



On one occasion, 'Umar bin 'Abdil 'Azeez (rahimahullah) sent an emissary to the ruler of Rome. After the emissary had concluded his mission with the ruler, he left his court and began to roam around. While roaming, he passed by a place where he could hear a man reciting the Quraan Majeed and grinding grain. He thus approached the man and greeted him with salaam two or three times, but the man did not reply to his salaam.

Finally, the man replied to his salaam and asked, "How is it that someone is making salaam to me in this land? (i.e. how is it that a Muslim is present here?)" The emissary then explained to the man that he was the emissary of 'Umar bin 'Abdil 'Azeez (rahimahullah), sent to the ruler of Rome.

The emissary then asked the man regarding his condition and what he was doing in the land of Rome. The man replied, "I was taken prisoner from such-and-such place and brought before the Roman ruler. (When I stood before him,) he invited me to accept Christianity, but I refused. (Hearing my refusal,) he threatened, 'If you do not do so, I will have your eyes blinded!' I made the choice to safeguard my Deen and sacrifice my sight. Hence, he had my eyes blinded, after which he sent me to stay in this place. Everyday, he sends wheat for me to grind, and bread for me to eat."

When the emissary returned to 'Umar bin 'Abdil 'Azeez (rahimahullah), he mentioned the Muslim prisoner he had encountered and informed him of his plight as well. On hearing the manner in which this Muslim prisoner was suffering, 'Umar bin 'Abdil 'Azeez (rahimahullah) was extremely affected. The emissary mentioned, "Before I could complete my report of the prisoner, 'Umar bin 'Abdil 'Azeez (rahimahullah) had already begun to weep with his tears wetting the area in front of him."

'Umar bin 'Abdil 'Azeez (rahimahullah) then had a letter sent to the ruler of Rome in which the following message was written:

“I have heard of the plight of so-and-so person (he then described the prisoner). I swear by Allah that if you do not release him and send him to me, I will dispatch against you an army of such size that when the front of the army reaches you, the rear will still be with me.”

When the emissary arrived in the court of the Roman ruler, he was surprised and remarked, “How soon you have returned!” The emissary then handed him the letter of ‘Umar bin ‘Abdil ‘Azeez (rahimahullah). On reading the letter, the ruler remarked, “We should not provoke this pious man into this. Let us rather send the prisoner back.”

The emissary says, “I then stayed there, waiting for the prisoner to be released (so that I may take him back). However, one day thereafter, when I came to the ruler, I found that he had descended from his throne and was seated on the floor. (On looking at him,) I could see that something (had transpired that) had affected him. He asked me, ‘Do you know why I have descended to sit on the floor?’ I did not like what I beheld (as it indicated that something adverse had transpired), and replied in the negative. He then said, ‘I have received news, from a certain region of my kingdom, informing me that the pious man (i.e. ‘Umar bin ‘Abdil ‘Azeez [rahimahullah]) has passed away. That is why I am conducting in this manner.’

“The ruler then remarked, ‘(It is my experience that) when a pious man is among evil people, he is not left among them for long, but is rather taken away from them (the reason for him saying this is that ‘Umar bin ‘Abdil ‘Azeez [rahimahullah] only ruled for two years and then passed away).’ I had then lost hope that he will allow the prisoner to return with me, and thus asked, ‘Will you allow me to return?’ He responded, ‘We are not such that we will accept his request in his lifetime, but then break our word after his demise.’”

Having said this, he released the prisoner and allowed the emissary to escort him back to the Muslim lands.

(Seerah ‘Umar bin ‘Abdil ‘Azeez libni ‘Abdil Hakam pg. 148)

Lessons:

1. 'Umar bin 'Abdil 'Azeez (rahimahullah) was the ruler, seeing to the affairs of millions of people spread over thousands of kilometers. Yet, when he heard of the plight of a single man, suffering in a foreign land, it moved him to tears and prompted him to take action. This should be the compassion and concern in the heart of every Muslim for his fellow Muslim. If anyone is in any difficulty, it should fill our hearts with pain. It should prompt us to do whatever is in our ability, be it assisting physically or financially, or even raising our hands and crying for that person in du'aa.

A true Muslim cannot continue living in comfort while turning a blind eye to the suffering of those around him.

2. When the prisoner was threatened, he understood the value of sight. He knew that he would forever lose the ability to gaze at a colourful flower, the blue sky, the crashing waves, and every other delightful image and scene. However, he also understood the value of imaan, which is why he patiently sacrificed his sight and saved his imaan.

If we also understood the value of imaan, we would do our best to avoid any element that poses a risk to the safety of our Deen and imaan.

3. When 'Umar bin 'Abdil 'Azeez (rahimahullah) ruled with total justice and upheld every teaching of Deen, Allah Ta'ala instilled respect for him within the heart of his enemy. Similarly, if we uphold all the teachings of our beautiful Deen in our lives, Allah Ta'ala will place our respect in the hearts of our enemies as well.



**“I made the choice to
safeguard my Deen and
sacrifice my sight.”**

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