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SEERAH PART 5

Preaching by the Prophet ﷺ , and the Persecution by the polytheists.

Open Preaching:

Bukhari reported from ibn Abbas .

When the following verse was revealed the Prophet ﷺ ascended mount AsSafa and started to call and gather people and present dawah to them. In another hadith from Muslim on the authority of Abu Hurairah, the Prophet ﷺ called the Quraish and gave them a general warning, referring to each tribe.

This was the start of the open call and the prophet ﷺ began to proclaim the invitation to Islam in every gathering and assembly.

Persecution of the new converts

Quraish in a desperate attempt tried tactics such as taunting, ridiculing and degrading the new converts and their leader, the Prophet (ﷺ), calling him different names. Also they tried to distort the message of Islam, and obstructing the message in all sorts in the way of acceptance by people.

At the beginning of the fourth year of prophethood, owing to the failure of their attempt in restricting the people from entering islam, Quraish held a gathering to step up their enmity and to start persecuting the early converts, many of whom did not have a strong clan to support them. Abu Jahl, one of the worst enemies of Islam, would mercilessly beat and inflict unspeakable torture upon any convert who was socially weak and did not have protection.

Among the people of the elite class was Uthmaan (رضي الله عنه), who was tortured by his own uncle. Mus'ab Ibn Umair (رضي الله عنه) was subjected to

TAHMEED INSTITUTE

SEERAH PART 5

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starvation and was thrown out of his house by his mother, who once used to enjoy a luxurious and easy life.

Bilal (رضي الله عنه) was severely beaten by his owner Umayyah ibn Khalaf. Sometimes he would be dragged along the rocky and rough streets by a rope tied around his neck. Apart from the extreme torture he experienced, he was also deprived of food and drink for prolonged periods of time, and was being bound and left in the desert with a giant rock on his chest during the hottest part of a day. Bilal remained firm and only uttered “Ahad, Ahad (One, one)” (i.e. Allah is One in worship).

Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه), saw this and was moved and he purchased Bilal and set him free from slavery.

Ammar, his father and mother (رضي الله عنهم) were all tortured. Initially his father Yasir (رضي الله عنه) died due to the unrelenting torture. Then his mother Sumaiyyah (رضي الله عنها) was bayoneted by Abu Jahl, and this granted her the status of the first female martyr in Islam. Ammar (رضي الله عنه) was subjected to various modes of torture and was forced to confess that he had made an error in accepting Islam. In a moment of vulnerability, he uttered something interpreted by his torturers as his retraction from Islam, while the faith in his heart remained firm. He informed the Prophet (ﷺ), who consoled him and confirmed his faith. Thereupon, Allah (سبحانه) revealed, “Whoever disbelieved in Allah after his belief, except him who is forced to and whose heart is at rest with faith.” [Surah Nahl 106]

Many other early converts were tortured horrendously and Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه) purchased whoever he could from their masters and set them free for the sake of Allah (سبحانه وتعالى). It was not easy for the Quraish to inflict physical harm upon the Prophet (ﷺ) because Allah protected him via his (ﷺ) uncle Abu Talib, who was from a large influential clan which would support him.

TAHMEED INSTITUTE

SEERAH PART 5

Preaching by the Prophet (ﷺ), and the Persecution by the polytheists.

Atrocities against the Prophet (ﷺ)

Quraish did whatever they could to not only hinder the spread of Islam but also attempted to get rid of it altogether. The faith of the new converts did not waver in the least despite facing a barrage of mental and physical torture.

Some notable figures from Quraish approached Abu Talib and insisted that he speak with his nephew. Abu Talib was one of their coreligionists and it was expected that he would not sit by idly while his ancestors and idols are 'insulted' by the Muslims.

The Prophet (ﷺ) gave a reply to Abu Talib's concerns, by telling him, "O my uncle, by Allah, if they put the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left on condition that I abandon this course, I would not abandon it until Allah made me victorious or I perish therein." To this, Abu Talib replied : "Go and preach what you please, I will never forsake you."

Abu Talib remained true to this resolve, standing by the Prophet (ﷺ) and doing his best to protect him till he died.

After some time, Quraish brought a youth and offered him to Abu Talib, to raise him up as a family member, in exchange for permitting Quraish to do as they please with the Prophet (ﷺ). Understandably, Abu Talib replied, "This is really an unfair bargain, where you give me your son to raise him and I give you my son (i.e. the Prophet (ﷺ)) to kill him!?"

Abu Lahab, an uncle of the Prophet (ﷺ), initiated the charge when it came to physical harm. He would throw stones at him (ﷺ) and forced his two sons to divorce their wives Ruqayyah and Umm Kulthum (رضي الله عنهما), who were the daughters of the Prophet (ﷺ). He even expressed delight at the death of the Prophet's (ﷺ) second son and called him 'the man cut off from offspring'.

TAHMEED INSTITUTE

SEERAH PART 5

Preaching by the Prophet ﷺ , and the Persecution by the polytheists.

It is no surprise then, that his wife Umm Jameel, joined him in this awful acts , for she was no less in enmity and hatred towards the Prophet (ﷺ). One of her tactics was to tie bundles of thorns and scatter them on the paths usually taken by the Prophet (ﷺ).

Once, in a fit of rage, she went to the Prophet (ﷺ) who happened to be with Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه). However, Allah (جل) temporarily blinded her in such a way that she could not see the Prophet (ﷺ) who was right in front of her. She addressed Abu Bakr angrily and returned.

In another incident, the Prophet (ﷺ) was offering prayers near the Ka'bah with some evil polytheists nearby. One of them dared others by saying, "Who among you will bring the guts of a camel and put it on the back of Muhammad?" A person called Uqbah ibn abi Mu'qit performed the evil action. He waited till the Prophet (ﷺ) prostrated and placed the filth on his back between his shoulders. The prophet ﷺ did not lift his head until Fatimah (رضي الله عنها), came and removed the filth from her father's back. After the Prophet (ﷺ) finished his prayer, he supplicated to Allah (جل) against seven of them: Abu Jahl, Utbah ibn Rabee'ah, his son Waleed bin utbah and brother Shaibah bin rabeeah, Umaiyah ibn Khalaf, Uqbah and Umarah ibn Al-Waleed. Allah answered this prayer several years later when all of them were killed in the battle of Badr.

Due to the increasing torture, the Prophet (ﷺ) advised the new converts to conceal their conversion and would meet them in private in Dar Al-Arqam to preach in safety. The Prophet (ﷺ), however, continued to preach and practice his faith openly.

Distorting the beautiful message of Islam is an old tactic used initially by the Quraish against the new converts and the Prophet (ﷺ). But this did not reduce the resolve of the Prophet (ﷺ) nor the companions, neither in their implementation of Islam nor its propagation.