329958 - She wants to be included with the foremost in faith (as-sabiqun) and those brought near to Allah (al-muqarrabun)

the question

Who are the foremost in faith (as-sabiqun) and those brought near to Allah (al-muqarrabun)? How can we attain this status? What are the deeds that enabled them to attain that level? I want to be one of them.

I hope that you can explain in detail: who are they? Who are the foremost in faith? What are the deeds that they did so that they became included among the foremost in faith? What is the difference between them and the siddiqs, and which higher in status?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

1. # The foremost in faith (as-sabiqun) are those who will be brought near to Allah (al-muqarrabun), may He be Exalted, on the Day of Resurrection

The foremost in faith are those who will be brought near to Allah, may He be Exalted, on the Day of Resurrection. This nearness is attained by taking the measures that can lead to it, namely striving hard in drawing close to Allah, may He be Exalted, by worshipping Him in this world, because the requital matches the deed.

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

They said: The Quran and Sunnah indicate in more than one hundred places that the requital matches the deed, whether good or bad, as Allah, may he be exalted, says: {a fitting requital} [an-Naba`78:26] – that is, one that is in accordance with their deeds. This is affirmed in the religious texts and is connected to universal laws (cause and effect).

End quote from *`Awn al-Ma`bud ma`a Hashiyat Ibn al-Qayyim*, 12/176.

It was narrated that Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Allah says: ‘Whoever takes a close friend of Mine as an enemy, I declare war on him. My slave does not draw closer to Me by anything more beloved to Me than that which I have made obligatory upon him, and My slave continues to draw closer to Me by doing nafl (supererogatory) deeds until I love him, and if I love him, I will be his hearing with which he hears, his vision with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes and his foot with which he walks. If he were to ask of Me, I would surely give to him; if he were to seek refuge with Me, I would surely grant him refuge. I do not hesitate about anything that I want to do as I hesitate to take the soul of a believer, for he hates death and I hate to hurt him.” Narrated by al-Bukhari, 6502.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

As for the foremost in faith who are brought close to Allah, they draw close to Him by doing supererogatory deeds in addition to obligatory deeds. So they do what is obligatory and what is recommended, and they refrain from what is prohibited and what is disliked (makruh). As they draw close to Him by sacrificing all that they are able to of what they are inclined towards and is dear to them, Allah loves them greatly, as He, may He be exalted, says [in the hadith qudsi quoted above]: “and My slave continues to draw closer to Me by doing nafl (supererogatory) deeds until I love him”, meaning absolute love…

So for these who are brought close to Allah, permissible things become acts of worship by means of which they draw close to Allah, may He be Glorified and Exalted. Thus all their deeds become acts of worship for Allah, and as they sow, so shall they reap. On the other hand, those who follow

a middle course, who did some of their deeds motivated by their own interests, will not be punished, but they will not be rewarded for that either, thus not everything they did was motivated by the desire to draw close to Allah.

End quote from *Majmu` al-Fatawa*, 11/179-180.

But the Muslim should note that what matters is what deeds a person does does at the end of his life, so it is not stipulated, for someone to be brought close to Allah, that he should have had that quality (of striving hard) from the time when he first became Muslim, or when he first repented or became accountable. Rather what matters is what he does towards the end of his life.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Abu Bakr as-Siddiq (may Allah be pleased with him) attained his lofty status towards the end of his life, not at the beginning. Rather he attained that by doing what Allah enjoined upon him and by doing righteous deeds, the best of which was repentance …

End quote from *Al-Mustadrak `ala Majmu` al-Fatawa*, 1/213.

Hence the Muslim should train himself and force himself to adopt the straight path which will lead him to those sublime levels, but he should do that on the basis of wisdom, without going to extremes. The options for doing supererogatory deeds are many and varied, so the Muslim should start to explore this field, taking it step by step and being gentle with himself, so that he will not tire or become weary, and then begin to dislike worship. Rather he should train himself to do supererogatory acts of worship little by little. What matters is persistence.

It was narrated from `A'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) came in and there was a woman with her. He said: "Who is this?" She said: This is So-and-so – and she mentioned how much she prayed every day. He said disapprovingly: "You should do only what you are able to, for by Allah, Allah does not grow weary but you grow weary." And the most beloved of religious practices to him was that in which a person persisted. Narrated by al-Bukhari, 43; Muslim, 785.

The gradual approach that leads to attaining high status is to be based on knowledge of the Quran and Sunnah, because the Muslim cannot attain what he aspires to of being close to Allah, may He be Exalted, except by following the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).

Allah, may He be Exalted, says:

{Say, [O Muhammad], “If you love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins. And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.”

Say, “Obey Allah and the Messenger. But if you turn away - then indeed, Allah does not like the disbelievers”} [Al `Imran 3:31-32].

Ibn Kathir (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

This verse sets the standard for everyone who claims to love Allah, but does not follow the path of Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), for such a person is lying in his claim, until he follows the Muhammadan path and the prophetic religion in all his words, deeds and situations…

End quote from *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, 2/32.

Shaykh `Abd ar-Rahman as-Sa`di (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

{Say, [O Muhammad], “If you love Allah} that is, you claim this lofty status, above which there is no other, but it is not sufficient to make mere claims; rather it is essential to be sincere in that claim. The sign of such sincerity is following His Messenger (sa) in all matters, in word and deed, in both major and minor issues of religion, inwardly and outwardly; if an individual follows the Messenger, this indicates that he is sincere in his claim to love Allah (st), and Allah will love him, forgive his sins, have mercy on him and guide him in all that he does and does not do. But the one who does not follow the Messenger does not truly love Allah, because loving Allah requires him to follow His Messenger; so long as that is not the case, this indicates that that love is not present and that he is lying in his claim. Even if that love did exist, it would not benefit him without fulfilling the necessary conditions. This verse sets the standard against which all people may be

measured; the extent to which they follow the Messenger is indicative of their faith and love for Allah, and any shortcoming in that reflects a shortcoming in loving Allah.

End quote from *Tafsir as-Sa`di*, p. 128.

Therefore what the Muslim should do is strive hard to study the texts of the Quran and Sunnah, gain knowledge about them, and act in accordance with that knowledge.

2.What is meant by those of old (al-awwalun) in the verse {those of old}

Allah, may He be exalted, says:

{And the foremost are the foremost,

Those are the ones brought near [to Allah],

in gardens of delight,

a multitude of those of old

and a few from those of later times} [Al-Waqi`ah 56:10-14].

There is a difference of scholarly opinion regarding what is meant by {those of old}. Some of the scholars are of the view that they are the earlier nations.

At-Tabari (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Allah, may He be Exalted, says: A multitude from the past nations and a few from the ummah of Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), who are those of later times. And they are called those of later times because they are the last of the nations.

End quote from *Tafsir at-Tabari*, 22/291.

The basis for this interpretation is the context of the verse, because it appears in the context of describing the condition of all people on the Day of Resurrection, not a context of specifically discussing the different categories of people of this ummah.

According to some scholars, what is meant by those of old is the early generations of this ummah. The basis for this view is the texts which highlight the virtue of this ummah and the great numbers of them who will enter paradise in contrast to all other nations.

Ibn Kathir (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The view favoured by Ibn Jarir here is questionable; in fact, it is a weak view, because this ummah is the best of nations according to the text of the Quran, so it is far-fetched to say that those brought near to Allah among other nations will be greater in number than those who are brought near to Him of this ummah, unless it is the total number from other nations that is being compared to the number from this ummah.

But what appears to be the case is that the number of those brought near to Allah from among this ummah is greater than the total number from all other nations. And Allah knows best.

However, the second view about this matter is the correct one, which is the view that what is meant by {a multitude of those of old} is of the early generations of this ummah, and {and a few from those of later times} means from the later generations of this ummah…

Ibn Abi Hatim said: My father told us: Abul-Walid told us: as-Sari ibn Yahya told us: al-Hasan recited: { And the foremost are the foremost, Those are the ones brought near [to Allah], in gardens of delight, a multitude of those of old} – a multitude of those who have passed of this ummah.

And my father told us: `Abd al-`Aziz ibn al-Mughirah al-Minqari told us: Abu Hilal told us, from Muhammad ibn Sirin, that he said regarding the words {a multitude of those of old, and a few from those of later times }: They used to say or think that they would all be from this ummah. This is the view of al-Hasan and Ibn Sirin, that all of them will be from this ummah.

Undoubtedly the first generation of every nation is better than the last, so it may be that this refers to all nations, each nation according to its merits. Hence it is soundly narrated in the *Sahih*s and elsewhere, via more than one chain of narration, that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: The best of generations is my generation, then those who come after them, then those who come after them…

The point is that this ummah is nobler than all other nations, and those among them who are brought near to Allah are greater in number than those of other nations, and higher in status, because of the superiority of its religion and the status of its Prophet…

End quote from *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, 7/518-519.

Shaykh Ibn `Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

{a multitude of those of old} – it was said that what is meant by that is the previous nations, {and a few from those of later times} means the nation of Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). According to this view, the fact that this ummah is smaller in number is because of the great number of the previous nations put together; it does not mean that those who will be admitted to Paradise of [each of] the earlier nations, taking each nation on its own, will be more numerous than those of this ummah who will enter Paradise.

And it was said that what is meant by those of old is the first generations of this ummah; in other words, a multitude from the first generations of this ummah and a few from the later generations. This view is the correct one; in fact, it is the only correct view, because the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “I hope that you will be half of the people of Paradise.” And in another hadith he said: “The people of Paradise will be one hundred and twenty rows, of which eighty will be from this ummah.”

Based on that, it is not correct for us to say a few of this ummah and many from the previous nations. Rather we should say a multitude, meaning many, from the early generations of this ummah, and a few from its later generations.

End quote from *At-Tafsir min al-Hujurat ila al-Hadid* (p.331).

But according to the view that those of old are the earlier nations, this does not give any excuse to give up striving and lose hope of attaining higher status, because the Muslim does not know how his deeds will be towards the end of his life. Therefore he should aspire to attain high status, by responding to the command of Allah, may He be Exalted, as He says: { And follow the best of what was revealed to you from your Lord [i.e., the Quran] before the punishment comes upon you suddenly while you do not perceive } [az-Zumar 39:55] and {So give good tidings to My servants, who listen to speech and follow the best of it. Those are the ones Allah has guided, and those are people of understanding} [Az-Zumar 39:17-18].

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

This is a command to the believers to follow the best of that which has come down to them from their Lord…

and following the best of speech means acting upon it, which implies that in it there is what is good and what is better.

Allah says: {So give good tidings to My servants, who listen to speech and follow the best of it. Those are the ones Allah has guided, and those are people of understanding}. The Quran contains news and commands; the news speaks of the righteous and those who are brought near to Allah, and undoubtedly following these two categories of people is good, but following those who are brought near to Allah is better. The commands include commands to do obligatory deeds and those that are recommended, and undoubtedly limiting oneself to doing obligatory deeds is good, but doing recommended deeds too is better. Whoever follows that which is better, and emulates those who are brought near to Allah and seeks to draw close to Allah by doing supererogatory deeds in addition to obligatory deeds, will be more deserving of these glad tidings.

End quote from *Majmu` al-Fatawa*, 16/6-7.

The Muslim should not despair of attaining these high levels, for despairing of Allah’s favour and

generosity is forbidden.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

There is no one who sets out on a journey but he has a destination he wants to reach. If it is said that someone has become close to Allah or has attained belief in His oneness (Tawhid) or knowledge of Him and the like, then in these statements there are different categories and levels that no one can count except Allah, may He be Exalted.

Despairing of attaining that which Allah loves and is pleased with, namely knowledge of Him and belief in His oneness, is a major sin. Rather one should hope for that and aspire to attain it.

But whoever hopes for something seeks it, and whoever fears something flees from it.

If he strives and seeks the help of Allah, may He be Exalted, and constantly prays for forgiveness and persists in striving, then Allah will inevitably grant him of His bounty that which has never crossed his mind.

If he feels that his heart is not opened, and he does not feel the sweetness of faith or the light of guidance, then let him repent a great deal and pray for forgiveness, and let him keep striving as much as he can, for Allah says: {And those who strive in Our cause - We will surely guide them to Our ways} [Al-`Ankabut 29:69].

And he must do the obligatory acts of worship wholeheartedly, and adhere to the straight path, seeking Allah's help and admitting that he has no power and no strength except through Him.

End quote from *Majmu` al-Fatawa*, 11/389-391.

So the one who wants to attain high status, in addition to striving to seek knowledge and put it into action, must also think positively of Allah, may He be Exalted.

It was narrated that Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "Allah, may He be Exalted, says: 'I am as My slave thinks I am.'" Narrated by al-Bukhari, 7405; Muslim, 2675.

Al-Qadi `Iyad (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

It was said that what is meant is: by forgiving him if he asks Me for forgiveness, accepting him if he turns back to Me, answering him if he calls upon Me, and sufficing him if he asks Me to take care of him, because these attributes will not appear in a person unless he thinks positively of his Lord and becomes strong in faith.

End quote from Ikmal al-Mu`allim, 8/172.

III. The apparent meaning of the texts indicates that the siddiqs are a category among those who are brought near to Allah (al-muqarrabun)

The siddiqs are a category among those who are brought near to Allah, as may be understood from the apparent meaning of the texts, because those who are brought near to Allah include people who have attained levels of perfection, namely the siddiqs, the martyrs and the righteous.

Allah, may He be Exalted, says: {And whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger - those will be with the ones upon whom Allah has bestowed favor of the prophets, the steadfast affirmers of truth (siddiqin), the martyrs and the righteous. And excellent are those as companions} [an-Nisa' 4:69].

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The levels of perfection are attained by four groups: the prophets, the siddiqs, the martyrs and the close friends of Allah (awliya'). Allah has mentioned all of them in the verse: {And whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger - those will be with the ones upon whom Allah has bestowed favor of the prophets, the steadfast affirmers of truth (siddiqin), the martyrs and the righteous. And excellent are those as companions} [an-Nisa' 4:69].

End quote from *Miftah Dar as-Sa`adah*, 1/222.

But the siddiqs are the most perfect.

Ibn Rajab (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The most perfect of people are those who truly follow the Prophet and believe in him, in word, deed and mindset; they are the siddiqs of his ummah, foremost among whom is Abu Bakr – the caliph who succeeded him – and they will be the highest in status in Paradise after the Prophets, as the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "The people of Paradise will see the people of the lofty dwellings in Paradise above them as you see a brilliant star far away on the horizon in the east or the west, because of the difference in status between them." They said: O Messenger of Allah, is that the status of the Prophets that no one else will attain? He said: "No, by the One in Whose hand is my soul. They are men who believed in Allah and believed in the Messengers."

End quote from *Fat-h al-Bari*, 1/54.

The siddiq is not only the one who is truthful in speech (sadiq), although this is one of his characteristics. Rather the siddiq is the one who is truthful in his mindset, his faith, his conduct and his worship, the one who believes (musaddiq) in the revelation with certainty.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The praise for as-Siddiq [Abu Bakr], who affirmed that what the prophets said was true, is not because he spoke the word of truth, but because he believed in the prophets, and especially the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). So the praise for this belief – which is a special kind of speaking the truth – is one type of praise, and the praise for his being a speaker of truth is another kind. For every siddiq is a speaker of truth (sadiq), but not every speaker of truth is a siddiq…

The word siddiq may refer to one who has attained a high level of telling the truth, or it may refer to one who has attained a high level of belief. The virtue of as-Siddiq [Abu Bakr] does not stem from his merely striving to tell the truth all the time; rather it stems from what he had learned of what the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) preached in general terms and in detail, and he believed it in a perfect sense in terms of knowledge, intention, words and deeds.

End quote from *Minhaj as-Sunnah*, 4/266-267.

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

… Sidq (truthfulness) is in three things:

Sidq in words means being steadfast in speaking the truth.

Sidq in actions means that all of one's actions are based on obeying divine commands and following the example of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).

Sidq in mindset means that the actions of the heart and physical actions are all based on sincerity and striving hard in that, thus the person will become one of those who will come on the Day of Resurrection as one of those of whom the Quran says: {Those who proclaim the truth and believe in it} [Az-Zumar 39:33].

Whether or not a person attains the level of being a siddiq is based on the extent to which he perfects these qualities and adheres to them. Hence Abu Bakr as-Siddiq (may Allah be pleased with him and make him pleased) attained the pinnacle of being a siddiq, to the extent that he is known to all as as-Siddiq. The siddiq is higher in status than the saduq (one who is very truthful) and the saduq is higher in status than the sadiq (one who is truthful).

The highest level of sidq (truthfulness) is that of being a siddiq; it is based on perfect following of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) combined with perfect sincerity towards the One Who sent him.

In *as-Sahihayn* it is narrated from `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "Truthfulness leads to righteousness, and righteousness leads to Paradise. A man may persist in speaking the truth until he is recorded with Allah as a speaker of truth. Lying leads to wickedness and wickedness leads to Hell. A man may persist in telling lies until he is recorded with Allah as a liar."

Thus telling the truth is the key to becoming a siddiq and the first step towards that, and it is the

most important quality of the siddiq. Hence no liar can ever attain this level, whether in words, deeds or mindset, especially one who tells lies about Allah having to do with His names and attributes, or denies what He affirmed for Himself, or affirms what He has denied for Himself. None of those who do such things can ever be a siddiq.

Similarly, the one who tells lies about Allah having to do with the teachings of His religion, by permitting what He has forbidden, or forbidding what He did not forbid, or regarding religious duties as not being obligatory, or making obligatory that which He did not make obligatory, or resenting what He loves, or liking what He dislikes – all of that is contrary to the attitude of a siddiq.

And the same applies to lying in one's actions, such as one who pretends to be among those who are honest and sincere, or pretends to among those who show little interest in worldly gain and put their trust in Allah, when in fact he is not one of them.

Hence being a siddiq means attaining perfect sincerity, following the example of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), and following what Allah said and obeying His commands, both outwardly and inwardly.

End quote from *Madarij as-Salikin*, 3/2105-2112.

So being a siddiq is based on acquiring deep knowledge of the religious texts and a perfect level of believing in them, as well as following them and acting in accordance with them.

Ibn al-Qayyim said:

Being a siddiq is based on perfect belief in what the Messengers brought in terms of knowledge, believing in it and acting in accordance with it. Hence it is based on knowledge itself, so anyone who has a great deal of knowledge of what the Messenger brought and a high level of belief in him, will attain a higher status in terms of being a siddiq.

Being a siddiq is like a tree: its roots are knowledge, its branches are belief, and its fruits are righteous deeds.

End quote from *Miftah Dar as-Sa`adah*, 1/223.

And Allah knows best.