36826 - Exhorting the dying person to say Laa ilaaha ill-Allah

the question

What is meant by exhorting the dying person to say Laa ilaaha ill-Allah, as mentioned in the hadeeth of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him): “Exhort your dying ones to say Laa ilaaha ill-Allah”?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Exhorting means teaching and explaining. What is meant by exhorting the dying person to say Laa ilaaha ill-Allah is that there should be someone with him who can remind him to say Laa ilaaha ill-Allah, as if teaching and prompting a small child.

It is mustahabb to exhort the dying person to utter the Kalimah or word of faith in this situation, so that his life will end with that and it will be the last words that he utters. Hence the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) enjoined it. It was narrated that Abu Sa’eed al-Khudri (may Allah be pleased with him) said: the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Exhort your dying ones to say Laa ilaaha ill-Allah.” Narrated by Muslim, 916.

It was narrated that Mu’aadh ibn Jabal (may Allah be pleased with him) said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) say: “If a person’s last words are Laa ilaaha ill-Allah, Paradise will be guaranteed for him.” Narrated by Ahmad, 21529; Abu Dawood, 3116; classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Irwa’ al-Ghaleel, 687

It was narrated from Anas that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) visited a man from among the Ansaar when he was sick and he said: “O maternal uncle, say Laa ilaaha ill-Allah.” He said: “Maternal uncle or paternal uncle?” He said: “Maternal uncle.” He said: “Is it better for me to say it?’ He said: “Yes.” Narrated by Ahmad, 13414. Al-Albaani said in

Ahkaam al-Janaa’iz: its isnaad is saheeh according to the conditions of Muslim.

The dying person should not be bothered with repeated requests to say it, if he has said it and does not say anything after that.

Al-Nawawi said:

They (the scholars) regarded it as makrooh to exhort him repeatedly or continuously, lest that cause him hardship and distress and he dislikes that in his heart and says something that is not appropriate. They said: If he says it once, he need not be reminded again unless he says something else after that, in which case he should be reminded again so that it will be the last thing that he says. End quote.

When ‘Abd-Allah ibn al-Mubaarak (may Allah have mercy on him) was dying, a man started prompting him to say Laa ilaaha ill-Allah, and he did that a great deal. He said to him: “You are not doing something good. I fear that you will annoy a Muslim after me. When you prompted me, if I say Laa ilaaha ill-Allah, then I did not say anything else after that, leave me alone, but if I say anything, then exhort me to say it again, so that it will be the last thing I say.”

Siyar A’laam al-Nubala’, 8/418

This exhortation is prescribed even if the dying person is a kaafir, because if he says it before the soul is taken, saying it will benefit him, even if he is punished for his sins. It was narrated that Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Exhort your dying ones to say Laa ilaaha ill-Allah, for if a person’s last words are Laa ilaaha ill-Allah at the time of death, he will enter Paradise at some point, no matter what befalls him before that.” Narrated by Ibn Hibbaan; classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh al-Jaami’, 5150.

Another indication that the command to exhort the dying to say Laa ilaaha ill-Allah includes kaafirs too is what the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did with his paternal uncle Abu Taalib, and with the Jewish boy who used to serve him.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was present when his uncle Abu Taalib was dying, and he said to him: “O uncle, say Laa ilaaha ill-Allah, a word for which I will testify for you before Allah.” Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 3884; Muslim, 24.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was also present when the Jewish boy who used to serve him was dying. He said to him: “Become Muslim” – according to the report narrated by Ahmad (12381): “Say Laa ilaaha ill-Allah.” Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 1356.

Two notes from Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him):

Should this exhortation come in the form of a command, whereby one says to the dying person: “Say Laa ilaaha ill-Allah” or should it be done by repeating the words in his presence so that he will remember them when he hears someone saying them by his side?

Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

That depends on the condition of the sick person. If he is of strong faith and can accept the command, or if he is a kaafir, he should be commanded to say it, by saying: “Say Laa ilaaha ill-Allah,” “Let your life end with Laa ilaaha ill-Allah” and so on.

If he is a Muslim and is of weak faith, he should not be commanded, rather Allah should be mentioned in his presence so that he will hear and remember. This differentiation is based on the reports and on rational thinking.

In the reports, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) commanded his uncle Abu Taalib, when he was dying, to say Laa ilaaha ill-Allah. He said: “O uncle, say Laa ilaaha ill-Allah.”

As for rational thinking: If he says it, all well and good, and if he does not say it, he is a kaafir anyway. If we assume that if he did not like this command and did not say it, then he remains as he is and nothing has changed. If he is a Muslim and can bear it if we tell him to say it, it will not affect him, but if he is weak (in faith) and we tell him to say it, perhaps he will react by becoming upset and angry, and he will reject it as he is departing this world. There are some people who, if they are told to say Laa ilaaha ill-Allah when they are in a state of good health, they will say: “I will

never say Laa ilaaha ill-Allah.” At times of anger, some people get so confused that they say, “I do not to say Laa ilaaha ill-Allah.” So what do you think about this situation?

Secondly:

We are to exhort the dying person to say Laa ilaaha ill-Allah and not “Muhammad rasool-Allah” because this is what is narrated in the hadeeth: “Exhort your dying ones to say Laa ilaaha ill-Allah.” The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “If a person’s last words in this world are Laa ilaaha ill-Allah, he will enter Paradise.” The word of Tawheed is the key to Islam, and whatever comes after that is additional.

If a person combines both phrases of the Shahaadah and says Laa ilaaha ill-Allah Muhammad rasool Allah, this does not mean that his last words in this world are not Laa ilaaha ill-Allah, because the testimony that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is the Messenger of Allah is a part of that affirmation.

Hence the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) regarded these words, along with the testimony that Allah is God, as a single principle, and there is no need to exhort the person repeatedly. The apparent meaning of the evidence is that it is not sufficient for the dying person to say Ashhadu anna Muhammadan Rasool-Allah, rather he must say: Laa ilaaha ill-Allah. End quote from al-Sharh al-Mumti’, 5/177

The evidence that the Muslim should be commanded to say it if he is strong in faith is derived from the hadeeth about the Ansaari that is quoted above, in which the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) commanded him to say Laa ilaaha ill-Allah: “O maternal uncle, say Laa ilaaha ill-Allah.”

Similarly, the doctor said to ‘Umar ibn al-Khattaab, after he gave him milk to drink and the milk came out of his wound solid and white: “O Ameer al-Mu’mineen, recommend someone to succeed you.” ‘Umar said: “You are being truthful with me. Had you said something else, I would not have believed you.” The people wept when they heard that and he said: “Do not weep for us. Whoever wants to weep, let him go out. Did you not hear what the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings

of Allah be upon him) said – ‘The deceased is tormented because of his family’s weeping over him’?” Narrated by Ahmad, 296; Ahmad Shaakir said: its isnaad is saheeh.