



202449 - The hadith “The true mujahid is the one who strives against his nafs in obedience to Allah”

the question

“The true mujahid is the one who strives against his nafs in obedience to Allah” – how authentic is this hadith?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

It was narrated by Imam Ahmad (23958), Ibn Hibban (4862), at-Tabarani in *Al-Mu`jam al-Kabir* (796), al-Hakim (24), Ibn al-Mubarak in *Az-Zuhd*, (826), an-Nasa'i in *As-Sunan al-Kubra* (11794) and al-Bayhaqi in *Ash-Shu`ab* (10611) that Fadalah ibn `Ubayd said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said during the Farewell Pilgrimage: “Shall I not tell you who is a believer? The one from whom people feel safe with regard to their wealth and their lives. The Muslim is the one from whose hands and tongue people are safe, the mujahid is the one who strives against his nafs in obedience to Allah, and the muhajir is the one who forsakes (*hajara*) mistakes and sins.”

It was narrated in brief by at-Tirmidhi (1621); his version says: “The mujahid is the one who strives against his nafs.”

It was also narrated in brief by Ibn Majah (3934); his version says: “The believer is the one from whom people feel safe with regard to their wealth and their lives, and the muhajir is the one who forsakes (*hajara*) mistakes and sins.”

It was classed as authentic by at-Tirmidhi and al-Hakim; it was also classed as authentic by al-Albani in *As-Sahihah*, 549.



Al-Haythami quoted it at length in *Majma` az-Zawa'id* (3/268), where he said:

It was narrated by al-Bazzar and in brief by at-Tabarani in *Al-Kabir*. The narrators of al-Bazzar are trustworthy.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah said:

This was narrated from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) via the hadith of `Abdullah ibn `Amr, Fadalah ibn `Ubayd and others, with a good (jayyid) isnad. It is in *As-Sunan*, and part of it is in *As-Sahihayn*. (*Majmu` al-Fatawa*, 7/7).

Regarding the meaning of the hadith, Shaykh al-Islam (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“The mujahid is the one who strives against his nafs in obedience to Allah” – he is instructed to strive against his nafs as he is instructed to strive in jihad against those who enjoin evil and promote sin. In fact, he is in greater need of striving against his nafs, because that is an individual obligation, whereas striving in jihad against evildoers is a communal obligation. Patience in striving against one’s nafs is one of the best of deeds, for it is the basis for physical jihad. So whoever shows patience in striving against his nafs will be able to show patience in the other (physical) jihad, as the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “and the muhajir is the one who forsakes (hajara) mistakes and sins.”

Moreover, no one will be praised for striving against his nafs unless he controls the whims and desires of his nafs; this is in contrast to [jihad against those who enjoin evil], for whoever is slain or prevails {then We are going to give him a great reward} [an-Nisa’ 4:114]. (*Majmu` al-Fatawa*, 10/635).

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said in *Zad al-Ma`ad* (3/6):

Striving against one’s nafs takes precedence over striving in jihad against external enemies, and is the basis for that. So if a person does not strive against his nafs first, and compel it to do what it is enjoined to do and refrain from what it is forbidden to do, striving against it for the sake of Allah, he will not be able to strive against his external enemy. For how can he be able to strive against



his enemy and settle scores with him when the enemy is inside him and is defeating him and controlling him, and he is not striving against that enemy or fighting it for the sake of Allah? Rather he will not be able to go out on campaign against the enemy until he strives against his nafs and compels himself to go out and engage the enemy. End quote.

Ibn Rajab (may Allah have mercy on him) said in *Lata'if al-Ma`arif* (p. 222):

The second type of jihad is striving against one's nafs in obedience to Allah, as the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "The mujahid is the one who strives against his nafs in obedience to Allah." One of the Sahabah said to the one who asked him about going out on campaign: Start with yourself and launch a campaign against your nafs; start with yourself and strive against your nafs.

The most important type of jihad against the nafs and striving to make yourself obey Allah is frequenting the houses of Allah to remember Him and do acts of worship therein. End quote.

He also said:

This jihad also requires patience, so whoever shows patience in striving against his nafs, his whims and desires, and his shaytan will prevail and will attain victory and be in control of his nafs. Thus he will become a man of dignity and like a king. But whoever loses resolve and is unable to show patience in striving will be defeated and suppressed, and he will become like a prisoner and a humiliated slave in the hands of his shaytan and his whims and desires, as the poet said:

If a man does not defeat his whims and desires, he will be in a position in which a man of dignity will become humiliated. (*Jami` al-`Ulum wa'l-Hikam*, 2/584).

For more information, see the answer to question no. [10455](#).

And Allah knows best.