

34852 - Commentary on the hadeeth “People will persist in falling back until Allaah puts them back”

the question

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

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

This hadeeth was narrated by Muslim (438) from Abu Sa’eed al-Khudri: that the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah 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 Allaah puts them back.”

The meaning of the hadeeth is as follows:

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) saw some of his companions staying back from the front row, so he told them to come forward to the front row so that they could follow his lead and those who were behind them, who could not see the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah 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 Allaah be upon him) which they had seen. This was the view of al-Sindi (may Allaah have mercy on him).

Then he (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “People will persist in falling back until

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Allaah puts them back.”

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

And it was said that what it means is: He will put them back (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 hadeeth should not be interpreted in all of these ways.

Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen said concerning the meaning of this hadeeth:

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah 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 Allaah puts them back.” Based on this there is the fear that if a person gets used to falling back in worship, he will be punished by Allaah putting him back with regard to all good things.

From Fataawa Ibn ‘Uthaymeen, 13/54

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

Al-Shawkaani said in Nayl al-Awtaar:

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 to be in the front row and to put them off hanging back from the front row.

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

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

And Allaah knows best.