

Fast 19

Holy Prophet's extraordinary gentleness towards his followers - 2

- Towards the end of his life, when the eastern Roman (Byzantine) empire started to threaten to attack Arabia, the Holy Prophet had to lead an expedition to Tabuk, a place halfway between Madinah and Damascus, to counter this threat. To join the expedition required great sacrifice, of effort, money, resources and time by his followers. There were some Muslims who routinely failed to make sacrifices on such occasions. They did the same this time. They were “fair weather” friends who joined in only when Muslims were winning and making gains. The Quran says to the Holy Prophet about them:

“Had it been *a near gain and a short journey*, they would certainly have followed you, but the hard journey was too long for them.” — 9:42

- Eventually, the Holy Prophet refused to accept any zakat or financial contributions from them, as these were not sacrifices which were made when needed by the community.
- There were also some sincere Muslims who failed to join the expedition to Tabuk for various reasons. The Quran says:

“⁹¹No blame lies on the weak, nor on the sick, nor on those who can find nothing to spend, if they are sincere to Allah and His Messenger. There is no way (to blame) against the doers of good. And Allah is Forgiving, Merciful —

⁹²Nor on those to whom, when they came to you (O Prophet) that you should (provide animals to) carry them, you said: I cannot find anything on which to carry you. They went back, their eyes overflowing with tears of grief that they could not find anything to spend.

⁹³The way (to blame) is only against those who ask permission of you (not to go), though they are rich. They have chosen to be with those who remained behind; and Allah has sealed their hearts, so they do not know.” — 9:91–93

Notes: Those Muslims for whom it was beyond their control or capacity to join the expedition or provide resources for it do not bear the least blame. Then verse 92 paints a heart-rending picture of those who wished to participate but did not have any means of their own, nor could the Holy Prophet find any way of taking them. They were heart broken.

Those who are unable to bear the burden of making any sacrifice, and are sincere, are entirely blameless and forgiven. The blamed are those who could do something but failed to do it as an intentional decision on their part.

“¹⁰²And others have acknowledged their faults — they mixed a good deed with another that was evil. It may be that Allah will turn to them (mercifully). Surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

¹⁰³Take charity out of their property — you would cleanse them and purify them thereby — and pray for them. Surely your prayer is a relief to them. And Allah is Hearing, Knowing.”
— 9:102–103

Notes: The persons mentioned in verses 102–103 were those sincere Muslims who could have gone but made a mistake in deciding not to go, perhaps not realising the importance of the expedition. When the Holy Prophet returned, they acknowledged that they had made a mistake. The Holy Prophet is told to accept their donations (unlike from the “fair weather” friends), as this act of repentance would purify them. Even though they had failed to come to the help of the Holy Prophet, he is told by God to pray for them, because his prayers for them brought comfort to their hearts.
