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The Golden Series of the Prophet's Companions

Salman Al-Farisi رضي الله عنه **In quest of Truth**

By

Abdul Basit Ahmad

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allâh,
the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

“Among the believers are men who have been true to their covenant with Allâh [i.e., they have gone out for Jihâd (holy fighting), and showed not their backs to the disbelievers]; of them some have fulfilled their obligations (i.e., have been martyred); and some of them are still waiting, but they have never changed (i.e., they never proved treacherous to their covenant which they concluded with Allâh) in the least.” (33:23)

Publisher's Note

All praises are due to Allâh, the Lord of all that exists. May Allâh's peace and blessings be upon His final Prophet and Messenger, Muhammad, his family and his Companions.

The following story, “Salman Al-Farisi-In Quest of Truth,” discusses the life of one of Islam's greatest heroes. Salman Al-Farisi was born into a house of nobility and wealth in the land of Persia. Yet, due to his sincerity and virtue, Allâh placed a burning desire in his heart to know the truth about the purpose of life and religion.

Darrusalam is pleased to present this valuable series, “The Golden Series of the Prophet's Companions” to the Muslim youth. The purpose of these books is to enlighten our youth about the lives of the greatest heroes of Islam, the Prophet's Companions.

The stories in this series are not “make-believe” or fables, but are real life stories of various important individuals in the history of Islam. The reader will learn how very ordinary people heard and came to accept the message of Islam from Prophet Muhammad ﷺ himself.

Abdul Malik Mujahid
General Manager

Foreword

Every human being has an objective in his life for which he does everything he can to attain. Some people see that collecting much money is the thing that deserves working for; but others look for something more rewarding than worldly things. Therefore, they go on a long journey of hardships and sufferings until they achieve their objectives. Our hero, Salman Al Farisi ؓ, is one of those men who sought to attain the ultimate truth. He was given the power that enabled him to go beyond worldly things and to search for a more meaningful life. He left behind the world of pleasures and easy life and, instead went in pursuit of the truth. He was a man who never looked behind when he knew that he found the answers to all of his inquiries about the true faith. Before that, his life was a mix of doubts and hesitations that made him, in spite of the luxury and riches he enjoyed, live in a world of smoke and gloom. Hence, he made his long journey to the land where Divine truth was revealed. In spite of the many obstacles he met and the sufferings he experienced on his way to guidance, he never complained or retreated. He was driven by an overwhelming desire to free himself from the slavery of doubt and false deities. He was a man of thought and

wisdom and a man who contributed much to the victory of the message of Islam through his original and creative ideas. He lived up to his morals and values taught to him by the Prophet ﷺ to the last moment of his life. He was humble and merciful toward the poor and needy but, at the same time, he was strong and decisive toward the arrogant and the evil.

He was one of those soldiers who joined the Muslim army to fight many battles for the sake of spreading the call of Islam. He was also the governor who set an example of a just and a pious Muslim for those to follow.

To know more about our hero, Salman Al-Farisi ؓ, I invite you to read the following pages. I hope they will shed light on some aspects of his life, which he spent in quest and defense of truth.

Abdul Basit Ahmad

Introduction

Arabs before the rise of Islam

The Arab society in the Arabian Peninsula and surrounding areas mainly consisted of tribes and clans. Some of them lived in towns while most of them followed their flocks everywhere in the desert in search of food and water. These tribes were usually involved in wars amongst each other. Every tribe was invading and invaded by other tribes.

The gloom that loomed over the Arabian Peninsula and the world in general before the rise of Islam killed nearly every virtue in the minds and hearts of human beings at that time. Human rights, for example, were not given any value. Slavery, burying girls alive and injustices were dominating the societies of the city and desert alike. Youth and old were spending their time in grazing animals or practicing trade during the daytime and seeking trivial pleasures during the night. The guidance brought by previous religions was absent from the life of people. There was no central government; rather, every tribe had its own chief and customs in spite of the fact that some common laws were prevailing in the society. The people of Arabia were largely idol worshippers.

A number of Jews and Christians were scattered here and there, but their practice of their religions had greatly diminished. Every Arab tribe had its own deities and its own forms of worship. The Ka'bah in Makkah was itself surrounded with hundreds of idols which were considered by Makkans as gods.

All these vices and atrocities urgently needed a messenger from Allāh to reform the society and spread guidance throughout the Arabian Peninsula in particular and the world in general.

Advent of Islam

The child Muhammad ﷺ grew up in such an environment. When he became a young man, he kept himself away from the evils and vices of the day. Like other youth, he used to graze his uncle's flocks. He was well behaved and was loved and respected by all those who came in contact with him. He was well known to be sincere and trustworthy to the extent that he was called *Al-Ameen* (trustworthy) by people. He did not like the ways that his peers were following to satisfy their desires. He even could not bear the idea to stand before any idol pleading for help. He sometimes engaged in trade on behalf of wealthy men. It is well known that he visited Damascus twice before he was commissioned with the message of Islam. On the way there, many

them abandon their faith were of no avail. The torture they received at the hands of the pagans did not succeed in making them even say one word against their faith. Some of them were even killed under torture.

Attempts of the Quraish to stop the call

The chiefs of the Quraish were furious to see Islam spread among the people. In the beginning, they tried their best to make the followers of Islam recant. When they could not force the believers to give up their faith, they began accusing the Prophet ﷺ of things that they themselves knew were untrue. They alleged that Muhammad ﷺ was a magician or a liar, although they themselves used to call him the trustworthy. However, all their attempts were of no avail. They followed another direction. They began negotiating with the Prophet ﷺ and his uncle to reach a compromise. They told the Prophet ﷺ that they would make him a king or give him all the money he might ask for. However, the Prophet ﷺ rejected all of their worldly proposals and continued preaching the message of Islam to all humanity.

The Long Journey to Truth

Background

In ancient times there were two super powers; the Persian and Roman Empires. The Persian Empire, on the one hand, was spreading its power over nearly half of the populated world. The people of this powerful empire mostly worshipped fire, falsely claiming it to be the source of light and knowledge. They erected fire temples throughout the empire and spent large sums of money to run such temples.

The Roman Empire, on the other hand, ruled over the other half of the world. The people under the rule of this Empire followed a distorted copy of the Christian Bible. The two empires were not on good terms with each other and therefore, they waged fierce wars against each other.

The lonely boy

Salman Al-Farisi (the Persian) was the only son of a ruling family in Persia. His father ruled over a town named Jay of Asbahan Province (presently Iran). The boy led a pleasant and painless life under the care of his father who loved him very much and kept him under close watch for fear of losing him. The boy had nothing to do

except to play most of the time and to enjoy every moment of his life.

When Salman grew up, his father directed him to serve in the fire temple and learn the rites of Mazdaism. So, the youth spent most of his time in the temple until he was given a rank of a fire setter.

He was now given some freedom to move here and there and to know more about the world around him. Although he was going to the fire temple daily, he felt inside himself that he was paying homage to something trivial. His aspiring soul was looking for something more convincing than this dumb fire.

As his father was so busy at home, he asked his only son to look after a farm he had at the outskirts of the town. The youth accepted the mission with happiness and carefully listened to the last advice of his loving father:

“Salman, do not be late and take care.
You know how much you are dear to me.”

The youth was going to the farm everyday. On the way there, he was passing by colored scenery in the gardens around the town through which he sensed that they were made by a power that gives greenery not a fire that kills everything green.

Introduction to Divine guidance

One day, he suddenly heard voices coming out of a church that stood near to his way to the farm. The closer he came to the church, the louder the voices were coming to his ears. He stood at the gate of the church hesitant to go in or to leave. However, a driving force pulled his legs inside. He was anxious to know about those people who were chanting with serenity within those high walls.

He stood in a corner with his eyes fixed on the man on stage giving a sermon to a group of people who were listening to him with great attention and tranquillity. After a while, they all said their prayers and began dispersing.

Salman was amazed on hearing those nice words uttered by the priest and could not help but to move toward him. He greeted the man and began inquiring about the things he saw and heard. He immediately started asking:

“What was that you had been doing? To whom were you praying and what is your religion?”

Salman recalled that his father had told him that Mazdaism was the only true religion on earth. Many times, he warned him not to divert from the right way and urged him to stick to the fire temple and fire rites. He, more than once, told him that

room. The young man spent many days inside the room behind thick walls and locked doors. He was all the time contemplating about the new belief he had deeply rooted in his heart. He was longing for a new life with new adventures in a land where he would live a new experience.

Salman sent a secret messenger to the church priest seeking to know of any caravan bound to Syria. He spent some time waiting for news from the priest and dreaming of the new life he would have after escaping from his father.

One day, the messenger came with the news of a caravan bound to the promised land of Syria. Salman felt that the moment of his freedom from false deities had come near. Under the cover of the dark night, he left the room where he had been confined with the help of his guard and met the caravan traders traveling to Syria.

Running away from gloom

Salman left to where the priest told him he would find answers to his many questions. Days and nights were passing and bringing him closer to the true and real life. On the way, he saw the stars brighter and more beautiful than before. He was looking up at them as if he had seen them for the first time. He thought for a while that they were different from those that shined over his motherland.

Salman and the priest

Upon his arrival to Syria, he saw a new world and new faces. He did not spare a minute to ask about the man whom he should keep company with to know more about the new religion. The people told him to go to the church where he should meet their priest. Salman met the priest and told him his story. He asked him to allow him to stay with him to worship god, to learn more about the teachings of Christianity and to serve in the church. The man agreed that Salman could stay in the church and keep company with him.

Salman started learning new things about the new religion. He was asking many questions and reading the Bible. Unfortunately, after a short time, he discovered that the priest he was serving was very bad. He was urging his followers to give alms to the poor but he was keeping such alms for himself. The inevitable end came and the priest died. His followers were busy with his funeral but before they buried him, Salman told them about the truth of their priest. They were astonished to hear such words about the man they loved and took as an example of piety. They asked Salman to prove his words; otherwise, they would subject him to torture. Salman took them to the place where the man was collecting the money. They

The Trench

Muslims were astonished to hear Salman's proposal. They had never known such a way of fighting. All they knew was to meet with the enemy face to face in an open battle. However, Salman ؓ explained the plan. He proposed to dig a wide and deep trench behind fences with the Muslim army to be deployed at the inner side of the trench with their backs to Al-Madinah. This would foil any attempts made by the enemy soldiers to cross over the trench.

The Prophet ﷺ welcomed the idea and asked Salman ؓ to set the layout. Salman ؓ planned to deploy the archers over fences while the other soldiers were to be deployed on the inner side of the trench with their backs to the Al-Madinah fences.

After lengthy discussions, the Prophet ﷺ was totally convinced that this was the only way to defend their town and community. He gave orders to dig the trench and initiated the first strike. All Muslims participated in the work with a very high spirit and overwhelming enthusiasm. Salman ؓ helped them and told them stories about the miracles that trenches made against invading armies. Work on digging the trench was progressing hour by hour.

As usual in every human effort, some difficulties might appear. While Muslims were digging in a rocky area, a huge rock blocked the progress of work. Nine persons were trying their best to break the rock but all efforts were in vain. At last they suggested to report the case to the Prophet ﷺ.

Miracles and promised miracles

The Prophet ﷺ took Salman's ax, went down into the trench and hit the rock with the ax. Sparks came out as a result of the blow and the Prophet ﷺ shouted: *Allâhu Akbar* (Allâh is the Greatest). The other Muslims standing at the top of the trench repeated his words. The second hit by the Prophet ﷺ brought out a light as if a lantern was lit in a dark room and the Prophet ﷺ said: *Allâhu Akbar* (Allâh is the Greatest). The other Muslims repeated his words. The third hit by the Prophet ﷺ broke the rock into pieces. The Prophet ﷺ came out of the trench. Salman ؓ was filled with wonder and said:

"O Messenger of Allâh ﷺ! I have seen something I had never seen before." The Prophet ﷺ asked the other Muslims, "Did you see what Salman saw?" They replied, "Yes, we saw you hitting the rock and light was coming out." The Prophet ﷺ said, "When I hit the rock the first time I saw Persian palaces and Caesar's fortresses.

Salman ؓ was from this time on belonging to a family that did not count on blood relationships as much as it counted on spiritual ties. He was sure that one day he would be a member of a larger family that has members all over the world.

The example of justice and mercy

Salman ؓ never thought that one day he would go back to his country of origin. After his long journey, he came to Al-Madinah to live with the Prophet ﷺ and the Muslim community. He stayed beside the Prophet ﷺ to quench his thirst for knowledge and fulfill his duties as a true Muslim.

When the Prophet ﷺ passed away, he accompanied Abu Bakr ؓ and continued the way of life he had at the time of the Prophet ﷺ with hopes to see the promises of the Prophet ﷺ come true.

Under the rule of 'Umar ؓ, Muslims continued the mission of spreading Islam. Salman ؓ left Al-Madinah under the command of Sa'd bin Abi Waqqas ؓ towards Iraq and from there to his homeland, Persia. When the Muslim army conquered Al-Mada'in, Salman ؓ was appointed by 'Umar ؓ as governor of that region.

He was now the governor of a land he left many years ago. He came back to his homeland but with different thoughts and faith. It was time to show

his people the real Salman ؓ. It was time to teach his people what Islam did for him.

Salman ؓ did not spare a minute to set an example of a humble and merciful governor. Governors always tend to distinguish themselves over the public, but Salman ؓ learnt that a governor should serve and not be served. Through his way of rule, he taught the public how to be just and caring. He always cared for the poor and the needy.

One day, he passed by a group of soldiers. They whispered to each other words criticizing his humble way of life. When he was told about that, he said to his companion:

"It is now time to distinguish good from bad. Take heed! If you are able, never be a leader of even two persons, for you will never be just to the very end of your life, however you try."

He felt that he was shouldering a very heavy duty that he wanted to fulfill. He once came to 'Umar ؓ and said to him:

"Had it not been an obligation to obey your orders, I would not have accepted to be a governor."

As a governor, Salman ؓ could bring back