

A Literal Explanation of a Ḥadīth: Religious Moderation

Abū Hurayrah reported that the prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said:

إِنَّ الدِّينَ يَسْرٌ وَلَكِنْ يُشَادُّ¹ الدِّينَ أَحَدٌ إِلَّا غَلَبَهُ، فَسَدِّدُوا² وَقَارِبُوا³ وَأَبْشِرُوا⁴
وَاسْتَعِينُوا بِالْغَدْوَةِ⁵ وَالرُّوحَةِ⁶ وَشَيْءٍ مِنَ الدُّلْجَةِ⁷

The religion is indeed easy, and no one contends with the religion except that it will overwhelm him. So seek out a balanced correctness, do as much as you can, and rejoice (at your reward). And seek assistance (from Allah) in the early morning, the afternoon, and some part of the late night.¹

1. يُشَادُّ “contends” – The word المُشَادَّةُ (*al-mushāddah*) means contending or struggling with something. It is said (in Arabic) شَادَّ / يُشَادُّ / مُشَادَّةً to mean “to vie in strength with”. So the meaning (in the Ḥadīth) is that no one delves too deep or goes to extremes in doing religious deeds, having no sense of leniency or gentleness, except that he will be incapable (of doing everything) and he will eventually stop and become overwhelmed.

2. سَدِّدُوا “seek out a balanced correctness” – The word means to stick to what is السَّدَادُ (*al-sadād*) or appropriate and sound, meaning that which is correct with neither

¹ Recorded by al-Bukhārī (no. 39) and Muslim (no. 2816).

excessiveness nor negligence. Arabic grammarians have mentioned that the word السَّدَاد (al-sadād) means moderation in deed.

3. قَارِبُوا “do as much as you can” – The word means that since you are unable to perform everything perfectly then still do what you can to get as close to that state as possible (while considering the statement above).

4. أَبْشِرُوا “rejoice” – Rejoice at the reward attained by continue actions despite being small or few. It means that this is an announcement of good news that whoever is unable to do everything perfectly, as long as his inability is not due to something he himself actually failed to do, then this inability in deed does not mean his reward will be any less. And this (announcement) is a way of dignifying and honoring the one given this good news.

5. اسْتَعِينُوا بِالْغَدْوَةِ “seek assistance (from Allah) in the early morning” – Seek Allah’s assistance with perseverance and persistence in doing acts of worship particularly during the special times of religious importance and liveliness. The word الغَدْوَةُ (al-ghadwah) is the period of time at the beginning of the day. The famous Arabic grammarian, al-Jawharī, said it is the period between the morning prayer and sunrise.

6. الرَّوْحَةَ “the afternoon” – The time period of midday, the afternoon.

7. الدُّلْجَةَ “the late night” – The last part of the night. It has also been said that it means the entire night. For this, these times were specifically distinguished from one another and doing deeds at night is often more difficult than during the day.

These times are also the best times for a traveler. It is as if he (صلى الله عليه وسلم) was addressing a traveler journeying to his destination, informing him of the times he should be most active. If a traveler travels all day and all night, he will be unable to continue, eventually being forced to stop. But if he specifically seeks out these times of liveliness, he would be able to continue without much hardship.

An excellent metaphor would be that the reality of this life is that it is a place of travel, the destination being the hereafter. And these specific times are the most refreshing, the most inspirited, or lively of times for the body to perform acts of worship.²

This Ḥadīth is explicit in that the religion is easy and that it is intended to be taken in moderation such that a person does not fall into excessiveness or go to extremes concerning himself just as he does not fall into negligence.

² This explanation of the Ḥadīth is from “Fatḥ al-Bārī” (1/94-95).