

MIFTAAH SEMINAR

FAMILIES AROUND THE PROPHET SAW



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SESSION 5

The Life of Abdullah ibn al-Abbas

- Ibn Abbas liked knowledge since he was very young. He devoted himself to it, gave care to understanding it, memorization and study.
- Once he grew up, he became the most knowledgeable about the Tafseer of the Quran, and the rulings of the purified Sunnah.
- People came to him from everywhere, to learn the rulings of religion at his hands.
- According to Ibn Abbas, these attributes are what makes a person a scholar:
 - Not relying on people
 - To travel
 - Having patience like a donkey
 - Rising early like a crow
- He was only 13 years old when the Prophet SAW passed away but he continued to collect and learn the Prophet's teachings from the companions and would consult, confirm and verify narrations with them.
- Whenever he heard that someone knew a hadith of the Prophet SAW which he did not know, he would go quickly to him and record it.

- A hadith attributed to Ibn Abbas reports:
 - ...I went to him during the time of the afternoon siesta and spread my cloak in front of his door. The wind blew dust on me (as I sat waiting for him). If I wished I could have sought his permission to enter and he would certainly have given me permission. But I preferred to wait on him so that he could be completely refreshed. Coming out of his house and seeing me in that condition he said, 'O cousin of the Prophet! What's the matter with you? If you had sent for me I would have come to you.' 'I am the one who should come to you, for knowledge is sought, it does not just come,' I said. I asked him about the hadith and learnt from him.
- Ibn Abbas also taught people. His house became the equivalent of a university, where he taught. One of his companions described a typical scene in front of his house:
 - I saw people converging on the roads leading to his house until there was hardly any room in front of his house. I went in and told him about the crowds of people at his door and he said: 'Get me water for wudu.'
 - He performed wudu and, seating himself, said: 'Go out and say to them: Whoever wants to ask about the Qur'an and its letters (pronunciation) let him enter.'
 - This I did and people entered until the house was filled. Whatever he was asked, Abdullah was able to elucidate and even provide additional information to what was asked. Then (to his students) he said: 'Make way for your brothers.'
 - Then to me he said: 'Go out and say: Who wants to ask about the Quran and its interpretation, let him enter'.
 - Again the house was filled and Abdullah elucidated and provided more information than what was requested.

- He held classes on many subjects and issues such as tafsir, fiqh, halal and haram, poetry, Arab history before Islam, inheritance laws, Arabic language and more. He would answer everyone's questions and sometimes he would answer more than what they asked.
- Umar ibn al-Khattab had a special love for Ibn Abbas. During his reign as Khalifa he gave Ibn Abbas a close seat to him in his assemblies.
- Umar often sought his advice on important matters of state from him and described him as "the young man of maturity".
- Umar used to summon him to his court to discuss difficult problems in the presence of veterans of Badr from among the Muhajirin and Ansar.
- A hadith attributed to Ibn Abbas describes:

قَالَ كَانَ عُمَرُ يُدْخِلُنِي مَعَ أَشْيَاخِ بَدْرٍ، فَكَأَنَّ بَعْضَهُمْ وَجَدَ فِي نَفْسِهِ فَقَالَ لِمَ تَدْخُلُ هَذَا مَعَنَا وَلَنَا أَبْنَاءٌ مِثْلُهُ فَقَالَ عُمَرُ إِنَّهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ عَلِمْتُمْ. فَدَعَا ذَاتَ يَوْمٍ - فَأَدْخَلَهُ مَعَهُمْ - فَمَا رُئِيتُ أَنَّهُ دَعَانِي يَوْمَئِذٍ إِلَّا لِيُرِيَهُمْ. قَالَ مَا تَقُولُونَ فِي قَوْلِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى {إِذَا جَاءَ نَصْرُ اللَّهِ وَالْفَتْحُ} فَقَالَ بَعْضُهُمْ أَمْرًا نَحْمَدُ اللَّهَ وَنَسْتَغْفِرُهُ، إِذَا نَصَرْنَا وَفُتِحَ عَلَيْنَا. وَسَكَتَ بَعْضُهُمْ فَلَمْ يَقُلْ شَيْئًا فَقَالَ لِي أَكْذَابُكَ تَقُولُ يَا ابْنَ عَبَّاسٍ فَقُلْتُ لَا. قَالَ فَمَا تَقُولُ قُلْتُ هُوَ أَجَلُ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَعْلَمَهُ لَهُ. قَالَ {إِذَا جَاءَ نَصْرُ اللَّهِ وَالْفَتْحُ} وَذَلِكَ عَلَامَةٌ أَجَلِكَ {فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَاسْتَغْفِرْهُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ تَوَّابًا}. فَقَالَ عُمَرُ مَا أَعْلَمُ مِنْهَا إِلَّا مَا تَقُولُ.

Umar used to make me sit with the elderly men who had fought in the Battle of Badr. Some of them felt it (did not like that) and said to Umar "Why do you bring in this boy to sit with us while we have sons like him?" Umar replied, "Because of what you know of his position (i.e. his religious knowledge.)" One day Umar called me and made me sit in the gathering of those people; and I think that he called me just to show them. (my religious knowledge). Umar then asked them (in my presence).

"What do you say about the interpretation of the Statement of Allah: 'When comes Help of Allah (to you O, Muhammad against your enemies) and the conquest (of Mecca).' (110.1) Some of them said, "We are ordered to praise Allah and ask for His forgiveness when Allah's Help and the conquest (of Mecca) comes to us." Some others kept quiet and did not say anything. On that, `Umar asked me, "Do you say the same, O Ibn `Abbas?" I replied, "No." He said, 'What do you say then?' I replied, "That is the sign of the death of Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) which Allah informed him of. Allah said:-- '(O Muhammad) When comes the Help of Allah (to you against your enemies) and the conquest (of Mecca) (which is the sign of your death). You should celebrate the praises of your Lord and ask for His Forgiveness, and He is the One Who accepts the repentance and forgives.' (110.3) On that `Umar said, "I do not know anything about it other than what you have said." (Sahih al-Bukhari 4970)

Knowledge and Wisdom

- His devotion to knowledge caused Ibn Abbas to be known as Hibr-ul-Ummat (the most learned man of Islam) and Bahrul Ulum (ocean of knowledge) in his time.
- His advice on dealing with people who had bad character or morales:
 - If he's older than me, I would respect him.
 - If he's the same age as me, I would favor him and respect him.
 - If he's younger than me, I would never disgrace him.
- His words of wisdom on committing sins:
 - You who are committing a sin Do not consider yourself safe from its consequences.
 - Worse than the sin is if you do any of the following things after committing the sin:
 - Your lack of shame from the angels who are to your right and left at the time of committing the sin is worse than the sin if you commit it.

- Your laughter when you do not know what Allah is going to do to you is worse than the sin itself.
- Your rejoicing over the sin which you committed is worse than the sin itself.
- Your grief over not being able to commit a sin when you miss an opportunity to commit it is worse than the sin itself had you committed it.
- Your fear of the wind which would unveil the curtain of your door while you are committing the sin your heart does not tremble at the fact that Allah is watching you. This is worse than the sin if you commit it.

Piety

- He was constant in his devotions, kept voluntary fasts regularly and often stayed up at night in prayer.
 - When Ibn Abbas lost his eyesight, a doctor said to him, I can cure you, but for a period of seven days you'll have to lie on your back, and even pray lying down. Ibn Abbas asked Aisha, Abu Hurairah, and some other companions (in one narration: Umm Salamah) about it. They said, what if you were to die in those seven days; what will you do about your prayer (lying down, while you were physically able to pray standing)? So he decided not to treat his eyes. (Musannaf ibn Abi Shaibah)
- He would weep while praying and reading the Quran. He was said to weep so much that the tears streaming down his cheeks had left permanent marks on them.
- He loved his fellow Muslims dearly and sought to fulfill their needs.

- It was narrated that he was staying in I'tikaf in the mosque of the Prophet SAW when a man came to him with the signs of grief visible on his face. He asked him about the reason, and the man said: "O paternal cousin of the Messenger of Allah! So-and-so has the right of allegiance over me, and, by the sanctity of the dweller of this grave, i.e. the grave of the Prophet SAW I am incapable of fulfilling it."
- He asked him: "Should I not use my good offices with him for you?" He said: "Yes, if you so like." Ibn Abbas, stood up, put on his sandals and left the mosque. The man asked him: "Have you forgotten the state in which you were?" That is, you are in I'tikaf according to which it is invalid for you to leave the mosque.
- He said: "No (I have not forgotten). But I heard the dweller of this grave (the Prophet SAW) who died a short time ago (and his eyes shed tears) saying: "Whoever seeks the fulfillment of his brother's need, and is able to do it, that is better for him than to stay in I'tikaf for ten years; and whoever stays in I'tikaf only for one day, seeking thereby the Countenance of Allah The Almighty, Allah then Separates him from Hell with three ditches, farther than the distance between the East and the West." (At-Tabarani, Al-Bayhaqi and Al-Hakim)
- He had a genuine concern for people, and was thoughtful and caring of others. He once said:
 - When I realize the importance of a verse of God's Book, I would wish that all people should know what I know.
 - When I hear of a Muslim ruler who deals equitably and rules justly, I am happy on his account and I pray for him...
 - When I hear of rains that fall on the land of Muslims, that fills me with happiness.

Death

- He dedicated himself to knowledge and worship until death approached him.
- He died in Ta'if when he was 71 years old.
- When he heard of Ibn Abbas' passing, Jabir ibn Abdullah said, "Today the most knowledgeable person has died, someone who had the most tolerance with knowledge. Today the ummah has been afflicted with such difficulty, such a loss that can never be replaced."
- Imam Muhammad ibn Al-Hanafiyyah led the funeral prayer on him, and buried him while saying: "Today, the God-conscious scholar of this ummah died."

