134757 - The refusal of ‘Umar and those who were with him to bring writing materials to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) during his illness

the question

One of my Shi‘i friends says that ‘Umar ibn al-Khattaab and Abu Bakr as-Siddeeq (may Allah be pleased with them) disobeyed the Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) when he was on his deathbed. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) asked the Sahaabah at that time to bring a piece of paper and a pen, but they both refused to bring them. According to what the Shi‘ah say, the Sahaabah went astray after the death of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), and the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) left instructions that ‘Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) was to be the caliph after his death. They have proven that to me by quoting the hadith which says that ‘Umar ibn al-Khattaab (may Allah be pleased with him) disobeyed Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), and anger could be seen on the Prophet’s face. I want to say that this friend of mine has influenced one of my friends, who do not have any information about Islam. Can you explain to me why ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) disobeyed the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)? Can you also tell me how to deal with such people? I hope you can give me references. Thank you very much.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

It is not permissible for you to make friends with any one from this group who claim to be Muslim, then they cast aspersions on the basic teachings of Islam and on those who conveyed the religion to people (i.e., the Sahaabah), and who believe that the Quran has been distorted, and that people

can be infallible, and they regard the Sahaabah as apostates, apart from a few of them.

What you must do with regard to these people and others like them is shun them, and warn others about their evil and misguidance.

Please see also the answers to questions no. 91665 and 96231

Secondly:

The wording of the hadith which speaks of the story which that Raafidi mentioned to you is as follows:

It was narrated that Ibn ‘Abbaas said: When the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was dying, there were men in the house among whom was ‘Umar ibn al-Khattaab. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Come, let me write for you a document after which you will not go astray.” ‘Umar said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) is overcome with pain, and you have the Quran; the Book of Allah is sufficient for us. The people in the house disagreed, and they argued. Some of them said: Come close and let the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) write for you a document after which you will not go astray. Others agreed with what ‘Umar said. When their debating and argument in the presence of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) became too much, the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Get up and leave.”

‘Ubayd-Allah said: Ibn ‘Abbaas used to say: What a calamity it was when the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was prevented from writing that document for them because of their disagreement and arguing.

Narrated by al-Bukhaari (6932) and Muslim (1637)

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the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) instructed his companions who were

present with him during his illness to bring a piece of paper and a pen, so that he could dictate to them something that had nothing to do with a new revelation that he had not yet conveyed to the people, or with any shar'i instruction that the people needed that had to do with their religion. Then he decided not to tell them about that matter, because of what happened. The evidence for that is as follows:

(a)This incident happened on a Thursday, and the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) died on the following Monday, i.e., four days later. He could have asked others to write that document, but because he (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) did not do that, we know that it was not revelation that he could have concealed.

(b)Allah, may He be exalted, praised His Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) for having conveyed what He revealed to him, and Allah, may He be exalted, reminded this ummah of the blessing that He had bestowed upon them by perfecting their religion and completing His favour upon them. The idea that what the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) did not write was part of the religion that all of the ummah needs is tantamount to accusing the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) of not conveying the message, and it constitutes disbelief in what the Lord, may He be exalted, said about the religion being perfected and His blessing being completed upon His slaves.

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

The writing of this document is not something that Allah enjoined upon him to write or convey at that time. If that had been the case, he (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) would not have failed to do what Allah instructed him to do.

Minhaaj as-Sunnah an-Nabawiyyah (6/315, 316)

And he (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

It was not permissible for him to abandon writing the document because of the doubts that some had about (its importance). If what he intended to write in the document was something that he

was obliged to convey and disclose, then the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) would have disclosed it and written it in a document, and he would not have paid any attention to the view of anybody, for he was the most obedient of creation to Allah. Thus it is known that when he decided not to write the document, the document was not obligatory and it would not have contained anything of religious matters that he was obliged to write at that time, because if that had been necessary, he would have done it.

Minhaaj as-Sunnah an-Nabawiyyah (6/12)

(c)What we have mentioned is supported by the fact that the Sahaabah who were with the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) differed with regard to their understanding of his instruction to bring writing materials and what he really intended. Otherwise they would all have hastened to fulfil his instructions. It was proven from them that they took off their shoes during the prayer because of merely seeing the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) take off his shoes during the prayer, without him instructing them to do that, so would such people have gone against an instruction if they believed it to be part of the revelation? They are far above doing such a thing. Therefore, some of them got up to bring a piece of paper and a pen, as the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) had asked them to do, and others refrained, thinking that he (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) may have been overwhelmed with pain, or that his instruction was meant as a recommendation only.

Abu'l-'Abbaas al-Qurtubi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

With regard to the words "Come, let me write for you a document after which you will not go astray", this is a command and a request that was addressed to everyone present. Hence it was the duty of everyone who was present to hasten to obey this command, especially when it was followed by the words "after which you will not go astray". But 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) and others thought that this command was not by way of obligation; rather it was by way of recommendation. Moreover, in the Book of Allah there is guidance to everything that the Muslim needs, as Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): "And We have sent down to you the Book (the Quran) as an exposition of everything" [an-Nahl 16:89]. In addition to that,

the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was suffering pain, so ‘Umar did not want him to have to do something that may be very difficult for him in that situation. Therefore they decided that it was more appropriate for him not to write anything. But the other group wanted him to write the document, following the apparent meaning of the command and out of eagerness for more clarification and to remove any ambiguity. Would that that had happened! But that is what Allah decreed, and whatever He wills happens. But there should be no blame or criticism of the first group, because the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) did not rebuke them or tell them off; rather he said to all of them: “Let me be, for I am fine.”

Al-Mufhim lima Ashkala min Talkhees Kitaab Muslim (15/18)

Al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Al-Maaziri (may Allah have mercy on him) said: It was permissible for the Sahaabah to differ concerning this document, despite the clear instructions given to them concerning that, because instructions may be accompanied by indications that make them less than obligatory. It is as if there was something to indicate that the matter was not obligatory; rather it was optional. Therefore they had different views, and ‘Umar insisted on his view for which he had circumstantial evidence that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) had said that without insisting on it.

Fath al-Baari (8/133, 134)

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The Prophet’s decision to write a document was either based on revelation that came then was abrogated, or it was something that he thought would serve some interest, then he changed his mind.

An-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) thought about writing the document when he thought that it would serve some interest, or it may be that he received some revelation

concerning that, then it appeared that best interests would be served by refraining from writing it, or he received revelation to abrogate the initial command.

Sharh Muslim (11/90). A similar report was narrated by al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar from al-Maaziri. See: Fath al-Baari (8/134).

-3-

The Raafidis claim that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) gave instructions that ‘Ali ibn Abi Taalib (may Allah be pleased with him) should become caliph after he died, but what does this incident have to do with them? Why do they have to tamper with it and misinterpret it, claiming that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) wanted to write down instructions that ‘Ali should become the caliph after him? Why couldn’t the instructions that he wanted to write in this document be instructions for Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) to become caliph after he died?

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

Whoever imagines that this document would have been about the appointment of ‘Ali to the caliphate is misguided, according to the consensus of the Muslims, including the scholars of both the Sunnis and the Shi‘ah. As for the Sunnis, they are unanimously agreed that Abu Bakr is superior and is to be given precedence. As for the Shi‘ah who say that ‘Ali was the one who deserved to be the imam (caliph), they say that ‘Ali had been named as the imam (caliph) before that, in clear and unambiguous wording that was widely known. In that case, there was no need for any document.

Minhaaj as-Sunnah an-Nabawiyyah (6/11)

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It is proven via the soundest isnaad that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) wanted to give instructions that Abu Bakr as-Siddeeq (may Allah be pleased with him) should be appointed caliph after he died, then he decided not to do that, and he said that the believers

would not accept anyone other than him as caliph. It was narrated that ‘Aa’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said to me during his illness: “I was thinking – or I wanted – to send for Abu Bakr and his son and appoint him as my successor, lest people say (that the caliphate should be for So and so) or lest anyone should hope for it for themselves. Then I thought: Allah and the believers would reject anyone who is less qualified than Abu Bakr.” Narrated by al-Bukhaari (5342). Also narrated by Muslim (2387) with the words: “when Allah and the believers insist on Abu Bakr.”

We (as Sunnis) are not concerned about that issue, because Allah and the believers decided that the successor (caliph) of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) should be no one but Abu Bakr.

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What occurred of some of the Sahaabah questioning the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) about some issues does not undermine the fact that they would hasten to follow his instructions and do what Islam required, because they would discuss things with him (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) until the revelation came confirming what the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) told them, whereupon they would hasten to obey the command.

An-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Al-Khattaabi said: The companions of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) would discuss some issues with him before he gave them definitive and binding instructions, as when they discussed the terms of the treaty between him and Quraysh with him on the day of al-Hudaybiyah. But once he issued definitive instructions, none of them would discuss it with him.

Sharh Muslim (11/91)

Al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The Sahaabah used to discuss some issues with him, so long as he had not issued definitive instructions; once he did that, however, they would comply with them.

Fath al-Baari (1/209)

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The words of ‘Umar, “the Book of Allah is sufficient for us”, were not addressed to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), for ‘Umar was too respectful to have done that. Rather these words were addressed to those who objected to him not bringing writing materials.

An-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The words of ‘Umar, “the Book of Allah is sufficient for us”, were answering back those who disagreed with him; it was not a counter-argument to the instruction of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).

Sharh Muslim (11/93).

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The scholars gave the following reasons to explain why ‘Umar thought it better not to bring materials with which to write the document for the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him):

(a)His compassion for the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), because he did not want to burden him in that situation with having to dictate the document, because that might be too difficult for him, as he said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) is overcome with pain.

(b)He was worried lest the hypocrites and those in whose hearts was sickness would cast aspersions on this document and express their doubts about those who transmitted it, and cast aspersions on them and their good character.

(c)He was worried that he may write some instructions that they would not be able to comply with, and thus they would incur sin by not complying, and he thought it was kinder to the ummah, with regard to these issues, to leave them as a matter of ijtihaad, to be subject to examination and

looking for the right answer, so that both the one who gets it right and the one who gets it wrong would be rewarded.

See: Dalaa'il an-Nubuwwah (7/184); ash-Shifa bi Ta'reef Huqooq al-Mustafa by al-Qaadi 'Iyaad (2/194); Sharh Muslim by an-Nawawi (11/91); Fath al-Baari (1/209)

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With regard to the words of Ibn 'Abbaas (may Allah be pleased with him), there is nothing in them to suggest that he was casting aspersions on the Sahaabah (may Allah be pleased with them). He was among those who swore allegiance to Abu Bakr as-Siddeeq, and to 'Umar al-Faarooq after him. What he meant was that the thing that prevented writing down the document (i.e., the Prophet's sickness) was itself a calamity, because turmoil emerged after that and aspersions were cast on those prominent Sahaabah.

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

The words of Ibn 'Abbaas, "What a calamity it was when the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was prevented from writing that document" mean that the thing that prevented it happening was a calamity; it was a calamity for those who doubted the legitimacy of Abu Bakr's caliphate, or were not certain about the matter, because if there had been a document, there would have been no doubt. As for those who knew that his caliphate was legitimate, it was not a calamity for them, praise be to Allah.

Minhaaj as-Sunnah an-Nabawiyyah (6/11)

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These words of Ibn 'Abbaas (may Allah be pleased with him) were based on his own ijtihaad. No doubt 'Umar was more knowledgeable and was senior to Ibn 'Abbaas. Some of the scholars are of the view that the fact that the document was not written, and the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) did not object to what 'Umar said, suggests that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) adopted 'Umar's opinion and thought that that was the correct thing

to do.

An-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Therefore ‘Umar was more knowledgeable than Ibn ‘Abbaas and the people who agreed with him.

Sharh Muslim (11/90)

Al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The fact that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) did not object to ‘Umar indicates that he thought his view was correct. When ‘Umar said, “the Book of Allah is sufficient for us”, he was referring to the verse in which Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): “We have neglected nothing in the Book” [al-An‘aam 6:38]. It may be that the aim was to make things easier for the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), when ‘Umar saw that he was in great distress. Thus he sensed that what he wanted to write was not something they could not do without. If that had been the case, the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) would not have refrained from writing it because of their differences.

This view cannot be undermined by what Ibn ‘Abbaas said, “What a calamity it was…”, because ‘Umar was definitely more knowledgeable than him.

Fath al-Baari (8/134).

Thus it becomes clear that the claims of the Raafidis, casting aspersions on the Sahaabah (may Allah be pleased with them) – and especially ‘Umar ibn al-Khattaab (may Allah be pleased with him) – are false. It also becomes clear that what the early generations said about them being the most mendacious of the groups that claim to be Muslims is true. So beware of them for the sake of your religious commitment. We ask Allah to make you steadfast in adhering to Islam and the Sunnah.

For more information on the beliefs of the Raafidis, please see the answers to questions no. 4569, 1148 and 21500

And Allah knows best.