

Abu Bakr, the Truthful (part 2 of 3): We are two and God is our Third

Description: Two friends face danger and put their trust in God.

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Prophet Muhammad, may God shower him with praises, and his close companion Abu Bakr were less than three years apart in age. Both were born into the same Arab tribe, Quraish, but were from different clans. Most of Prophet Muhammad's early life was spent in relative poverty while Abu Bakr came from a reasonably well off family. Both men lived and behaved in a quiet and dignified manner and both men had shunned idolatry all of their lives. When Prophet Muhammad received his mission to spread the message of Islam the first man he turned to was his friend Abu Bakr. Without a moment's hesitation Abu Bakr accepted Islam and began a journey of dedication and love that was to last the rest of his life.

Abu Bakr loved his friend dearly and was ready and able to accept the truth of Islam easily. When he heard the message that God was One, he was ready to accept what he already knew to be true. His daughter Aisha narrated that in all of his life, Abu Bakr never prostrated to an idol. Abu Bakr himself relates that when he was a child, his father took him to the place of idols and left him there amongst the statues. The young boy looked at the inanimate objects surrounding him and asked them of what benefit they could be to him. When the idols were unable to respond Abu Bakr decided that he would not worship something that could not hear or see. He innately understood that statues and idols were not worthy of worship.

Abu Bakr's love for the One True God and his support for his friend Muhammad meant that in the early days of Islam, he was often persecuted and mercilessly beaten. The majority of Meccans hated to hear Muhammad's message of reform and reckoning. They were the guardians of idolatry and a great deal of revenue was made from the pilgrims visiting one or more of the idols worshipped in and around Mecca. If Muhammad succeeded in uniting the people in the worship of One God and if their ways of corruption were eradicated, their lives would be irreversibly changed.

The Migration

The shocking treatment, torture and brutality directed against the Muslims meant that Prophet Muhammad sent many of them away for their own protection. The second of two migrations was to the nearby city of Yathrib, later to be named Madina. Although often called a flight, it was in reality a carefully planned migration. Two tribes from Yathrib had negotiated a treaty with Prophet Muhammad and offered him their allegiance and protection but at this stage, Prophet Muhammad had not been given permission by God to

leave Mecca. He did however send his followers to Yathrib in groups small enough not to attract the attention of the Meccans.

One day in the heat of the noonday sun, Prophet Muhammad visited the home of his friend Abu Bakr. The streets of Mecca were deserted and Abu Bakr knew this visit of great importance, this time of day was reserved for rest. Prophet Muhammad asked Abu Bakr to "empty your house", meaning that he had something important and private to discuss. Abu Bakr replied, "This is your family." Prophet Muhammad went inside and revealed to his friend that God had given him permission to leave Mecca. Aisha narrates that her father wept when he heard that he was to be Prophet Muhammad's companion on the journey.

Abu Bakr wept not from fear, although the journey would be fraught with danger, but from sheer joy. This was an opportunity for him to spend more than ten days travelling alone with his dearest companion. It was an opportunity to spend many days and nights drinking from the fountain of Prophethood. Abu Bakr announced that he had camels prepared and ready to go, for he too had been waiting for his companion Muhammad to be given the permission to leave. That night the two friends left through the back door and walked into the black desert landscape.

The Search

When the Meccans realised that Prophet Muhammad had escaped Mecca, thereby eluding their plans to kill him, they were furious. Search parties immediately began to scour the surrounding areas. Although they suspected that prophet Muhammad was heading for Yathrib, they sent scouts in every direction. Abu Bakr and Prophet Muhammad spent three days hiding in a cave south of Mecca.

At one stage, a search party came so close to the entrance of their cave Abu Bakr could see their shoes above him. He was filled with fear and trepidation, not for himself, for he was a courageous man, but for his beloved friend. Abu Bakr whispered, "Messenger of God, if they look down towards their feet they will see us!" Prophet Muhammad replied, "Abu Bakr, what do you think of two people with whom God is the third?" God revealed the following verse of Quran in response to this poignant moment.

"If you help him (Muhammad) not (it does not matter), for God did indeed help him when the disbelievers drove him out, the second of two, when they were in the cave, and he (Prophet Muhammad) said to his companion (Abu Bakr),"Be not sad (or afraid), surely God is with us." Then God sent down His Sakinah (calmness, tranquillity, peace, etc.) upon him, and strengthened him with forces that you saw not, and made the word of those who disbelieved the lowermost, while it was the Word of God that became the uppermost, and God is All-Mighty, All-Wise." (Quran 9:40)

The angry and frantic Meccans stood outside the cave but did not enter. A spider had spun a delicate web across the entrance to the cave making it appear that no one had

entered the cave in a very long time. Abu Bakr understood from his beloved friend's words that the power of God is often found manifest in the least expected places. A tiny, fragile spider spinning a web of concealment was mightier than an army. Abu Bakr, the first man to enter Islam became one of two. Two friends united on a mission, bound by their love for each other and for the fledgling Muslim nation, strengthened by their love of the One True God.

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