34852 - Result of Refraining From Joining the Congregation's Front Rows

the question

I would like to know the commentary on this Hadith: “People will persist in falling back until Allah puts them back.”

Summary of answer

The Hadith highlights the consequence of continuously refraining from joining the front rows during congregational prayers, resulting in the inability to do so as a punishment from Allah.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

This Hadith was narrated by Muslim (438) from Abu Sa’id al-Khudri: that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) saw some of his companions falling back (in the rows for prayer) and said to them: “Come forward and follow me (in prayer), and let those who come after you follow you? People will persist in falling back until Allah puts them back.”

The meaning of the Hadith is as follows:

- The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) saw some of his Companions staying back from joining the front row, so he told them to come forward to the front row so that they could follow his lead and that those who were behind them, who could not see the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), could follow their lead.
- It may be interpreted as meaning: those of the Ummah who came after them could follow their example, because they would transmit to them the description of the prayer of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) which they had seen. This was the view of Al-Sindi (may Allah have mercy on him).

Then he (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “People will persist in falling back until Allah puts them back.”

This means: people will keep getting used to staying away from the front row or rows, until Allah will punish them by putting them back.

It was also said that the meaning is: He (Allah) will put them away from His mercy and Paradise, or His great bounty, or from being raised in status, or from knowledge.

There is no reason why the Hadith should not be interpreted in all of these ways.

Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymin said concerning the meaning of this Hadith:

“The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) saw some people staying back in the mosque, i.e., they did not come forward to the front rows, so he said: “People will persist in falling back until Allah puts them back.” Based on this, it is feared that if a person gets used to falling back in worship, he will be punished by Allah putting him back with regard to all good things.'” (Fatawa Ibn ‘Uthaymin, 13/54)

Some of the scholars were of the view that what is meant by this is a group of hypocrites. The correct view is that the Hadith is general in meaning and does not apply only to the hypocrites.

Al-Shawkani said in Nayl al-Awtar:

“It was said that this is about the hypocrites, but the apparent meaning is that it is general and refers both to them and to others, and that it encourages worshippers to be keen on being in the front row and to put them off hanging back from the front row.”

The point is that the Hadith encourages men to pray in the front row or rows, and condemns getting accustomed to praying in the back rows.

We ask Allah to help us to hasten to do good deeds and to compete therein.

For more details, please read the following answers: 101766 , 118155 , 112071 , 11199 , and

36881 .

And Allah knows best.