

The Rightly Guided Caliphs: Abu Bakr (part 2 of 2)

Description: A continuation of the short biography of Prophet Muhammad's companion, friend and father-in-law, Abu Bakr.

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Objectives:

- To understand the importance of Abu Bakr's role in the history of Islam.
- To recognise the special relationship between Prophet Muhammad and Abu Bakr.

Arabic Terms:

- *Kabah* - The cube-shaped structure located in the city of Mecca. It serves as a focal point towards which all Muslims face when praying.
- *Sunnah* - The word *Sunnah* has several meanings depending on the area of study however the meaning is generally accepted to be, whatever was reported that the Prophet said, did, or approved.
- *Zakah* - obligatory charity.
- *Ummah* - Refers to the whole Muslim community, irrespective of color, race, language or nationality.

Abu Bakr the protector. (continued)

- The two friends Abu Bakr and Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of Allah be upon him, saw each other every day and every day their friendship grew. Abu Bakr felt it was his duty to protect Prophet Muhammad. One day whilst praying in the *Kabah*, Prophet Muhammad was attacked. An altercation that started as taunting quickly escalated into a physical abuse. When Abu Bakr was informed he ran to the *Kabah* and pushed himself into the middle of the fight shouting, **oeWould you kill a man for saying that Allah is his Lord".[1]** The Meccans were momentarily stunned but then fell upon Abu Bakr beating him so badly



that the blood flowed freely and matted his hair. Although beaten until he lost consciousness the *sunnah* informs us that Abu Bakr's first words when waking were to inquire urgently about the condition of Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of Allah be upon him.

- On another occasion when Prophet Muhammad was praying at the *Kabah* one of the Meccan leaders threw a piece of cloth around his neck and began strangling him. There were many people watching but none were brave enough to stop the harassment except Abu Bakr, who rushed over and fought off the person attacking his beloved friend.

Abu Bakr migrates.

- One day in the heat of the noonday sun, Prophet Muhammad visited the home of Abu Bakr. He revealed to his friend that Allah 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. He wept not from fear but from joy. Abu Bakr was overcome with emotion that he would be the one to accompany and protect the Messenger of Allah.

That very night Prophet and Abu Bakr walked out into the desert nightscape, and Allah protected them both with a web of deceit. Abu Bakr and Prophet Muhammad were heading for Yathrib (later named Medina) but knew the Meccans would be furious and looking for them everywhere, thus they hid for three nights in a cave south of Mecca. The search party came so close that Abu Bakr could see the tops of their shoes. They stood outside the cave but did not enter because Allah blinded them from seeing the entrance.

Abu Bakr the warrior.

- The first battle the new Muslim nation engaged in was the Battle of Badr; the men refused to let Prophet Muhammad be in the front lines and built him a shelter at the rear of the troops. It was Abu Bakr that volunteered to guard his Prophet. No one else was willing to do that, possibly because they wanted to be in the thick of battle; however Abu Bakr understood that the life of Prophet Muhammad was of the utmost importance. While Prophet Muhammad was in the shelter Abu Bakr could be seen walking back and forth, his sword unsheathed, ready to defend his companion. Later in the battle, Prophet Muhammad led the centre battalion and Abu Bakr the right flank.
- In 630 CE Prophet Muhammad decided to lead an expedition to [Tabuk](#) on the [Syrian](#) border. A great deal of livestock and equipment were needed for the expedition so Prophet Muhammad invited contributions and donations from his followers. It is said in the *sunnah* that Abu Bakr gave all his wealth to finance this battle. When Prophet Muhammad asked him how much he had donated Abu Bakr said, "I have brought all that I had. I have left Allah and His Prophet for myself and my family".^[2]

Abu Bakr the Caliph.

- Abu Bakr led the Muslims during the most intense and difficult time that had faced the *Ummah*. Prophet Muhammad had passed away and a number of tribes rebelled by

refusing to pay the *zakah*. At the same time there were impostors who claimed prophethood and began to revolt. Under these circumstances, many advised Abu Bakr to make concessions but he disagreed insisting that there was no distinction between any of the pillars of Islam especially comparing the *zakah* to prayer. He insisted that any compromise would erode the foundations of Islam. The rebelling tribes attacked, however the Muslims were prepared and their defence was led successfully by Abu Bakr, the Caliph himself. Abu Bakr also forced the false claimants to prophethood to retract their claims and most of them submitted to the will of Allah by re-joining the *Ummah*.

Abu Bakr died in August 634 at the age of sixty three. He was buried by the side of his dear friend and leader, Prophet Muhammad. In his brief caliphate of twenty-seven months he had strengthened the Muslim *Ummah* from perils that threatened its existence.

Abu Bakr's love and devotion to Prophet Muhammad were remembered fondly even after his death. The fourth Rightly Guided Caliph, Ali ibn Abi Talib spoke at Abu Bakr's funeral and thrilled the mourners with stories of his bravery. "You supported him (Prophet Muhammad) when others had deserted him, and you remained firm in helping him in misfortunes when others had withdrawn their support. You had the lowest voice but the highest distinction. Your conversation was most exemplary and your reasoning most just; your silence was longest in duration, and your speech was the most eloquent. Bravest among men, and well-informed about matters, your action was dignified."

Endnotes:

[1] *Saheeh Al-Bukhari*

[2] *Abu Dawood*

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