

VISITING THE SICK (PART 1 OF 2)

Rating: 4.2

Description: Visiting the sick is an obligation rewarded by the Most Merciful, God, and the practice of his merciful Prophet, Muhammad.

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Islam invites to all that is good and warns from all that is bad. From those good and virtuous deeds is the visiting of the ill and afflicted. When people visit each other in good health, bonds of brotherhood and friendship are strengthened. How then when people visit each other in times of sickness and poor or failing health? Illustrating the empathy that Muslims are required to feel for each other, Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, said:



“The parable of the Believers in their mutual love and mercy is like that of a living body: if one part feels pain, the whole body suffers in sleeplessness and fever.”^[1]

Visiting the sick is from the clearest signs of such mutual love, mercy and empathy. More than that, visiting the sick is a major responsibility that every single Muslim is duty-bound to fulfill. The Prophet Muhammad said:

“The rights of one Muslim over another Muslim are six... When you meet him, you greet him with the salaam (i.e. to say: “As-Salamu alaykum”), when he invites you, you accept his invitation, when he consults you in a matter, you give him sincere advice, when he sneezes and praises God, you ask God to have mercy on him, when he is sick, you visit him, and when he passes away you accompany him (through his funeral).”^[2]

In this Prophetic narration we find that the Muslim is encouraged with concern for his brother in Islam during the three phases of his worldly existence: his health, sickness and his death.

Whilst in good health, the Muslim is obliged to greet his brother in faith with the greetings of peace and protection, to accept his invitations and to give him sincere

advice.

Then, when the Muslim is suffering from a cold, an allergy or whatever else is causing him to sneeze, his brother in Islam is obliged to ask God to have mercy on him.

Likewise, when the Muslim's sickness is such that he is incapacitated, his brother in Islam is obliged to visit him.

Finally, when the Muslim passes away from this life, his brother in faith is obliged to accompany his funeral procession, prayer and burial.

The great reward awaiting those who visit the sick was spelt out by the Prophet when he explained:

“A Muslim visiting his sick brother will continue to be in the harvest of paradise until he or she returns home.”^[3]

And God's Messenger of Mercy, Muhammad, also said:

“A visitor walking to visit a sick person will be wading in the mercy of God. When the visitor sits with the sick one, they will be immersed in mercy until his or her return.”^[4]

God Himself explained the importance of and greatness of the reward of visiting the sick. The Prophet said:

“On the Day of Resurrection, God the Mighty and Majestic will say: ‘O child of Adam! I became sick and you did not visit me!’ The person will say, ‘O Lord, how can I visit you and you are the Lord of all that Exists!’ God will say, ‘Did you not know that my slave ‘so and so’ became sick, and you did not visit him? Did you not know that if you visited him, you would have found me with him?’” (Saheeh Muslim)

As with every other virtuous deed and noble duty, Prophet Muhammad led by example. He would both make time to personally visit the sick and also enquire after them through others.

Whilst in Mecca, for example, a pagan woman was given to throw filth and garbage upon the Prophet whenever he passed her house. One day, the noticeable absence of the Prophet's abuser concerned him so much that he enquired after her. When he learnt of her sickness, he visited her. She was so taken aback by his merciful concern and that she embraced Islam.

“Repel (the evil of your foe) with what is better: then lo! the one between whom and you was enmity (will become to you) as if he were a dear friend.” (Quran 41:34)

The learned Companion, Anas b. Malik, also related the following episode from the life of God's Final Prophet to humanity:

“A Jewish boy who would serve the Prophet fell sick, so the Prophet said: **‘Let us go and visit him.’** They (the Prophet and his illustrious Companions) went to visit him and found his father sitting by his head. The Messenger of God said: **‘Proclaim that there is no true deity worthy of being worshipped except God alone, and I will intercede on your behalf on account of it on the Day of Resurrection.’** The boy looked at his father and the father said: **‘Obey Abul-Qasim (Muhammad)!’** So the boy uttered: **‘There is no true deity worthy of being worshipped except God alone, and Muhammad is the last Messenger.’** The Messenger of God then said: **‘All praise is due to God Who saved him from the Fire of Hell.’**”^[5]

From these two examples from life of the Prophet, we find that it is not a precondition that the sick being visited are from within the fold of Islam. Nevertheless, from these two examples, we find that the act of visiting the sick and suffering, as exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad, can be such a touching and moving experience that it might even cure that most fateful of diseases: infidelity.

“Indeed in the Messenger of God you have an excellent example to follow for whoever hopes for [the meeting of] God and the Last Day and remembers God much.” (Quran 33:21)

Footnotes:

[1] *Saheeh Muslim.*

[2] Related by Abu Hurayra in *Saheeh Bukhari.*

[3] *Saheeh Muslim.*

[4] Imam Ahmad and Ibn Hibban.

[5] Ibn Hibban.

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