive. We should always have hope that Allah can, and will, have mercy on us as long as we keep struggling and pushing forward.

## Good Manners

When you practice the hadith's first two components of God-consciousness and following the bad deed with a good one, you will end up with the third component of good character. Good character is a true test of religiosity. Many times, people are outwardly religious, but their manners are terrible. They engage in religious matters with enthusiasm, but when it comes to business, they mistreat their employees. It is not just about what is legal; that is not what our standard of goodness is. The Prophet (sas) was sent and confirmed by Allah to have a very high level of morals and to be very strict in his ethics. We have to hold ourselves to the highest ethical standards and be morally rigorous, because it is part of what it means to bear witness to the world around us and carry the message of Islam. The Prophet (sas) was asked, "What will enter the greatest amount of people into Paradise?" His response was, "Taqwa of Allah and dealing with people in a nice and beautiful way."

In another hadith narrated by Bukhari, the Prophet (sas) said the one who has good manners may attain the same level of merit as those who fast and pray frequently. When you stand in the night and you fast during the long days, you're struggling with yourself against yourself. But when you strive to have good manners, you are struggling with yourself while amongst others. It is a higher level of interaction, and it can actually be more difficult than praying in the night and fasting during the day.