

Uddat al-Sabirin wa Dhakhirat al-Shakirin



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Patience ^{of}
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*Uddat al-Sabirin
wa
Dhakhirat al-Shakirin*

By Ibn al-Qayyim

Translated by: Abdul Ali Hamid
The Muslim College, London



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In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Beneficent

Praise be to Allah, the Most Patient, the Most Appreciative, the Most High, the Great, the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing, the All-knowing, the Most Powerful. His power is infinite and His Will, regarding His creatures, affects all their affairs. His call for the appointed day reaches the people in their graves. He has decreed the fate of the people and their life span, and He records all their actions and deeds. He apportions their livelihoods and their wealth. He created life and death for all so that He may see which of them is best in conduct. He is the Mighty, the All-Forgiving, the Overpowering, and the Most Powerful. All difficulties are easy for Him. He is the Protector, the Helper, and He is an excellent protector and an excellent helper. Everything, in the heavens and on the earth glorifies Him. To Him belongs all sovereignty and all praise, and He has power over everything.

"It is He who created you, some of you are unbelievers and some of you are believers. Allah sees that which you do. He created the heavens and the earth with truth, and shaped you, and made your shape beautiful. To Him is return.... He knows what you conceal and what you reveal. He is, surely, aware of what is in the hearts. (65/2-5)

I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah. He is the Alone, the only deity, and He is above having anything similar or equal to him, and He is free from having a partner or a helper. He is never inactive, as the heretics claim, and is beyond being similar to the creation; there is nothing like Him. He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing.

I also bear witness that Muhammad is His Servant and Messenger; the best from His creation and the chosen one from among the created beings. He is Allah's trustee concerning the revelation and His envoy to His slaves. He is the most knowledgeable of all the people concerning Allah; he is the most fearful of Allah, the most sincere to his community, the most steadfast concerning Allah's commands, and the most grateful for Allah's bounties. He has the closest access to Him, is the highest in rank with Him, the greatest in honour and having the greatest means of intercession with Him.

Allah, the Almighty sent him as a caller to Paradise, an inviter to faith, working earnestly to achieve His pleasure, commanding what is good and prohibiting what is evil. He conveyed the message of His Lord, proclaimed what he was commanded, and suffered for the sake of Allah such hardships that no other human being ever will. He remained steadfast and grateful to Allah until he attained His appreciation. He remained firm in his endurance in such a lofty manner that no other can ever attain; he advanced in the rank of gratefulness, reaching a position higher than all other grateful people do. The result of this is that Allah, His angels, His Messengers and all believers offer their praises of him, so that he alone has been singled out to be granted the banner of praise. Adam and all other Messengers and Prophets will be under this banner. Allah shows His praise in the opening of His Book which He revealed to him, and He made it the beginning of the Torah and the Gospel, as reported in the *Hadeeth*. He made His praise the last words to be spoken by the people who were guided by Him to deserve His reward. The Almighty called his community 'the ones who praise the most' (*al-hammadun*) even before they came into existence because they engaged in His praise in prosperity and adversity, and in ease and hardship. He enabled his followers to enter the abode of reward, to enjoy recompense ahead of all other people. The closest person to his banner is the one who praises Allah and remembers Him much. The highest in rank is the one who exercises patience and often expresses thanks. May Allah, His angels, His Prophets and Messengers and all believers send their blessings and salutations upon him as he declared the oneness of Allah, taught it and called the people to it.

Allah, the Exalted made the quality of endurance similar to a horse that does not stumble, like a sword that does not fail, like a victorious fighter who is never defeated and like a fortified castle that defies destruction and damage. Endurance and triumph are, therefore, like brothers that do not part from one another.

*"We are suckled by the breast of the same mother sharing among us on a dark night.
We will never be separated."*

Triumph is joined with endurance, relief with distress and ease with hardship. Endurance, unaided by equipment and an army of soldiers, is more helpful to the one who exercises it. It is as close to triumph as the head is to the body. Allah the Trustworthy and the Truthful, promises in His clear statement, which is found in the Book, that He will reward those who persevere patiently without measure. He has declared that He is with them with His guidance, dominant help, and a clear victory. He says (what means):

“Be patient and persevere, for Allah is with those who patiently persevere.” (8/46)

Those who persevere with His divine company achieve the best in this world and in the Hereafter, and they gain the seen and unseen bounties of the Almighty.

The Almighty imbues leadership of the religion with endurance and firm belief. He says (what means):

“When they became steadfast and believed firmly in our message, We raised leaders among them guiding them according to Our command.” (32/24)

He declares in an emphatic way that endurance is best for those who exercise it. He says (what means):

“If you persevere in endurance, this is surely best for those who persevere in endurance.” (16/126)

Allah also announces that perseverance in endurance, together with consciousness of Allah, foils the stratagem of an enemy even if he has greater power. He says (what means):

“If you remain steadfast and are conscious of Allah their schemes will not harm you in the least. Allah is encompassing what they do.” (3/120)

He relates to us about His truthful Prophet Yoosuf (peace be upon

him), whose endurance and consciousness of Allah led him to the position of honour and power. He says (what means):

“Whosoever is conscious of Allah and perseveres in endurance, Allah does not suffer the reward of those who do right to be lost.” (12/90)

He attributes success to endurance and consciousness of Allah. The believers understood this from Him, as He taught them (what means):

“O believers! Be steadfast, vie in steadfastness, strengthen each other and be conscious of Allah that you may succeed.” (3/200)

He told us that He loves the people who persevere with patience, and this is the greatest encouragement for those who aspire for it. He says (what means):

“Allah loves those who endure in patience” (3/146)

He gave to those who remain steadfast the glad tidings of three things, when He said (what means):

“Give good tidings to those who are steadfast, those who say, when afflicted with calamity, ‘We belong to Allah and to Him we shall return. These will be given blessings and mercy from their Lord and it is they who are rightly guided.’” (2/155-157)

He commanded His servants to seek help thorough endurance and prayer against the vicissitudes of the world and the religion. He, the Most High, says (what means):

“Seek help through endurance and prayer. It is indeed hard except on those who are humble.” (2/45)

He decreed that those who endure with patience will be the ones to succeed in gaining access to Paradise and protection from Hell. He declared (what means):

“I rewarded them this day because they persevered in patience. They are indeed the triumphant.” (23/111)

Allah also related that the desire for His rewards and turning away from the world and its finery can only be achieved by those who believe and persevere in patience.

“The people who were given knowledge said, ‘Alas for you! Allah’s reward is better for those who believe and do good deeds: only those who are steadfast will attain it.’ (28/80)

The Almighty also indicated that repelling evil with good makes the evildoer a close and intimate friend. He said (what means):

“Good and evil cannot be equal. Repel evil with what is better. Then he between whom and you there is enmity will become as a close and intimate friend.” (41/34)

Only those who endure patiently and those who are fortunate will attain this quality.

Allah also affirmed (what means):

“Surely man is in loss except those who believe and do good deeds, and urge one another to truth and urge one another to steadfastness.”(103/2-3)

He divided His creation into two groups: the people of the right and the people of the left. He favoured the people of right by making them urge one another to steadfastness and compassion, and He favoured the steadfast and grateful people with the benefits of His signs in order to differentiate them. He said, in four verses of His Book (what means):

“Surely there are signs in this for every steadfast thankful person.” (14/5, 31/31, 34/5, 42/33)

Allah, the Exalted attached forgiveness and reward with good deeds

and patience. Any task is easy for those whom He makes it easy. He stated (what means):

“Except those who are steadfast and do good deeds, they are the ones who will attain forgiveness and big reward.” (11/11)

He also indicated that steadfastness and forgiveness are virtues that never fail. He affirmed this by saying (what means):

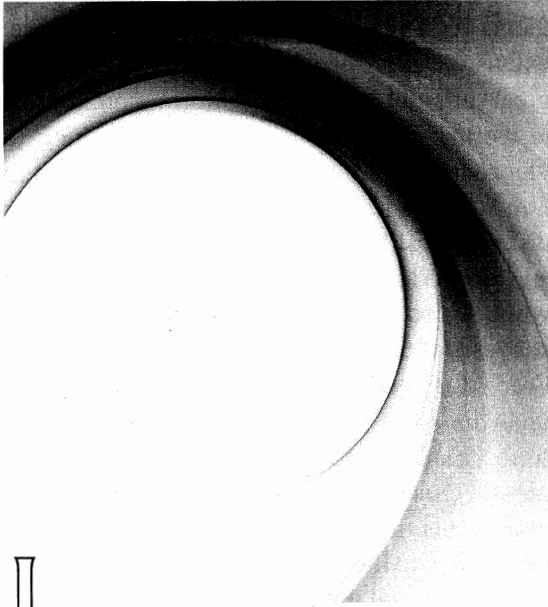
“The one who is steadfast and forgives that is one of the greatest things.” (42/43)

He commanded His Messenger to endure with patience in carrying out His orders and told him that his patience was from Him, and that all problems would be made easy. He said (what means):

- ***“Endure patiently in your Lord’s command; you are under Our watchful eyes.” (52/48)***
- ***“Be steadfast, your steadfastness is only from Allah. Do not grieve over them; do not be distressed by their scheming. Surely Allah is with those who are mindful and do good.” (16/127,128)***

Patience is the foundation to which the believer always returns. It is the cushion of his faith on which he rests. The one who lacks patience has little or no faith; if he was to have any faith, then it will be weak and negligible. Such a person is from among those who worship Allah as if they are upon the edge of a blade. If good comes to him, he is content, but if he is tested, then he reverts to his old ways. He has lost both the world and the Hereafter, and is left with nothing but a losing transaction.

Fortunate are those who attain the best way for their life through their steadfastness, advance to the highest ranks and enter the garden of bliss on the wings of their patience and gratitude. This is Allah’s bounty, He grants it to whomever He wills.



INTRODUCTION

As faith consists of two parts: steadfastness and thankfulness, it is therefore necessary for a person, who wishes good for himself, desires safety for his soul and hopes for the best for it, to never abandon these two basic qualities and not to deviate from these two straight paths. He should proceed towards Allah, treading these two paths, in order to be placed among the best group from among those who meet Him on that Day.

This book is written to highlight the necessity and the pressing need to pursue these two qualities and to illustrate that happiness in this world and the Hereafter is dependent on them. It is intended to be a comprehensive, extensive and useful book. It contains a great amount of useful information, which is worthy of being held firmly and clung to vigorously. It is pleasing to the reader, plain to him who reads it thoroughly, engaging to the distressed, stimulating for the neglectful one, and encouraging for the one who is ready to work. It also contains points of benefit from the exegesis of the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) duly referred to their sources, reports from pious predecessors with references, juristic issues supported by evidence, and indications to the spiritual path. All these will be obvious to the one who contemplates over it and is endowed with a sound intellect.

The book deals with the various forms of patience and gratitude. It offers a decisive answer to the debate about who is better: the grateful rich person or the steadfast poor person. It exposes the real face of the world and cites the similitudes stated by Allah, His Messenger and the pious predecessors.

The reality of these similitudes and their conformity with actual situations are also discussed. What is praiseworthy and what is blameworthy of the worldly matters, what brings a person closer to Allah and what takes him away from Him are all elaborated on; what

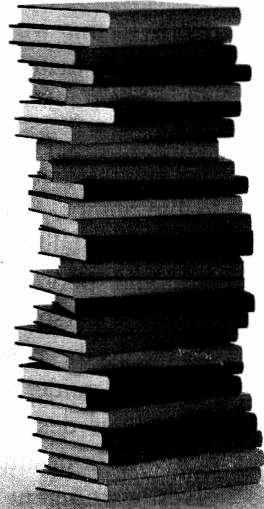
makes a person miserable and what makes him happy in this world – all these are dealt with along with many other useful discussions that are rarely found in other books.

It is an undeniable favour and a gift from Allah to the author, His servant. This book can be seen as suitable for kings and commanders, rich and poor, ascetics and jurists. It will prompt a person who is sitting to rise up and march forth, entertain the traveller on his path and guide the follower on the spiritual path to his destination. Yet it is the effort of one who is destitute and needy himself, who gives warning in it against the illness from which he himself is suffering. He prescribed the medicine but he did not take it regularly due to his own wrongdoing and ignorance. He hopes that the Noblest of the nobles and the most Compassionate of the compassionate will forgive him for his adventure of embarking on giving advice to His believing servants.

All that is correct in this book is from Allah alone and He alone is praiseworthy and the source of help. Whatever is wrong in it is from its author and from Satan; Allah and His Messenger are free from it.

The scanty capital of its author is brought to you and his commodity is presented to you, to the reader goes its benefit and to its author its harm. His ideas are transmitted to you. If they reach a noble honourable person he will feel happy, otherwise it will be like a young woman given to a handicapped and impotent person.

*I have arranged it
in 26 chapters along
with a conclusion.
They are:*



Chapter one:

The dictionary meaning of *Sabr* (patience), its etymology and conjugation.

Chapter two:

The real essence of *Sabr* and the views of people concerning it.

Chapter three:

The names of *Sabr* as regards its connections.

Chapter four:

Difference between *Sabr*, *Tasubbur*, *Istibar* and *Musabarah*.

Chapter five:

The types of *Sabr*, concerning its objects.

Chapter six:

Its types in accordance with its strength, weakness and its ability or inability to counter the army of one's desire.

Chapter seven:

Its type in relation to its connections.

Chapter eight:

Its categories concerning its connection with the five categories of rules.

Chapter nine:

The different levels of *Sabr*.

Chapter ten:

Its division into the praiseworthy and blameworthy.

Chapter eleven:

The difference between the *Sabr* of the nobles and that of the lowly.

Chapter twelve:

The measures that help in exercising *Sabr*.

Chapter thirteen:

Affirmation that human beings can never be free from exercising *Sabr*.

Chapter fourteen:

The hardest of *Sabr* is on the self.

Chapter fifteen:

Texts from the Holy Book concerning *Sabr*.

Chapter sixteen:

Texts of the *Sunnah* concerning it.

Chapter seventeen:

The statements of the Companions about the virtue of *Sabr*.

Chapter eighteen:

Discussion of matters connected with calamity like crying, yelling, tearing of the clothes, uttering unIslamic words and so on.

Chapter nineteen:

Sabr is half of faith, as faith is made up of two parts: *Sabr* and *Shukr*.

Chapter twenty:

Argument about which one is the best: *Sabr* or *Shukr*.

Chapter twenty one:

Judgement between the two groups and clearing the case.

Chapter twenty two:

Dispute among the people as to who is better: the thankful rich or steadfast poor; judgement of the case.

Chapter twenty three:

The citations forwarded by the poor from the Book, the *Sunnah*, the reports and logical deduction to support their claims.

Chapter twenty four:

The argument of the rich by quotations from the Book, the *Sunnah*, the reports and analogy.

Chapter twenty five:

Matters that are opposite, damaging or contradicting steadfastness.

Chapter twenty six:

Sabr as one of the attributes of the Lord, as He is called *al-Sabur* and *al-Shakur*.

I named the book '*Uddat as-Sabirin wa Dhakhirat ash-Shakirin*. I pray to Allah to make it purely for His sake and as a means to gain His closeness and good pleasure; to enable its author, the scribe and the reader to benefit from it. He certainly hears the supplication, and is the source of hope. He is sufficient for us and is the best supporter.

Chapter

One

The dictionary meaning of the word *Sabr* and its derivation and conjugation^[1]

The original meaning of this word is: “to prevent and to subdue or arrest”. Thus, *Sabr* means to restrain the soul from worry, control the tongue from complaining and restrain parts of the body from striking the face, tearing the clothes and so on.

Allah says (what means):

“Restrain yourself with those who call upon their Lord.” (18/28)

Antarah said:

“I restrained for this (hard work) a free soul that knew and kept steadfast when the soul of the coward was shaken; i.e., I restrained a soul that was aware of the consequences. It was the soul of a free proud man, not the soul of a slave without pride. It remained calm when the soul of a cowardly person was shaken.”

1 Some discussions of this chapter are left out because they are purely linguistic, which are not useful to the English readers.

In a *Hadeeth* regarding a man who held someone while another person killed him, the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: *'The killer will be killed and the one who held [the victim] will be held in custody'*^[1], meaning, until his death.

Sabr is the word used when a person is held and detained for being killed. In an authentic narration, the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: *'Whoever commits perjury to appropriate the property of a Muslim will meet Allah while He will turn away from him.'*^[2]

In another report, the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) forbade *Masburah*, ^[3], i.e., a goat or a chicken that is tied and shot until it dies.

It is said that the original meaning of the word is strength and power. The word *Sabr*, for a herb which is very bitter and distasteful, is derived from this. The word *Subr* is also taken from this meaning, and applies to a fertile land, because of its hardness and firmness.

A third view is that its meaning is "to collect and to gather". Hence, *Saabir* is a person who holds himself up and keeps his soul away from worries and anxiety.

Actually, the word *Sabr* embraces all the three meanings: to restrain, to find strength and to pull oneself together.

The word is used in the first form (*Sabr*) to refer to being steadfast, in the fifth form (*Tasabbur*) to imply to try and attempt to be steadfast, in the eighth form (*Istibar*) to indicate making the effort to acquire steadfastness, in the third form (*Musabarah*) to mean holding someone in the state of steadfastness and in the second form (*Tasbir*) to imply to encourage someone to exercise *Sabr*.

1 Recorded by Abd al-Razzaq (17892), al-Darqutni (3/139) and al-Bayhaqi (8/50)

2 Al-Bukhaari (4549, 6676, 7183) and Muslim (355)

3 Al-Shafi'i reported it in "*al-Umm*" 7150) cf. Al-Bukhaari (5513), and Muslim (5057).

Chapter

Two

*The real essence of Sabr and the scholars' views concerning it*¹

The real essence of *Sabr* is that it is one of the noble qualities of the soul that prevents a person from doing what is reprehensible and unacceptable. It is one of the forces of the soul by which the soul's affairs are maintained and its condition kept stable.

Al-Junayd bin Muhammad was asked about it and his answer was that it was: "to swallow bitterness without showing any sign of a frown."

Thun-Noon says: 'It is to keep away from violations, to remain calm when experiencing the hardship of a calamity, and to demonstrate affluence, even if poverty is affecting one's life.'

It has also been defined as: "remaining steadfast in distress, with noble character."

Another meaning is: "to be self sufficient in tribulation without complaint."

Abu 'Uthman explained the word *as-Sabbaar* as: "a person who has trained himself to meet any adversity."

Another scholar said: "*Sabr* is to show as good the same attitude in

¹ The following statements are taken from *al-Risala al-Qushayriyyah* (pp.183-188) by Abu al-Qasim al-Qushayri.

adversity as shown in prosperity”, meaning that a person has a duty to show devotion to Allah when experiencing prosperity or tribulation. He should be thankful to Allah for his prosperity and be steadfast when afflicted with adversity.

‘Amr bin ‘Uthman al-Makki said: “*Sabr* is to remain steadfast with Allah and accept any trial from Him with composure and magnanimity.” The sense is that one should receive afflictions with an open heart and seek to avoid expressing annoyance, irritation or complaint.

Al-Khawwas stated: “*Sabr* is to remain patient on the rulings of the Qur’an and the *Sunnah*.”

Ruwaym defined *Sabr* as not resorting to complaint. He defined it with its outcome.

Someone else said that *Sabr* means to seek the help of Allah.

Abu Ali said that *Sabr* was what its name implied.

Ali bin Abi Talib stated that *Sabr* is a mount that never stumbles.

Abu Muhammad al-Jariri said: “*Sabr* means that a person should be indifferent to the states of favour and adversity, his heart remaining in peace in both conditions.”

I say that it is neither possible nor was it commanded. Allah has given people the ability to distinguish between these two conditions. What a man is capable of doing is to restrain himself from worrying, but not to remain the same in both conditions. The capacity for well-being is wider in a person than that of steadfastness. This is attested by the saying of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in his well-known supplication: “(O Allah!) If you are not angry with me, then I do not care, yet wellbeing, granted by You, is better for me.”^[1]

This does not contradict the Prophet’s statement that no one is granted a gift better and more comprehensive than patience.^[2] This applies in a state of affliction or calamity. In that condition, nothing is broader than steadfastness. However, to be in a state of wellbeing is preferable.

Abu Ali al-Daqqaq asserted: The definition of patience is that a person does question the decree. Speaking about calamity without complaining

1 See the full text in Ibn Hisham (2/268), also at-Tabarani: *al-Mu’jam* (13/ No.181).

2 Al-Bukhaari (1469, 6470) and Muslim (2424)

is not in contradiction with steadfastness. Allah, the Exalted, said about Prophet Ayyoob (peace be upon him) (what means):

“We found him to be steadfast.” (38/44)

He described him as such, despite his saying (what means): ***“Affliction has touched me.”*** (21/83)

Here ad-Daqqaq has explained the word with its required result. His statement that speaking about a calamity should be without complaint needs further illustration. There are two types of complaints:

First: To complain to Allah, which is not inconsistent with patience -- as Prophet Ya’qoob (peace be upon him) said (what means):

“I complain my distress and sorrow to Allah.” (12/86)

At the same time, he also said (what means):

“So, beautiful endurance is most becoming.” (12/18, 83)

Ayyoob (peace be upon him) said (what means): ***“Affliction has touched me”*** (21/83), nevertheless, Allah credited him with endurance.

The master of the patient people, may Allah’s blessing and peace be upon him, said: ***“O Allah! I complain to you about my weakness of power and lack of means.”***

Moosa (peace be upon him) prayed: ***“O Allah! For you is praise; to you is the complaint. You are the One whose help is sought for and you are the One to whom the supplication for support is made. On You we are reliant. There is no power, no strength except with You.”***^[1]

Second: The second type of complaint is the one made by the affected person by words or actions. This is not compatible with patience; rather it opposes it, and is detrimental to it.

There is then a difference between complaining to a person and complaining to Allah. We will deal with this issue later in the chapter of ‘combination and separation of complaint and steadfastness’ if Allah wills.

Another meaning for *Sabr* is ‘the courage of the soul’.

From this comes the saying: Courage is an hour’s steadfastness.

It is also said that steadfastness is steadiness of the heart in a situation of commotion.

1 At-Tabarani: *Al-Awsat* (3394) and *al-Saghir* (1/122)

Steadfastness and anxiety are opposites, which is why they are used against one another. Allah, the Exalted, cites a saying of the people in Hell (which means):

“It makes no difference whether we show anxiety or steadfastness. There is no escape for us.” (14/21)

Anxiety is the partner to and the helper of incapability, while steadfastness is the companion and essence of competence. If anxiety were to be asked: Who is your father? It would reply: Incapability. On the other hand if competence was asked: Who is your father? It would reply: Steadfastness. The soul is the steed of a person on which he rides to Paradise or Hell. Steadfastness is like the noseband and reins for it; without them, it would wander in any direction.

Al-Hajjaj is reported to have said in one of his sermons: “Restrain these souls as they are eager to commit every evil act. May Allah have mercy on a man who has fixed a halter and a rein to his soul. He leads it by its noseband to the obedience of Allah and turns it away by its reins from disobedience of Allah. Restraining oneself from the prohibitions of Allah is easier than suffering from His torment.”

I add: The soul has two forces: the force to proceed and the force to restrain. The true quality of steadfastness is to direct the force to proceed towards what is useful and restrain the force from that which is harmful. Some power of control of people over doing what is good, and their firmness on it, is greater than refraining from what is bad and harmful. They are able to endure the hardship of performing good deeds, but have no control over their motives of lust and become involved in what is forbidden. There are others whose power of control over violation is stronger than their endurance to the hardship of doing good deeds, and there those who have no control over either.

The best person is he who is capable of controlling himself in both situations. It is observed that there are many people who endure persistently the hardship of keeping vigil in the night in both cold and hot weather, and observing the fast, but they are unable to control themselves from gazing at prohibited objects. There are others who restrain their gaze and do not pay attention to images, yet are unable to carry out the duty of commanding the good and prohibiting evil, or struggling against unbelievers and hypocrites. They are utterly powerless and incapable of undertaking these tasks. Most

people lack the determination of doing one or the other. Very few have the ability to be steadfast in both circumstances.

It is said: 'Steadfastness is the control of the rule of intelligence and religion against the desire to fulfil one's lust and passion.'

This means that the natural disposition of man is to incline towards what is desirable, but the motives generated by intelligence and religion are opposed to it. The battle between the two continues and success alternates. The battlefield of this war is the heart of a human being and the weapons are steadfastness, courage and firmness.



Chapter

Three

Names of Sabr , in relation to its object

Commendable steadfastness is that which emanates from the free will of the mind to resist the incentive of reprehensible desire, thus, different names are given to it in relation to its application. Restraint from unlawful sexual desire is called chastity (*Iffah*), and its opposite is immorality, adultery and prostitution.

If one controls oneself from the desires of the stomach in rushing to eat or taking what is not proper it is called dignity and satiation, their opposites being greediness, gluttony and meanness.

Refraining from the disclosure of secret talks is known as keeping a secret, and its opposites are announcement, dissemination, accusation, abomination, abuse, lies or defamation.

When applied to the control of one's excesses in life it is called *Zuhd* (abstinence), and its opposite is greed.

If it is applied to describe the contentment of what is enough of the worldly materials, it is known as contentment (*Qana'ah*). Its opposite is greed.

Refraining from acting in anger it is called forbearance (*Hilm*), its opposite being recklessness.

Chapter

Four

Difference between Sabr, Tasabbur, Istibar, and Musabarah

The differences in the usage of these words depend upon the condition of a person within himself and his relationship with others. If keeping away and restraining himself from responding to the call of performing whatever is not good is natural and inborn in him it is *Sabr*. If he does it with difficulty and must force himself to undertake it, then it is *Tasabbur*. The latter comes from the fifth form, which indicates the efforts that are made to do the work.

Here are some other words with the same indication: *Tahallum* (to pretend to be forbearing), *Tashajju'* (to try to be brave), *Takarrum* (to try to be generous), *Tahammul* (to work to bear), etc.

When a person forces himself to acquire the quality of steadfastness and practices it regularly, it becomes a natural part of his character. The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "*Whoever forces himself to endure, Allah will make him steadfast.*"^[1]

1 Al-Bukhaari (1469, 6470) and Muslim (2424)

Similarly, when a person makes an effort to become chaste, chastity becomes natural to him. Other qualities may be acquired in the same fashion. Whether moral qualities that can be acquired through endeavour or forcing oneself to certain behaviour or can ever become natural disposition, is disputed among the scholars. A poet said: "The heart is pressed to forget you, but the natural disposition refuses to change."

Another one said: "O the one who adorns himself with qualities other than his own, the effort produces character."

Another person said: "The ignominy of making effort to acquire a particular habit is the indication of natural disposition."

Some believe that Allah, the Exalted, has completed the work of creation, bestowing good disposition, provision and the time of death to everyone.

However, others believe that it is possible to acquire a good character. Understanding, clemency, generosity, benevolence and bravery can all be acquired, as is evidenced from many people.

It is also said that constant practice leads to a natural disposition. This means that when a person regularly does something, becomes used to it and trains himself by continuously doing it, it becomes a habit and a natural disposition for him. Habits change one's nature. A person continues to make the effort to exercise patience until it becomes natural for him. In the same way, forbearance, dignity, tranquillity and firmness become part of the innate character of a person when he continually tries to adopt them.

They assert that Allah, the Almighty has created in human beings the potential for learning and adapting. Transformation of the natural disposition is not impossible. However, this transformation may be fragile, and the person may revert to his innate nature for the slightest reason. Although strong, it is not complete and when there is a powerful cause, the person may return to his former habits. In some cases, however, the transformation is so firm that the newly acquired character becomes second nature for a person and it becomes almost impossible for him to revert to his former character.

Istibar, a degree higher than *Tasabbur*, is the effort of exercising steadfastness when acquiring something by effort. As the effort of earning leads to an income, so the effort of acquiring steadfastness leads to becoming steadfast, and when repeated regularly, results in acquiring that quality.

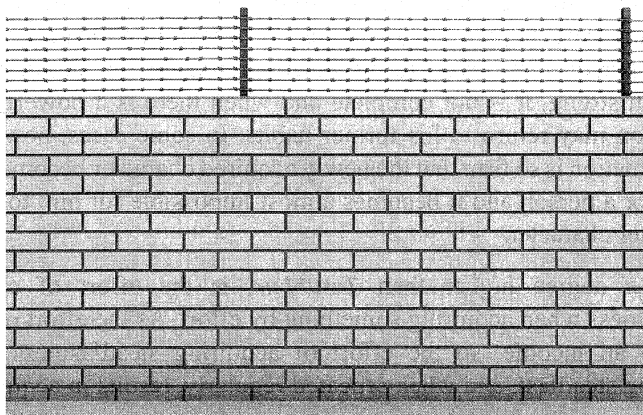
The word *Musabarah* implies an encounter with an enemy in the field of endeavour. It is the third form of the verb that requires two parties to engage in something like abusing or striking one another. Allah, the Almighty says (what means):

4

“O believers! Persevere in patience, vie in such perseverance, strengthen each other and be conscious of Allah that you may succeed.” (3/200)

In this verse, the Almighty commanded the believers to exercise patience. This is the state of a patient person within himself. He ordered them to compete against each other, and with the enemy. He further asked them to remain steadfast, to be firm and constant in the state of steadfastness while vying with one another in it. This indicates that a person may show steadfastness, but he may be unable to outdo others. At other times, a person may be able to compete without being constant. He may be doing all three without dedicating himself to Allah consciously. Thus, Allah asserted that the basis of all these things is consciousness of Him and any success is attached to it.

Murabatah means to station oneself on a frontier from which the danger of attack is expected, but it also implies watching over the frontier of the heart, to stop attacks from desires and the devil, both seeking to take control of it.



Chapter

Five

The categories of patience according to its conditions

Patience is of two kinds: physical and mental. Each of them is either optional or obligatory, and can be divided into four categories:

The first is physical and optional: undertaking voluntarily actions which are difficult.

The second is physical and obligatory: enduring the pain of a beating, illness, wounds, cold, heat, etc.

The third is psychological and optional: to restrain oneself from doing what is not good religiously or rationally.

The last is psychological and obligatory: restraining the soul forcibly from what it loves when there is a barrier to achieve it.

These categories as explained are exclusively applicable to human beings. They are not found in the animal kingdom. However, animals share two of them with human beings: the obligatory physical and mental endurance, where some animals show greater endurance than human beings. The distinction between human beings and animals is seen in the voluntary types of endurance. Many people have the power of control in the areas

that are common between people and animals, and have less control in the area that is limited to human beings. Such people may be considered to be steadfast while in reality they are not.

5

Now the question is whether the *Jinn* share this type of endurance with human beings. The answer is: yes. This is because it is a necessary requirement of the legal obligations on which commands and prohibitions are based. *Jinn* are required to be steadfast in carrying out the commandments and avoiding the prohibitions, just like human beings.

The next question is: Are *Jinn* charged in the same manner as we are or in a different way? The answer is that in matters that are necessary aspects of the soul, such as love, hatred, belief, faith friendship and enmity, they are equal with us. In matters that relate to the body, such as washing for purification, washing the parts in ablution and after urine, circumcision, taking a bath after the period of menstruation, etc., they are not obliged to do them as we do. They do these actions in the manner that suits their life style and their nature.

Do the angels share with us any kind of patience? The angels are unable to experience desires that may overwhelm their reason and knowledge. Devotion and obedience for them are like breathing is for us. Therefore, it is unconceivable that they have patience, the real essence of which is to keep the forces of reason and religion firm against the forces of lust and desire. They have the quality of steadfastness that is suitable for them, i.e., to be constant and steadfast in what they have been created for, without any interference from lust or desire.

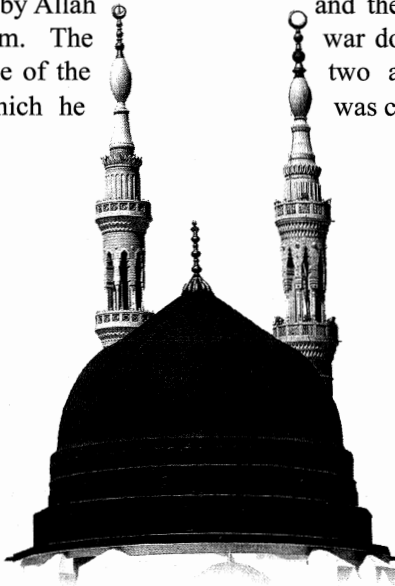
When a man's patience is so powerful that it overwhelms the motives of lust and desire, he reaches the level of the angels, but if his steadfastness is defeated by the motives of lust and desire he joins the rank of the devils. When he is unable to restrain himself from the habits of eating, drinking and sexual activities he descends to the level of animals.

Qatadah said: "Allah, the Almighty created angels with reason without desire, He created animals with desire without reason and He created humankind and endowed him with the faculty of reasoning and with desires. So, if a man's reason dominates his desire, he joins the angels, but if his desire controls his reason, he becomes like the animals."

Since humankind was born imperfect, only the desire for food was put in his nature, because it is essential for his survival. His endurance in this

case is similar to that of animals. Before reaching the stage of discretion, he does not have power of voluntary endurance. When the desire for play develops in him, he becomes ready to acquire that power in its weakest form. Later, when sexual desire awakens in him, the power of endurance develops fully. With the growth and strength of the power of reason, he is able to take support from the forces of endurance. However, the power of reason alone is not capable of confronting the forces of lust and desire. The light of guidance shines on him when he reaches the age of discretion and gradually grows stronger as he advances and reaches the age of puberty. It is like the thread of dawn that grows as the day advances. Yet this guidance is not enough to enable him to realize the advantages and disadvantages of the Hereafter. The most it can do is to make him aware of some of the advantages and disadvantages of this world.

Then when the sun of Prophethood and Messengerhood rises and its light spreads, he becomes, in that light, capable of seeing the benefits and harm of both worlds in detail. He looks at the outcomes and prepares himself by putting on the coat of mail for the war and taking up all sorts of weapons. Then he enters the battle between the incentives of desire and passion, and the power of reason and guidance. The victorious one is he who is supported by Allah and the loser is he who is deserted by Him. The war does not end until the person gets to one of the two abodes and reaches the place for which he was created.



Chapter

Six

The categories of patience according to a person's strength, weakness, ability or inability to combat the forces of desire

The cause of religion, with respect to the motive of desire, has three conditions:

First: The cause of religion is dominant; it overpowers the cause of desire and subdues it. This can be achieved only by constant perseverance. Those who reach this stage are successful in the world and the Hereafter. These are the people who said: *'Our Lord is Allah, and remained firm on it.'* They are the ones to whom the angels say at the time of their death (what means):

"Do not fear nor grieve, but receive the good tidings of the Garden (of bliss) which you were promised. We are your protectors in this life and in the Hereafter." (41/30,31)

These are the people who will achieve the companionship of Allah along

with the steadfast people. They are those who strove in the cause of Allah as it was due, so He chose them alone for His guidance.

Second: Power and dominance are the motives of desire that overpower completely the incentive of religion. As a result, a person who submits to the devil and his forces will be dragged in the direction they want, and be left with two options:

To join the forces of the devil and become a member of his group; this is the condition of a weak and incapable person.

Or to make the devil subordinate to himself: this is the state of the strong powerful evildoer and an innovator who is promoting his innovations and recruiting followers. He is like the one described in the following: 'I was a member of the forces of the devil, then I advanced till the devil became among my soldiers.'

In this case, the devil and his army become his allies and supporters. They consist of those whose misfortune so overwhelmed them that they sold the Hereafter for worldly possessions. They reached this state of tribulation, overwhelming misfortune, and an unlucky end to the rejoicing of their enemies, because they did not possess steadfastness. The powers of these people are composed of trickery, deception, false hopes, illusion, delaying of good works, lengthy hopes and preference of immediate gain over the forthcoming reward. These are the people about whom the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) remarked: "*The incapable person is the one who follows his desire and has high hopes from Allah.*"^[1] People in this state are of different types:

- He that wages war against Allah, and His Messenger, and busies himself by destroying what the Messenger was sent with. He hinders people from the path of Allah and exerts himself in seeking some crookedness in the work of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and distorts it in order to turn people away from it.
- Another is the one who has turned away from what the Messenger has brought and is fully engrossed in worldly possessions and carnal desires.
- A third kind is the hypocrite with two faces, who is engaged in

1 Ahmad (4/124), at-Tirmithi (2459), Ibn Majah (4260), Hakim (1/57)

taking advantage from both belief and unbelief.

- Another type is the one who is impudent, unmindful, whose life is absorbed in play, amusement and shameful acts.
- There are also those who when exhorted exclaim, *“How keen I am for repentance, but it is difficult and I have no access to it!”*
- People who claim: ‘Allah is not in need of my prayer and fasting. After all, I cannot save myself by my deeds. Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.’
- There is another group that says that avoiding sin is showing contempt to Allah’s pardon and forgiveness. So, commit as many sins as you can, as you are going to meet a Generous Lord.
- Another person from this group says: What can my good deeds do against what I have committed? For a person who is drowning, rescuing one finger is not useful when the rest of his body is under water.
- Yet another person says: I will soon return to Allah in repentance. When the time of my death approaches and I am about to die I will repent and my repentance will be accepted.

In addition to these people there are others who live in deception, their minds controlled by their desires. They do not make use of their reason except in their meticulous search for tricks to satisfy their desires. Their reason is controlled by the devil, like a prisoner, in the hands of an unbeliever, who is employing him in caring for pigs, making wine and carrying the cross. By controlling his reason, and surrendering it to his enemy, he is like a man who arrests a Muslim and sells him to the unbelievers, handing him over to them so that he may be kept as a prisoner.

There is an amazing point here worth reflecting upon, worthy of attention and an attempt at understanding:

When this deceived person undermines the power through which Allah granted him honour and dignity and raised his status, instead of taking care of it, he surrenders it to the most hated enemy of Allah, the devil, and puts it under his control and disposal. Allah, the Almighty put him under the power and authority of the one who was to be controlled by

him. That same devil now has full control over him, subjects him and uses him according to his wishes. His party and forces laugh at him and make fun of him. As he tried to disgrace the power of Allah over him and submitted to the enemy of Allah, so Allah disgraced him, and gave His enemy power over him to control him, to humiliate him and to use him in any way he liked. This person became like a man who gave himself to his worst enemy, who afflicted dreadful torment on him while he had been given the power to arrest and overpower him and to vent his anger on him. Instead of becoming involved in struggle and combat against his enemy, he submitted to him. As a result, his enemy was given power and authority over him as a punishment from Allah. Allah, the Exalted, says (what means):

“When you read the Qur’an seek Allah’s protection from the Satan the rejected one. He has no authority over those who believe and put their trust in their Lord. His authority is over those only who take him as patron and who join partners with Allah.” (16/98-100)

A question arises here: Allah stated in the above verse that the devil has been given authority over those who follow him, whereas in the following verses He denied any authority for him over his followers. He stated that the Satan would say when matters would have been settled in the Hereafter (what means):

“Satan will say when the matter is decided: Allah made a true promise and I promised you but failed in my promise. I had no authority over you except that I called you and you listened to me.” (14/22)

The Almighty also said in another verse (what means):

“Satan proved his idea true on them and they followed him all but a party of true believers. He had no authority over them except that we wanted to know who believes in the hereafter from which there is no doubt.” (34/20, 21)

The answer is that the power attributed to Satan is different from that which has been denied to him. This is explained in the following two ways:

The authority given to him consists of obtaining access to them, playing his tricks with them and driving them the way he likes. He achieves this by their obedience to and friendship with him. The authority that is denied for the devil is the authority of proof. The devil has no proof to use for overpowering them except that he calls them and they follow him without any proof or evidence.

Allah did not give any authority to the devil over humankind. It was humankind themselves who gave him this authority, by obeying him and joining his party and group. He did not get control over them by his power, for his tricks are very weak, but he achieved access to them by their own will and choice.

The point is that a person who takes his closest and most devoted friend, his children, his entourage and his well-wishers, and surrenders them to his enemy, deserves to be punished by being put under the authority of that enemy.

The third state in the conflict between the causes of the religion and desire is the alternating domination by both parties. The occasions for success for the religious side also vary in number. This is true for most believers, who mix righteous deeds with bad ones. The result of these three conditions on the Day of Judgement will be in line with the conditions here in the world. Hence, some people will enter Paradise and will not go to Hell; some others will enter Hell and will not go to Paradise; and a third group will enter Hell then will be allowed to enter Paradise.

These three conditions correspond with the conditions of people in illness and health. Some have sufficient immunity to overcome disease and overpower it. Others, whose immunity is weak are overpowered by the illness, and there are those in whom the conflict between illness and immunity is inconclusive, and they alternate between illness and health.

There are people who exercise endurance with difficulty and strain while others succeed in persevering with patience with little effort. The first type is like a man who is engaged in wrestling a powerful man and is able to knock him down with great difficulty and effort. The second group is like a man who wrestles a weak person and knocks him down easily. In the same way the struggle between the forces of Allah, the Most Beneficent, and the forces of Satan continue. The one who succeeds in defeating the forces of Satan will be able to defeat Satan himself.

Abdullah bin Mas'ud is reported to have said: "A man came across a *Jinn* and engaged in combat with him. The man knocked down the *Jinn*, then asked him: 'Why do you appear so weak?' 'I am strong among my people,' he replied. The companions asked: 'Was that man 'Umar bin al-Khattab?'

‘Who else could he be?’, was the reply.[¹]

One of the Companions said: “A believer exhausts his devil just as one of you exhausts his camel on a journey.”[²]

Ibn Abi al-Dunya quoted one of the pious predecessors as saying: “A Satan met another Satan and asked him: ‘Why do I see you pale?’ He replied: ‘I am with a man who mentions the name of Allah when he starts eating, so I am unable to eat with him. When he drinks he mentions the name of Allah so I am unable to drink with him. When he enters his house he mentions the name of Allah, therefore, I am forced to pass the night outside his house.’ The other Satan said: “I am appointed to a man who does not mention the name of Allah when he starts eating, so I join him in eating. When he drinks he does not mention the name of Allah and I share drink with him. When he reaches his house he enters without mentioning the name of Allah and I enter with him. When he intends to have intercourse with his wife he does not remember Allah, so I become his partner in the intercourse.”[³]

When a person is accustomed to patience, his enemy is scared of him, but when patience becomes hard to exercise for a person, his enemy gets access to him and succeeds in attaining his aims from him.



- 1 Ibn Abi al-Dunya: *Makayid* (63), At-Tabarani (8826)
- 2 Ahmad (2/380), Ibn Abi al-Dunya (20)
- 3 Abd al-Razzaq (19560)

Chapter

Seven

The categories of patience with regard to its object

Patience is of three kinds, and they are:

- Patience in carrying out religious commandments and good deeds.
- Patience while restraining from committing violations and prohibited deeds.
- Patience in remaining firm and steadfast to the divine decrees and fate, by not showing any annoyance.

These three categories were summarised by Shaykh Abd al-Qadir in his book *Futuh al-Ghaybin*. He said: “A servant has a command which he is obliged to carry out, a prohibition that he is to avoid and a divine decree which he has to accept and endure.”

This statement connects with two of the three categories: one relating to the Lord Almighty, and the other concerning the servant himself.

As for the one related to the Lord; one has to know that Allah has two rules for the people: one religious and the other cosmic.

The religious is connected with His command and the cosmic with His creation. To Him belong both the creation and the command.

His religious commands are, depending on the act commanded, of two kinds; i.e., the act that is desirable to be done could be either obligatory or desirable. Either way, the command cannot be carried out without perseverance. If the matter is distasteful to Him, then it is either prohibited or reprehensible and is to be shunned. Again, this requires perseverance.

His cosmic plans concern the tribulations He decrees for a person who has no choice in the matter. Nevertheless, humankind is required to persevere in patience by them. For a person to accept what Allah has decided is desirable. This is the opinion of Ahmad bin Hanbal.

We can conclude that the basis of all religious matters are the following three principles:

- Doing what is commanded.
- Avoiding what is prohibited.
- Accepting with patience what is decreed.

The servant is also tied to these three rules. Being legally responsible, a man cannot be free from them. Acceptance of commands, prohibitions and divine decrees, and acting with perseverance in fulfilling them, is an essential requirement of the faith. Perseverance in this respect is the foundation, and it is as necessary as a stalk is necessary for a plant.

Steadfastness is connected with what is commanded, prohibited and decreed. A teacher moves around these three basic things. He says: My son do what you have been asked to do, avoid what is prohibited and endure with patience what is decreed. Luqman advised his son of these three essential rules. He said to him (what means):

“My son, establish regular prayer, enjoin what is just and forbid what is wrong and persevere in patience what befalls you.” (31/17)

Enjoining what is just includes first following it oneself and then commanding others to do it, and the same applies to forbidding what is wrong. This is as far as the words of the text are concerned. As far as his religious obligation are concerned, a man who embarks on preaching what is good and warning against evil is required to be the first to act on his own preaching. Otherwise, his work will not avail him. Allah Almighty mentioned these three principles in the following verses (which mean):

“It is those who are endued with understanding that receive admonition, those who fulfil the covenant of Allah and do not break the pact, those who join together what Allah has commanded to be joined, fear their Lord and are scared of the terrible reckoning, those who persevere patiently seeking the countenance of their Lord, establish regular prayer, spend out of what We have bestowed on them for their sustenance, secretly and openly and turn off evil with good. For such there is the final attainment of the heavenly home.” (13/19-22)

Allah put together for these people the stages of submission (Islam) and belief (*Eeman*) in their characters. These people are described as fulfilling the covenant that Allah has concluded with them. It includes all that Allah Almighty has commanded them to do in the field of commands and prohibition. They have to comply with it and enjoin others to do the same. The Almighty then spoke of their faithfulness in fulfilling their duties regularly and that they never breach the pact. He also described them as joining what He ordered to be joined. This includes the open and secret sides of the religion and the rights of Allah and those of humankind. They join what is between them and their Lord through dedicating themselves to Him alone without ascribing partners to Him. They obey Him, turn to Him, put their trust in Him, love Him, fear Him, have hope in Him, turn in repentance to Him, show humbleness to Him, submit in humility to Him, acknowledge His bounties and show thankfulness to Him, confess their mistakes and ask Him for forgiveness. These are the links between the Lord and the servant. Allah has asked that all these ties be maintained.

Allah, the Exalted also ordered that we establish a strong relationship with His Messenger, through having faith in him, believing in his truthfulness and accepting his authority in every matter. We should also be satisfied with his judgement and surrender to him. Love for him must be placed over the love of oneself, one’s children, parents and all other people, may the blessings and salutations of Allah be upon him. This includes fulfilling our duty to the rights of Allah and His Messenger over us. Allah has also commanded us to take care of the bonds between us and our parents and relatives by showing kindness to them and helping them. He has ordered us to be kind to parents and to strengthen the bonds of relationship. These are among the things He has enjoined upon us. He ordered us to maintain a good relationship with our spouses, by fulfilling our duties to them and treating them with justice. He made it our duty to be considerate to our servants, by offering them the same food that we eat, the same

kind of dress that we wear, and by not asking them to do what is beyond their capability. We are also required to be good to our near and distant neighbours, by doing what is beneficial to them and taking care of their persons, wealth and families in the same way in which we take care of our families, our wealth and ourselves. We are also commanded to maintain good relations with our companions, whether at home or on journey. He ordered us to maintain good relations with people in general, by doing what they would like to be done to them. We are also required to take care of our relationship with the honourable angels, by showing respect to them, and feeling ashamed of what a person feels ashamed of doing in the presence of his colleagues, whom he respects and honours. All these are among what Allah has commanded us to join and take care of.

Allah stated that the people who take care of these things act out of fear of Allah, and apprehension of terrible reckoning on the day of return to Him. In fact, nobody can join what Allah has commanded to join except through fear of Him. Once this fear leaves the heart, all these bonds break.

Allah, the Almighty placed all this under one basic command, which is the foundation and axis around which everything revolves, and that is perseverance in patience. He said (what means):

“Those who patiently persevere seeking the countenance of their Lord -” (13/22)

He did not mention perseverance alone but place the condition of being purely for the sake of Allah. He then mentioned the tool that would give them support in perseverance, namely prayer. So, He added (what means):

“...and established regular prayer.” (13/22)

These two virtues: prayer and perseverance, are the source of strength in achieving the benefits of the world and the Hereafter. He said (what means):

“Seek help with perseverance and prayer, though it is hard except for those who are humble.” (2/45)

He also said (what means):

“O believers! Seek help with perseverance and prayer. Certainly Allah is with those who persevere in patience.” (2/153)

Then Allah mentioned their good works for others, which include spending on them openly and in secret. In this way, they gather goodness for themselves, by performing prayer and being steadfast, and for others, by giving out charity to them.

Then He prescribed their behaviour when wrong is done to them and they are subjected to harm: they should not retaliate, but repel the evil with good and kindly acts toward those who act badly toward them. He said (what means):

“They repel evil with good.” (13/22)

Repelling here is also explained that they do away with the sin by doing good deeds after it, as Allah has said (what means):

“The good deeds erase the evil deeds.” (11/114)

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: *“Follow up an evil deed with a good one and it will erase it.”¹*

The right view is that the verse includes both interpretations.

In short, these verses include all the states of submission (Islam) and belief (*Eeman*). It contains doing what is commanded, leaving out what is prohibited, and enduring patiently what is decreed. Allah, the Almighty has spoken of these three basic principles in a number of verses. Some of them are mentioned below (which mean):

“Yes, if you are conscious of Allah and persevere in patience.” (3/125)

“Surely the one who is conscious of Allah and endures in patience.” (12/90)

“O believers, persevere in patience, encourage one another to steadfastness and strengthen each other and be conscious of Allah, that you may succeed.” (3/200)

In every place where the consciousness of Allah is mentioned together with perseverance, it includes all those three basic elements because the real essence of *Taqwa* (consciousness of Allah) rests in doing what is commanded and avoiding what is prohibited.

1 Ahmad (5/153, 158, 177), at-Tirmithi (1987), al-Darimi (2794) and Hakim (1/54)

Chapter

Eight

Patience can be divided into five categories: Obligatory, Desirable, Forbidden, Reprehensible and Permissible.

Obligatory patience consists of:

- Patience in resisting what is prohibited.
- Patience in carrying out obligatory deeds.
- Patience in tribulation over which a person is helpless, such as illness, poverty, etc.

Desirable patience is to restrain oneself from worrying over unpleasant matters, to remain constant in doing desirable deeds, and to restrain from retaliating when one faces an aggressor or other acts of aggression.

Forbidden patience consists of refraining from food and drink until death. It also applies to refusing to eat dead meat, blood or meat of swine when there is danger of starvation.

Tawus and later Imam Ahmad said: "A person who was forced by necessity to eat dead meat or drink blood and refrained from doing so and consequently starved to death would go to Hell." (See Section below)

Reprehensible patience applies in the following cases:

- To resist and control oneself from food, drink, dress and sexual intercourse to the extent of causing harm to the body.
- To refrain from having intercourse with one's wife, when she needs and desires it, and it is not going to cause him any harm.
- To remain steadfast when committing reprehensible acts against oneself.
- To restrain the self from doing what is recommended.

Permissible patience is to restrain from any act in which the consequences of both the doing and avoiding an act are equal.

SECTION

Is begging allowed in such a situation? Some scholars say that it is, others say it is forbidden. Imam Ahmad's statement indicates that is not permissible. He was told that there is the danger that the person may die. He remarked that he would not die; Allah would surely bring him his sustenance. Thus, Imam Ahmad did not allow begging. He believed that when Allah knows his need and sincerity in avoiding begging, He would provide him with sustenance. However, many of the followers of Ahmad and ash-Shafi'i are of the opinion that it is obligatory for a person in the situation of starvation to beg. If he did not, he would be committing a sin, because begging could surely spare his life.

Included in prohibited patience is holding oneself in a situation where the danger of death is imminent, like confronting a beast, snake, fire, flood or an unbeliever who is intent on killing him. This is different from remaining steadfast during civil strife and restraining himself from joining mobs in fighting Muslims. This type of restraint is permissible or rather desirable as many evidences indicate.

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was once asked about this particular situation and he replied: *"Be the better of the two sons of Adam."*¹

In another version, he is reported to have said: *"Be the servant of Allah who was killed, not the one who was the killer."*²

1 Ahmad (4/416), Abu Daawood (4259), Ibn Majah (3961)

2 Ahmad (5/110), al-Tabarani (1724)

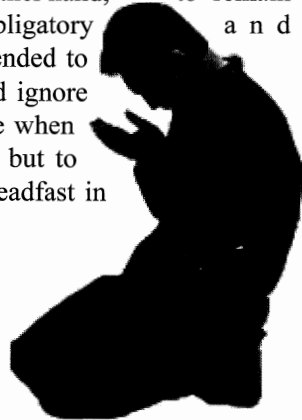
In another version the following addition occurs: "Let him bear his sin as well as yours."¹

A further addition says: "If the flash of the sword dazzles you, put your hands over your face."²

Allah, the Almighty related the story of the surrender of the better of Adam's two sons and praised him for his act. This should not be compared with killing an unbeliever because here a Muslim is required to defend himself. The very objective of *Jihad* in Islam is to defend oneself and the Muslim community against the invasion of unbelievers.

How should a person act when confronted by robbers? Is fighting and resisting them compulsory or should one surrender? The answer is as follows: If the belongings of an innocent person are at risk then to protect them is obligatory. If a person's own property is at risk, then Imam Ahmad's statement indicates that it is not obligatory to become involved in fighting to save it, although some of his followers consider it obligatory. In the case where a person or his wife is attacked for immoral purposes, he has to resist and fight.

In summary, five categories of rulings are applied to patience. It is obligatory when involving an obligatory act, and is prohibited when it is exercised in leaving an obligatory duty. On the other hand, to remain steadfast on avoiding a prohibited act is obligatory and doing it constantly is forbidden. It is recommended to patiently do what is desirable and to leave and ignore whatever is reprehensible. Patience is desirable when exercised in avoiding an act that is desirable, but to do this constantly is undesirable. To remain steadfast in doing acts that are permissible is permissible. And Allah knows best.



1 Muslim (7250)

2 Ahmad (5/163), Abu Daawood (4261), Ibn Majah (3958), Ibn Hibban (5960) and Hakim (4/423)

2

Chapter

Nine

Different levels of patience

We have noted that patience is of two types: compulsory and optional.

Optional patience ranks more highly than compulsory patience. The latter is common among all people; it is seen even in those people who never exercise voluntary steadfastness. This is why the steadfastness of Yoosuf (peace be upon him) in resisting temptation by refusing to accept the demands of the wife of Aziz, and during the hardship that followed in the form of imprisonment and suffering, was greater than bearing patiently the trouble inflicted at the hands of his brothers, when they dropped him in the well, separated him from his father, and sold him as a slave. It was for his steadfastness in the former case that Allah rewarded him with honour, raised his rank and gave him power and authority in the land.

The same is true about the patience of Ibraaheem, Moosa (Moses), Nooh (Noah), 'Eesa (Jesus) and our Prophet, the Seal of the Prophets and the foremost of the children of Adam (peace be upon all of them). They all

stood steadfast in carrying out their duty of calling people to Allah and resisted their opponents. Allah gave them the title of ‘the people of firm resolution’, and ordered our Prophet, (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), to follow their example in perseverance and steadfastness. He said (what means):

“Patiently persevere as did the messengers of firm resolve.” (46/35)

The messengers of firm resolve are the ones who are mentioned in the following verses (which mean):

“He laid down for you the same religious injunctions that He gave to Noah, which We revealed to you and which we enjoined on Abraham, Moses and Jesus.” (42/13)

“Remember when We took a solemn pledge from the prophets and from you and from Noah, Ibrahim, Moses and Jesus, son of Mary.” (33/7)

This interpretation is affirmed by Ibn ‘Abbas and other scholars of the past.

Allah commanded our Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) not to behave like Yoonus (Jonah), the man of the whale who did not show steadfastness like the messengers of firm resolve. He said (what means):

“Wait patiently for your Lord’s judgement and do not be like the man of the whale when he cried out in distress.” (68/48)

There is a valuable question here: What is the regent of the adverb ‘*ith*’? It cannot be the verb that ordered the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) not to be like him, because the meaning in that case will be: ‘Do not be like him in his invocation.’

This is not correct because in another verse Allah, the Most High, praised him for crying out to Him and declared that He only rescued him after doing so. He said (what means):

“And the man of the whale when he went off in anger, thinking We had no power over him, then he cried out in darkness: There is no god but You. Glory be to You. I was indeed wrong. We heard his call and delivered him from distress. Thus We deliver all those who believe.” (21/87-88)

At-Tirmithi and others reported the Prophet (Muhammad) as saying: *“The call of my brother, the man of whale, by which he called upon Allah when he was in the belly of the whale is such that no distressed person calls upon*

Allah by it but He will deliver him from his distress. The call is: 'There is no god but You. Glory be to You. I was indeed wrong.'"¹

9 It is unconceivable that our Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) would be prohibited from being like the man of the whale in this call, which rescued him. Our Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was ordered not to be like him in committing the act that was the cause of his call: that is in giving in to his anger which caused him to be swallowed by the whale, where he was detained in distress, and where he cried out to his Lord.

Then what is the causative agent of the adverb? It is the sense of the verb created by the phrase "the man of the whale."

However, the problem is not yet fully solved. This is because when a prohibited act is linked with a proviso, or a period of time, that is also included in prohibition. Here if the meaning were: Do not be like the man of the whale in this condition or that time, in that condition it would also will be prohibited.

The solution may be, that since his call was the result of being trapped in the belly of the whale, our Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was ordered not to be like him in that condition which led him to be swallowed by the whale, and then cry out to Allah. That condition was the weakness of will and lack of patience with the judgement of Allah, the Almighty. Allah did not say to our Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him): Do not be like the man of the whale when he went off in anger and a whale swallowed him, and then he cried out. The Almighty abridged the story, summed it up, and referred to it at another place, where it was cited in more detail. Here He mentioned its purpose and outcome.

One may ask: What prevented you from substituting the adverb for the act that was prohibited? The meaning in that case would have been: Do not be like him in his call when he was full of anger, anguish and distress. Your call should be of a person who is content with the decree of Allah and accepts the decision of Allah with approval, satisfaction and comfort, not like the call of someone in anguish.

The answer to this remark is that although the meaning of the phrase in this case is correct, yet the order is not merely for avoiding of being like him.

1 At-Tirmithi (3505), An-Nasaa'i: al-Kubra (10491, 10492), Ahmad (1/170), al-Bazzar (1186) and al-Hakim (1/505)

It was for being like him in the condition that forced him to depart in anger and end up in the belly of the whale. This is supported by the following statement of Allah (which means):

“Wait in patience for the judgement of your Lord.”

Followed by:

“...and do not be like the man of the whale.” (68/48)

That is: do not be like him in being unable to wait in patience for the judgement of his Lord. The condition he was ordered not to be in, is different from the one he was asked to be in.

Why don't we explain the verse in the following way?

Wait in patience for the eternal decree, which He has commanded you to accept and for which He gives support, and do not be like the man of the whale who could not do it and showed impatience, but cried out in distress for its removal. He was restless and disquiet.

The reason for not accepting this interpretation is that Allah, Glory be to Him, praised Jonah and the other prophets for calling upon Him for help to remove their distress. He said about Jonah (what means):

“And the man of the whale when he went off in anger thinking that We had no power over him, then he cried out in darkness: There is no god but You. Glory be to You. I was indeed wrong. We heard his call and delivered him from distress. Thus We deliver those who have faith.” (21/87-88)

How then will our Prophet be ordered to avoid being like him (Jonah) in the condition for which Allah has praised him?

In the same way, Allah praised Ayyoob (Job) when he called upon Him saying (what means):

“Adversity has come upon me and You are the Most Merciful of the merciful.” (21/83)

He commended Ya'qoob (Jacob) when he called (what means):

“I only complain of my grief and anguish to Allah.” (12/83)

He praised Moosa (Moses) when he said (what means):

“My Lord, Truly I am in desperate need of any good you send me.”
(28/25)

His last Messenger and the Seal of the Prophets complained to Him saying: “O Allah! I complain to you of the weakness of my power and lack of means.”

Complaining to Allah, the Exalted, is not contradictory to patience. In fact, to express one’s grievance to Him alone, and turning away from all others beside Him, is real steadfastness. Allah The Most High afflicts His servant with suffering to hear his complaint, supplication and invocation. He condemned in His Book those who do not implore and invoke Him for help at the time of suffering. He said (what means):

“We inflicted punishment on them, but they did not humble themselves to their Lord, nor do they submissively entreat (Him).” (23/76)

The servant is too weak to show resistance to his Lord. Allah, the Almighty does not want His servant to demonstrate defiance to Him. He wants him instead to show submissiveness and humbleness to Him. The Almighty Lord hates the person who complains to His creation, and loves those who express their sufferings to Him.

A pious person was asked: How do you complain to Him when He knows everything and nothing is hidden from Him? “My Lord likes to see His servants entreating Him in humility”, he replied.

The point is that Allah, the Almighty ordered His Messenger Muhammad (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) to endure patiently like those among His servants who remained steadfast to His judgement, willingly and with firm resolve. This is the most perfect steadfastness. This is how the request for intercession on the Day of Judgement is going to be made to those prophets, and they would refer it to the most superior and the best among them: our Prophet Muhammad (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) because he demonstrated firm endurance and remained steadfast to the judgement of Allah. Allah’s blessings and greeting be upon all of them.

Now the question is, which of the three categories of steadfastness is the best and most excellent: Steadfastness in carrying out the obligatory duties, constant resistance to prohibited acts or accepting willingly, with patience, what is decreed by Allah?

The answer will be that the steadfastness linked with legal capacity, which is connected with command and prohibition, is superior to bearing in patience the decrees of Allah. This latter patience is exercised by every person, good or bad, believer or unbeliever. Everybody has to accept the Divine decrees willingly or unwillingly. The patience in fulfilling the commandments of Allah, in doing what He ordered and avoiding what He prohibited, is the patience of the followers of the Messengers of Allah. The most devoted to the messengers is the man who is most steadfast and constant in his obedience. Each type of patience has its own merit. Steadfastness in resistance to forbidden matters has its own merit, as does persevering in doing good deeds, which has its own value.

Here is another question: Which steadfastness is better, the steadfastness exercised in carrying out the obligatory duties or that demonstrated in avoiding forbidden acts?

This issue has been disputed among scholars.

One group of scholars hold that patience in restraining oneself from breaking the Divine law is better for the following reasons:

1. It is more difficult and strenuous. Good deeds are performed by both the pious and impious, whereas to control the self from prohibitions is the way of the most devout people only.
2. To resist committing prohibited acts patiently is to resist the desire of the self, which is the most difficult thing, and for that reason, the most superior.

To abandon the things that are desirable and beloved to the soul is an indication that the one for whom it is abandoned (i.e. Allah) is more beloved to a person than his own self and desire. It is different from doing what the beloved loves. This does not necessarily indicate that nobility and magnanimity lie in this type of steadfastness.

Imam Ahmad said: "Magnanimity is to give up what you desire for the fear of losing the favour of the One you love."

Nobility and manliness are centred on this type of patience. It should be no surprise when a man is committed and constantly fulfils his obligations, because most of these acts are attractive to good-natured people, as they contain justice, benevolence, sincerity and righteousness. These qualities are loved by people with pure and perfect souls. What is surprising is a person who restrains himself in patience from prohibited matters, most of which are charming to the soul. He leaves these charming things that

are easily available to him for the sake of gaining desirable rewards in the Hereafter. Souls are inclined to love what is available now and to control this inclination is against their nature.

9 There are four agents that induce people to commit prohibited acts: the soul of the man, the devil assigned to him, his desire, and this world. In order to keep away from prohibited matters a man has to fight and resist all these. Needless to say, it is the most difficult and strenuous thing for the soul.

Prohibitions are meant to work as the antidote against the desires and pleasures of the soul. In the presence of strong motives, it is most difficult and arduous for them to work.

Due to the seriousness of its consequences, drawing near any prohibited matter is completely banned, while the commanded duties are to be performed according to the best of ability. This is what the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) taught: *“When I command you to do something, do it as much as you can, but when I ask you to keep away from something, eschew it completely.”*¹

This shows clearly that the influence of prohibition is greater than that of command. It also makes it clear that although doing a forbidden act is impermissible, without exception, there are permissions granted to some people to leave a commanded action for reasons of inability or excuse.

This is also proven by the fact that punishments are generally prescribed for committing forbidden acts, unlike the negligence of obligatory duties, for which Allah, the Almighty has not fixed any punishment. The most important duty for a Muslim is to perform the regular prayers, yet the scholars have not agreed whether there is a punishment for a person who neglects this duty.

These are some of the arguments put forward by people who hold that showing steadfastness in abandoning what is forbidden is better than remaining firm and steadfast in doing what is commanded by Allah.

Others who oppose this view believe that doing and exercising steadfastness in what is commanded is better and superior to the steadfastness displayed by the abandonment of what is forbidden. Put simply, doing what is

1 Al-Bukhaari (7288), Muslim (3257, 6113)

enjoined is more beloved by Allah, the Most High, than leaving what is prohibited, and to remain firm and steadfast on what is better is higher and more superior. They base their arguments on the following points:

1. Performing an action that is enjoined means doing something for its own sake, which has been prescribed as an objective to be achieved. The knowledge of Allah, to acknowledge His unity, to worship Him alone, to turn to Him, to put your trust in Him, to work sincerely for Him, to love and be content with Him and to be devoted to His service, are the aims and objectives of the creation of humankind. These are the matters which have been enjoined and they are required to be obeyed by their nature, while the forbidden acts are not. They are forbidden because they hamper or deter carrying out a commanded duty or at least hinder its perfect completion. They vary in the degree of prohibition in accordance with their hindrance, impediment and obstruction of doing a duty perfectly. As such, they are intended for other objectives, while the duties which are commanded are meant for themselves.

Were it not for the reason that they hinder the remembrance of Allah and the performance of regular prayer and disturb friendly and amicable relations, which Allah has enjoined, drinking wine and gambling would not have been declared unlawful. Another reason for the prohibition of wine drinking is that it blocks the reason, which makes a person recognize Allah, worship Him, praise and glorify Him, perform prayers and bow down in prostration to Him. All that Allah has prohibited is a source of impediment of doing what He likes and is pleased with, and hinders a person from doing it in the perfect manner.

2. The duties which are commanded are connected with the knowledge of Allah and the acknowledgement of His unity, His worship, remembrance, gratitude, love and trust in Him, and turning to Him for help. Hence, their object is the essence of the Lord the Creator, His Names and Attributes, whereas the prohibited matters are connected with themselves. The differences between the two are enormous.
3. The need and necessity of doing what is commanded is greater for a person than the necessity of keeping away from what is forbidden. He is not in a greater need and want of anything than the knowledge of Allah, acknowledgement of His unity, total sincerity for Him in

his work, devotion to Him in worship and love and obedience to Him. He needs these things more than he needs himself. His life and existence are more valuable than the food by which his body sustains its strength. Performing the commanded duties is, for his heart and soul, like life and nourishment for his body. He is a human being because of his heart and soul, not his structure and figure.

A poet says: "O slave of the body, how much do you suffer in its service! Remember that you are human because of your heart and not because of your body." Avoiding what is forbidden is prescribed for him to make him achieve what is essential for him, which is something he needs and requires urgently.

4. Avoiding what is forbidden comes under the category of precaution, while doing what is commanded resides in the category of strength and nourishment, without which the constitution of the body cannot be sustained and life cannot continue. A man can survive without precaution even if his body is affected by the most serious illness, but he cannot live without food, which gives him strength. Thus it is with the commanded and forbidden matters.
5. There are two root causes for all the sins: negligence of obligatory duties and committing prohibited acts. If a person commits the forbidden acts throughout his life but has the smallest amount of the faith in his heart, he will save himself from being in Hell for eternity. If, however he refrains from every prohibited act but does not have faith, which is a very essential duty, he would remain in Hell for ever. The act of having faith that people are required to have – even if it is a tiny atom's weight – can take a man out of the fire and neutralize the many evil deeds that the person may have committed.
6. All the prohibited acts, which were committed from the beginning to the end of one's life, are wiped away by one commanded act, i.e., repentance. The commanded acts that are performed are not affected by the violation except by association of partners with Allah and dying without repentance. All Muslims agree that any sin is wiped out by repentance. However, they are not unanimous that good deeds are nullified by sin. It is a disputed issue the details of which cannot be discussed here.

Adam committed a sin by doing what was forbidden, but when he turned to his Lord in repentance, He accepted it, showed mercy to

him, and guided him. In contrast, the sin of the devil was the violation of a command and his fate was what Allah has mentioned in His Book and made an example for the children of Adam till the Day of Judgement.

7. The obligatory duties are loved by Allah and the prohibited things are detested by Him. It is He who decreed them and enabled a person to perform them because they are means of achieving what He loves for His servants and wants them to do. He loves His servants to turn to Him in repentance, seek forgiveness, show humility, submissiveness, servility and so forth. He wants to forgive His servants, turn to them, pardon them, ignore, disregard, or wipe out their mistakes. His love for these acts would not have been apparent had He not decreed what He disliked. He decreed the hateful things to happen because they are means of achieving what He loves. He loves the outcome of the evil deeds [i.e., repentance]. To miss the loved things is more hateful to Him than those that were distasteful. In fact, if committing the acts that He dislikes lead in other ways to what He loves, these hateful acts would have been intended by Him as a means :

“I created the Jinns and mankind only to worship me.” (51/56)

He decreed what He hates and dislikes to fulfil that objective for which He created the creation. He enjoined certain duties that are impossible to do without some unpleasantness. *Jihad*, love, and hatred for His sake, for instance, which are the most beloved acts to Him, involve matters that are not pleasant, yet He prescribed them because they were the means of achieving His pleasure.

8. Merely abandoning a forbidden act will not result in closeness to Allah unless it is combined with fulfilling some commanded acts. If a person abandons every forbidden act, he would not deserve a reward from Allah, the Most High, unless he has faith in Allah. Even if he has faith and leaves forbidden works, he will not deserve a reward unless he has the intention of doing it for the sake of Allah alone. It indicates that abandoning forbidden acts are not a matter of reward unless they are joined by something that Allah has commanded. It is not so in the case of doing obligatory duties, which does not necessitate the abandonment of forbidden things to gain reward. If it were so, Allah would not accept any good deed of a person who is disobedient to Him, which is a most absurd and illogical idea.
9. It is necessary to refrain from forbidden matter, just as it is important to

carry out the duties which are commanded. The purpose is to promote the good deeds that are enjoined and eliminate prohibited acts. If we were to suppose what is more beneficial: the existence or absence of both the commanded and prohibited acts, definitely their existence is better. If the obligatory deeds were non-existent, the absence of impermissible actions would be of no use, but if the obligatory deeds are present, they can be used to repel the forbidden actions, or at least to reduce their impact. To have life and illness is better than losing both of them.

10. A good deed of an obligatory nature is rewarded by 10 to 700-fold or higher, whereas prohibited acts of sin are recompensed by what is equal to it. Moreover, they are very likely to be wiped out by repentance, seeking forgiveness, doing good deeds that may erase them, a tribulation that cleanses the man from his sins, the angels' prayer for the believing people and the believers' prayers for forgiveness of one another, etc. All this is a sign that the existence of forbidden actions are appreciated more by Allah, the Most High, than their absence.
11. Allah, the Exalted wipes out the prohibited acts and eliminates their impact by certain acts of His servants and many other things. He negates them by sincere repentance, asking for forgiveness, doing good deeds, affliction by tribulation, angels' prayers for forgiveness and the believers' supplication. These are six factors during the lifetime of a person. Then when he comes to depart from this world, his sins are forgiven by the agony, pain and hardship through which he passes at the time of death. After that, he experiences horrible scenes, the terror of the two angels in the grave, where he is squeezed and pressed hard. This is followed by the hardship of the Day of Resurrection, with all its troubles and sufferings, followed by the intercession of those who are allowed, and finally the demonstration of the mercy of the Most Merciful. If all these factors fail to release a man from his sins then he will certainly end up in Hell. There his stay will be as long as the dirt and filth of sins remain on him. This is because Allah, the Almighty has closed Paradise except for those who are completely pure. As long as dirt and filth remain on a sinner, he is kept in the bellows of purification until all his dirt and filth are removed and he becomes clean. As for the obligatory good deeds, they are not affected, except by association of partners with Allah.
12. The recompense for observing the obligatory duties is reward, which

is the result of the grace, bounty and mercy of Allah, whereas the repayment of committing forbidden sins is punishment, which emanates from the justice and anger of the Almighty. His mercy overwhelms His anger. Therefore, anything which is connected with His mercy and grace is more loved by Him than anything connected with His anger and justice. Negligence of what is connected with the divine mercy is more hateful to Him than doing what is connected with His anger.

13. One single good deed wipes out thousands of prohibited evil deeds, but thousands of evil acts cannot demolish a single good deed commanded by Allah, the Almighty.
14. The commanded acts are connected with doing, which is a quality of perfection. The perfection of the creation is Allah's work. He perfected it and it became perfect. The connection of prohibition is with abandonment, which is non-existence and as such, it cannot be perfection. Absolute non-existence cannot be considered as perfection. It could reach the degree of perfection through a positive work that leads to the stage of perfection. Mere omission, which is non-being, cannot be perfection or even a source of it. Let us illustrate this: If a person avoids bowing down in prostration to an idol, it would not be regarded as something great and valuable unless he bows down in prostration to Allah. If he does not prostrate to Allah and to the idol, his act would not be counted as perfect. Similarly, if he does not deny the Messenger and does not show hostility to him, this would not make him a believer, but he would be required to do the opposite of that, i.e., to declare belief in the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), express his love of him and follow him. This shows that perfection lies solely in carrying out what is enjoined, while leaving a prohibited act does not lead to any useful result, or indeed perfection, unless it is accompanied by doing something that is enjoined. Thus, if a person said to the Messenger (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him): "I do not regard you as a liar, but I do not consider you a truthful person either, neither do I regard you as either a friend or an enemy; I will not fight you, but I cannot fight those who fight you either", such a person would be regarded as an unbeliever. He could not become a believer by avoiding being the Prophet's enemy, not denying him and not fighting him, as long as he does not do the positive work he is required.

When a person carries out an obligatory duty in the proper way, he definitely shuns a prohibited act. What is required is to do the work that is commanded, and if it is done in the right way, then it is impossible that the prohibited act is also done. In fact, what is forbidden is to neglect the commanded duty. When a person behaves with justice and integrity, he will avoid injustice and immoral acts. This is simply because justice means to shun injustice, and integrity requires refraining from immoral acts. In this way shunning the prohibited acts is a part of the fulfilment of the duty, but not the other way round. Avoiding the forbidden acts does not include doing the commanded duty. It is possible that a man may neglect them both. This shows that the purpose is to carry out the acts in their proper ways, and with this, it is not possible to commit the violation of the commandment. On the other hand, avoiding the forbidden acts does not necessarily indicate carrying out a command.

15. When the Lord Almighty orders His servant to do a duty and thus, prohibits him doing another thing, by doing both, he does what the Lord loves and also that which He hates. However, His desirable act will repel the evil of His hateful act and give him power to resist it, especially when performing the good deed is more beloved to Him than leaving the hateful one. The Almighty will pardon his offence because of his obedience and ignore his evil deed. This can be illustrated as follows: A man kills an enemy of the king, who was keen on killing the king, but in the meantime, the man drank an intoxicant, which the king had ordered him not to drink. The king will condone this fault and many other mistakes of that man because of what he did to fulfil the desire of the king. In case he abandons both what the king likes and hates, his abandonment of what he dislikes will not fulfil the benefit of what he likes. Similarly, a king who ordered his slave to kill his enemy and ordered him not to drink intoxicants, but the slave disobeyed the king by not carrying out his first order though he had power to do it, but he kept away from drinking. The king is not going to pardon his offence because he did not carry out his order although he obeyed him in the other matter. Allah has created His servants with this nature. This is how masters treat their slaves, fathers their children, kings their soldiers and husbands their wives. Anyone who abandons both desirable and hateful matters is not like the one who does both.

16. This is explained further in the following: It is impossible that a person who does what the Lord Almighty loves is also engaged in all those activities that Allah disapproves. He would rather shun the hateful matters to the same measure as he performs his Lord's approved things. Since he does what Allah likes and that which He dislikes, it is impossible that he will do all He dislikes. As a result of combining both actions, Allah will love him on the one hand and hate him on the other. In contrast, if he neglects all the commanded matters, he would be guilty of abandoning what Allah, the Exalted, loved. It has been pointed out that merely shunning the prohibited matters is not regarded as obedience unless it is joined by doing what is commanded. Allah, the Almighty does not love a person for merely abandoning what He forbade. He hates and dislikes such a person because he did not carry out His commands. He becomes disgraced in the eyes of Allah Almighty from every side, as he has done nothing that Allah loves.
17. Allah, the Exalted does not attach His love, except to some special positive act, which He has made obligatory or desirable. He never links His love to a negative act. He loves those who turn to Him in repentance. He declares that He loves those who are kind and generous, those who are thankful, those who are steadfast, those who are clean, those who fight for His cause in battle array, as if they were a solid cemented structure. He also loves those who are conscious of Him, those who remember Him and those who give out charity. He always attaches His love to acts He commanded and to carry out them is the purpose of creation and judgement. He announced (what means):

"I did not create the Jinn and the mankind except to worship Me."
(51/56)

Thus, He created the creatures in order to carry out His commands, and He prohibited only those acts that might hamper the people's work in fulfilling their duties.

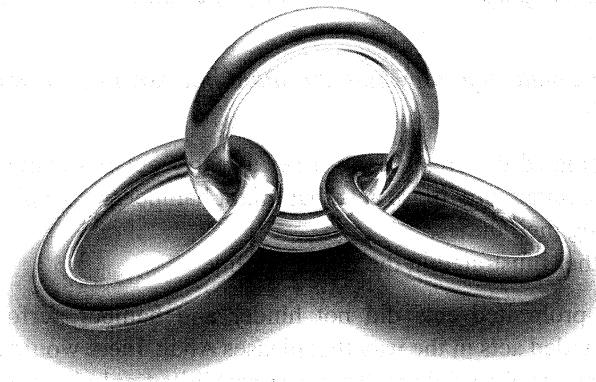
This is further illustrated in the following lines:

18. If the prohibited acts did not hinder and hamper performing the commanded acts in the way that pleases Allah, there would have been no reason to forbid them. They are prohibited only because they are in opposition to His Commandments and are a source of hindrance

and impediment to their execution. It means that their prohibition is a kind of completion and perfection of the commands. It is like clearing a waterway so that it may run in its course without any obstacle. The commands are like water that is released by the river for the survival of people and cities, and prohibitions are like clearing its ways and course and cleansing it from any object that may obstruct the flow of water. The commands are like its life and strength and prohibitions are like the precautionary measures that guard the strength and keep away the disease.

The advocates of the superiority of steadfastness, in doing what is obligatory over abandoning what is prohibited, conclude their argument by saying: now it is proved that carrying out the obligatory duties is superior, it becomes clear that being steadfast and exercising patience in performing these duties is better. As a result, remaining steadfast in keeping away from the prohibited acts and bearing Allah's decrees with patience becomes easier. This is because a higher degree of patience includes a lower one and not the other way around.

It also indicates that all three types of steadfastness are linked together, and each helps in exercising the other two. However, there are people who have the strength to sustain the decrees, but are weak when facing the commands and prohibitions, and others who present the opposite. Similarly, there are those in whom steadfastness in connection to the commands is stronger and some who are opposite to them. And Allah knows best.



Chapter

Ten

Division of patience into praiseworthy and blameworthy

Patience is divided into two categories: blameworthy and praiseworthy. Blameworthy patience is keeping oneself aloof from Allah, His will, His love, and to curtail the journey of the heart toward Him. This type of endurance completely blocks the servant from achieving perfection and causes him to miss the purpose for which he was created. It is the most repulsive kind of endurance and the greatest and the most serious one. There is no endurance greater than the endurance of a man who restrains himself from something that is his favourite, without which he cannot survive.

In the same way, there is no renunciation greater than the renunciation of the honour that Allah has prepared for His devoted servants, which no eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard and no human being can ever imagine. Heedlessness to it is the greatest type of renunciation. A man said to one of the ascetics (those who devote themselves to Allah and have no interest in the world), amazed by his lack of interest in worldly matters: "I have never

witnessed anyone who is more self-denying than you!” The man replied: “In fact, you are more self-denying than I. I have no interest in the world, which has neither permanence nor loyalty, while you are not interested in the Hereafter. So, which one of us is more self-denying?”

10

Yahya bin Mu’adh al-Razi said: “The endurance of the lover is more amazing than the endurance of the ascetics. It is amazing to see how they endure in patience!”

A poet says about this: “Endurance is praiseworthy under all conditions except concerning yourself, which is not at all praiseworthy.”

A man asked Shibli: “Which type of patience is the hardest for those who practice it?” He replied: ‘Patience in Allah.’ ‘No’, the man remarked. ‘Patience for Allah,’ Shibli said. ‘No,’ he replied. ‘Patience with Allah,’ he suggested. The man did not agree. ‘Then what is it?’ Shibli enquired. ‘Patience from Allah,’ he replied. Upon hearing this, Shibli cried out so vehemently that he almost expired. It is said that patience with Allah is loyalty while patience from Allah is animosity.

There is full agreement among the scholars that patience from the beloved is not praiseworthy, especially when the success and perfection of a person depends upon this love. The beloved always blame their lovers for showing their patience towards them as is shown by the following line of poetry: “The consequences of endurance, in keeping away from you, are denounced when patience in other things is praised.”

Another poet said: “While people play with everything, I noticed that love plays with people. How can I accept patience from the one who has become like a right hand to my left hand?”

Another person complained to his beloved of his suffering from his love, and the beloved said to him: “If you were sincere you would not have been able to be patient from me.”

“When I complained of love she said: You are lying. How can a lover be patient with his beloved?”

Praiseworthy endurance is of two kinds: endurance for the sake of Allah and steadfastness by Allah. Allah, the Exalted says (what means):

“Endure patiently; your endurance is only by Allah.” (16/127)

The Almighty also says (what means):

“Wait patiently for your Lord’s judgement because you are in our sight.” (52/48)

The scholars had differences of opinion regarding which of the two types of patience is best: One group affirmed that endurance for Allah is the better because something that is for Allah is better than what is by Allah. This is because what is for Him is a goal, and what is by Him is a means, and goals are greater than the means. This is why a vow must be fulfilled, as it is to seek the reward and favour of Allah because it is for Him; but if it was an oath, the fulfilment was not necessary because it was an oath by Him. What is for Allah is connected with His divinity, and what is by Him is connected with His Lordship. Certainly, what is connected with His divinity is superior to what is connected with His Lordship. This is borne out by the fact that it is the unity of divinity that delivers from the association of partners with Allah, and not the unity of Lordship on its own. The devotees of idols admitted that Allah alone is the Creator, Provider and Controller of everything, but since they did not acknowledge the unity of divinity, which embodied the worship of Allah alone without associating partners with Him, this declaration of the unity of lordship alone did not benefit them at all.

The other group claimed that endurance by Allah was better. In fact, endurance for him is impossible to attain without endurance by Him. Allah, the Most High, says (what means): ***“Endure with patience.”***

He commanded the Messenger (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) to have patience. What He commanded was to be done for Him. Then He added (what means):

“Your patience is only by Allah.” (16/127)

This is a declarative sentence, different from the preceding one which was an exclamatory sentence, in which He declared that it was not possible for the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) to have patience but by Him.

This combines two things: seeking help from Him, and the special companionship which is implied by the preposition ‘b’, which here is used to give the sense of company. In this sense, it is used in the following

Qudsi Hadeeth (sacred narration): “He hears by me, he sees by me, he holds by me and he walks by me.”

10 Here the preposition is not used to give the sense of seeking help, because it is a matter that is shared by the obedient and disobedient alike. Anything which is not by Allah cannot be found. This ‘b’, therefore is to give the sense of companionship and being together. This meaning has been declared with the use of the word *ma’a* in the following verse (which means):

“Surely Allah is with those who are steadfast.” (8/46)

This companionship is acquired by the worshipper who seeks closeness to Allah, through engaging in supererogatory acts until he earns His love and reaches a state where he hears by Him, sees by Him and endures in patience by Him. He does not move, stay, or think unless Allah is with him. A person who attains this level is able to have patience for Allah and bears the hardships for Him alone, as it is stated in the following divine statement: “*What the people bear for My sake is in My sight.*”

The Qur’anic words (which mean): “**Your patience is only by Allah,**” indicates that if Allah is not with a man, he cannot have patience. How can he be patient in accepting and carrying out the commanded duties and conveying the message to others, and in agreeing with what Allah has decreed for him if He is not with him? A person whose patience is not by Allah is not expected to have that patience, the outcome of which is beneficial. In the same way, a man whose hearing, seeing, holding and walking are not by Allah, cannot think of reaching the state of coming closer to Him and being loved by Him.

This is what is meant by the statement in the *Hadeeth Qudsi*: “*I become his ears by which he hears, his eyes by which he sees, his hands by which he holds, and his legs by which he walks.*”

It does not mean that I become these forces and parts of body themselves as the enemies of Allah, the proponents of the idea of the unity of being, imagine. They claim that the being of a man is the being of Allah. Allah is far above the claims of the Christians and their likeminded followers. If it were as they assume, there would be no difference between this devoted servant and others, or between his seeking closeness to Allah through voluntary acts, and his causing His anger by displeasing Him by committing sinful acts. In fact, in that case there would be no one seeking

closeness or anyone whose closeness is sought. There will neither be the worshipper nor the worshipped, nor the lover and the beloved. The above *Hadeeth* refutes their false claim in about 30 ways that can be known with simple contemplation.

The meaning of the statement “*I become his ears, his eyes, his hands and his legs*” has been explained by the following statement in the *Hadeeth* “so, he hears by Me, sees by Me, holds by Me and walks by Me.” This illustrates the companionship, in the most beautiful and wonderful style, and emphasizes the continuation of this togetherness in a way that leads Him to be the ears, eyes, hands and legs of the worshipper.

Comparable to this is the following saying of the Prophet in another *Hadeeth*: “*The Black Stone is Allah’s right hand on earth. Whoever touches and kisses it, it is as though he shakes hands with Allah and kisses His hand.*”¹

This kind of saying is common where a person is placed in the position of something close to him. As the lover says to his beloved: ‘You are my life, my heart, my ears and my eyes’. This statement has two meanings: That the beloved is in possession of the lover’s life, heart, ears and eyes. Since his love and memory dominate his heart and soul, he feels that he is with him and in his company. It is like the words of Allah quoted in a *Hadeeth Qudsi*: “*I am the companion of him who remembers Me.*”²

In another version: “*I am with My servant as long as he mentions Me and his lips move in My remembrance.*”³

In the sacred *Hadeeth* Allah says: “*When I love my servant I become for him ears, eyes, hands and helper.*”

This sense cannot be expressed in a more completely beautiful and marvellous analogy. Any attempt to illustrate this expression makes it mysterious and ambiguous.

The purpose is to explain patience by Allah. A person’s patience is in accordance with his share of the company of Allah. Once Allah is with him, he will be able to demonstrate a kind of patience that no one else can.

1 It is not authentic see *ad-Dha’eefah* (223) of al-Albani.

2 A very weak report

3 Ahmad (2/540), Ibn Majah (3792), Ibn Hibban (815) cf. Al-Bukhaari (13/499)

Abu 'Ali said: The people of patience attain the honour of both worlds because they succeed in achieving the company of Allah, who said (what means):

"Surely Allah is with those who are patient." (8/46)

Here is a wonderful secret. When a person gets connected with one of the attributes of Allah, the Exalted, that attribute takes him and leads his way to Him. The Lord Almighty is the Most Patient, no one is more patient than Him concerning an insult that he hears. It is reported that Allah revealed to Daawood (David) (peace be upon him): *"Be moulded by My qualities; remember that one of My qualities is that I am the Most Patient."*

The Lord Almighty loves His beautiful Names and Attributes. He loves the requirement of His Attributes and manifestation of their outcome in the servant. He is Beautiful and loves beauty. He is Forgiving and loves those who forgive. He is Generous and loves the people of generosity. He is All-Knowing and loves the people of knowledge. He is Single and loves the people who perform the odd number of prayers. He is Powerful and the strong believer is more beloved to Him than the weak one. He is the Most Patient and loves the people of patience. He is Appreciative and loves those who are thankful. He loves those who try to acquire the virtues of His Attributes and He is with His servants in accordance with their achievement in this respect. This is the special companionship that He spoke of by declaring: *"I become his ears, eyes, hands and helper to him."*

Some people have added a third category of patience here, and that is patience with Allah, and claim that it is the highest degree of patience. They say it constitutes faithfulness. If these people are asked to explain the real essence of patience with Allah, they will not be able to do so beyond those three kinds that have been mentioned before, i.e., to remain steadfast on His decrees, be firm on carrying out His commands and employ restraint from doing what He has prohibited. They claim that patience with Allah means to remain steadfast in carrying out his rulings, whenever they are in such a manner that the servant is always with Allah, not with himself. He loves Him and agrees with all that He decides. This meaning makes sense, but it still revolves around those three categories cited earlier. If they claim that patience with Allah is inclusive of all the categories of patience, it will be true. However to make it into a fourth category is not right.

Remember that the essence of patience with Allah is the firm stand of the heart with Him, in full sincerity, and not acting like a fox going hither and thither. The best thing is to remain steadfast and to focus on Him.

Others added another type of patience and called it ‘patience in Him’. Again, this is not out of the aforementioned categories. Patience in Him does not mean other than patience for Him. It is said: ‘I did this in Allah and for Him’. Khubayb said: “And it is in the cause of Allah, if He wishes, He will bless the parts of the shattered body.”

Allah, the Exalted says (what means):

“Those who strive in Our (cause), We will certainly guide them to Our ways.” (29/69)

He also says (what means):

“Strive in (the cause of) Allah.” (22/78)

Jabir reported that Allah, the Exalted, brought his father back to life and asked him to make a wish. He replied: ‘My Lord, my wish is that you return me to the world so that I am killed in your (way) a second time.’

The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: *“I was tortured in the cause of Allah. May no one else be so tortured!”*

The following two meanings can be drawn from these texts: This suffering was in seeking the pleasure of Allah and in His cause and obedience, and this applies to those actions that a man does by his free will. This is attested by the saying in the following report: ‘I acquired knowledge in your (cause).’ It happened through Him and because of Him. This applies to matters that are beyond the power of a man. The phrase ‘in Allah’ is usually spoken to give that sense. Now, pay attention to the saying of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) : “I was tortured in (the cause of) Allah.” Consider also Khubayb’s statement: “This is in the way of Allah” and reflect on the wish of Abdullah bin Haram to be killed in the way of Allah. The same can be said about the statement of Allah (which means): ***“...Those who strive in our (cause).”*** In all the above cases, they suffered in the cause of Allah Almighty.

The preposition ‘fi’ is not used in these cases as an adverb, nor is it to give the sense of being with reason, although this is its original use. Mark the statement in the following reports: “The ransom for taking the life of a believer is 100 camels.” “A woman went to Hell because of a cat.” An

additional sense is noted besides reasoning. *Fi* does not imply the sense of receptacle in all its usages. When you say: "I did it in your pleasure", it indicates something more than your saying: "I did it for your pleasure." In the same way when one says: "I was tortured in (the cause of) Allah", it is different from saying: "I was tortured for Allah or because of Allah." Once the meaning is clear, the expression becomes clear.

The inference is that if 'by patience in Allah' the above-mentioned meaning is intended, then it is right, but if another meaning apart from patience on His decrees, steadfastness in carrying out His orders and restraint from His prohibitions is considered, then it is not tenable. The person who perseveres in the cause of Allah is like the one who strives in the way of Allah. Striving in the cause of Allah is not different from striving by Him and for Him. And Allah is the supporter.

Some people said: "Patience for Allah is affluence, patience by Allah is survival, patience in Allah is a trial, patience is faithfulness, and patience in remaining away from Allah is estrangement." This is an unacceptable statement, and the one who said it spoke whatever came to his mind without paying attention to it. What is reported through authentic sources from the infallible Messenger must be accepted.

Let me explain these words. "Patience for Allah is affluence." It means that patience for Allah and remaining steadfast for Him is achieved by shunning the pleasure and desire of the self for the sake of Allah, Exalted be He. This is the most difficult and demanding matter. To cover the distance between the soul and Allah, and to reach Allah is very difficult for the soul, unlike the journey to the Hereafter, which is easy.

Al-Junayd said: "The march from the world to the Hereafter is easy for a believer, but deserting the people for the sake of Truth (Allah) is difficult; the journey from the soul to Allah is very difficult and to remain steadfast in patience with Allah is even more difficult."

"Patience by Allah is survival." This is because when the servant is with Allah, everything becomes easy for him. He bears heavy burdens without experiencing any problem. When he is with Allah and not with the creation or with himself, his heart and soul procure another life and he acquires a different status from what he would have when he is with the creation and by himself. In this new condition, he does not feel the distress and bitterness of patience. The hardships of legal responsibilities turn, for him, into pleasure and delight for the eyes. As some devoted person said: "I

undertook standing in prayer for a year and relished it for twenty years.” Whosoever finds pleasure in prayer, he would not experience any trouble or discomfort in it.

“Patience in Allah is a trial.” Trial is above distress, and exercising patience in trial in Him, is above the patience for Him. It is because patience in Him is like struggle in Him, which is more difficult than struggle for Him. Every person engaged in striving in Allah and having patience in Him is striving for Allah and exercising patience for Him, not the other way round. A man may strive and have patience for Allah once and thus earn the name of the one who does it for Allah, but he cannot be called the one who did it in Allah. This description applies to the one who is completely immersed in striving and exercising patience, which will take him to Paradise.

“Patience with Allah is faithfulness.” This is because patience with Him means to remain steadfast in carrying out His orders. The heart in this case does not swerve from turning to Him, and the parts of the body do not deviate from obedience. Thus, companionship takes its full effect as Allah, the Exalted, said about Ibraaheem (Abraham) (peace be upon him) (what means):

“And Ibrahim who fulfilled (his commitment).” (53/37)

i.e., he fulfilled what he was commanded by having patience with Allah with His commands.

“Patience in remaining away from Allah is estrangement.” There is no alienation greater than the act of the one who turns away from his God and Lord and his Protector, besides whom he has no protector. He has no life without Him. He cannot achieve righteousness or pleasure unless he loves Him and draws closer to Him and puts His pleasure over everything else. No alienation can be greater than turning away constantly from Him. This is the meaning of the following saying: “Steadfastness is of two kinds: The steadfastness of worshippers and the steadfastness of the lovers. The best thing for the steadfastness of the worshippers is that he is saved, and the best thing for the steadfastness of the lovers is it is rejected.”

A poet says: “On the day of departure it will become clear that his intention of patience was a false assumption.”

Another one said: “When I called out after you, the patience and the cry, the cry responded willingly, but the patience did not.”

It is attested by the fact that Yaqoob (Jacob) (peace be upon him) said (what means):

“(for me) beautiful patience is more becoming.” (12/18, 83)

When the Messenger of Allah made a promise, he fulfilled it. Then, his passion and yearning for his son Yusuf (Joseph) (peace be upon him) made him say (what means):

“How great is my grief over Yusuf!” (12/84)

His lack of patience concerning Yusuf was in contradiction to his saying (what means): **“The beautiful patience is most fitting (for me)”**. Patience is not accompanied with complaint, and it is not in contradiction with complaint to Allah, the Almighty.

Ya’qoob (peace be upon him) said (what means):

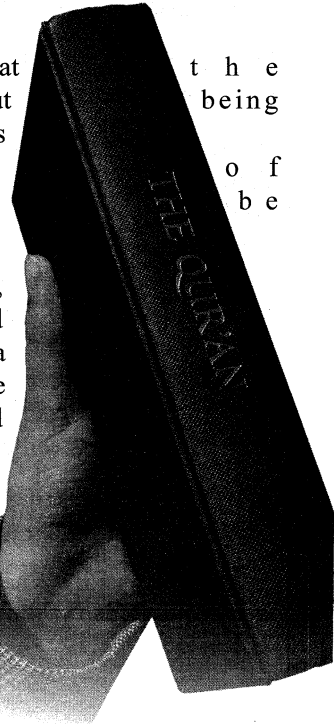
“I only express my grief and distress to Allah.” (12 86)

Allah, the Exalted commanded His Messenger Muhammad (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) to exercise good patience, and he obeyed His order and prayed: **“O Allah, to You I complain of the weakness of my strength and lack of my means.”**

Some people said: “Good patience means that afflicted person is among the people, without recognized.” This is true patience; whoever does not do it is lacking in patience. The appearance the effect of a calamity on a person cannot repelled in any way. Allah is the helper.

Some people added another category of patience, and called it patience over patience, and defined it as follows: It is to be immersed in patience in a way that it is unable to contain it. A poet said: “He tried to compete with patience and patience called him for help, and the lover cried out for patience by patience.”

This is not out of the aforementioned categories of patience. It is necessary, in reality, to remain steadfast and firm on patience. And Allah knows best.



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Chapter

Eleven

Differences in the patience of the honourable and dishonourable people

Every person has to exercise patience over something he dislikes, willingly or unwillingly. A noble man endures patience willingly, because he is aware of the benefit of being patient. He knows that he would be praised for his patience and condemned for showing anxiety. He also knows that if he is not patient, his worry cannot bring him back what he has lost, nor remove from him what he dislikes. There is no way of escaping from what has been decreed for him, and what has not been decreed for him he can never obtain. In such a case, the harm caused by worrying is closer to him than its benefits.

A wise man once said: "A sensible man does at the time of affliction what a foolish one does after a month."

A poet said: "A matter leads to another, and thus the last one becomes the first."

Thus, if ultimately one has no choice but to be patient, then even if a person is not praiseworthy, it is better for him to face the matter in the beginning with what a foolish person will do at the end.

Another wise man said: "Whoever does not endure in patience like the noble people, he will have to satisfy himself like the animals."

A noble man looks at the affliction, if he feels that worry can repel and remove it, worrying may work for him. If worry cannot help him, then he makes his trial double by worrying.

A mean person is forced to exercise patience unwillingly. He goes around the arena of worries and comes to realize that it is not going to bring him any benefit. Ultimately, he resorts to patience, like a person who is tied to be beaten.

There is another difference between the two. The noble person endures in patience in obedience to Allah, the Most Beneficent, while a lowly person exercises patience in obedience to the devil. The people of a lowly disposition are the most steadfast in working to satisfy their desires and lusts, and are far less patient in acts of obedience to their Creator and Lord. A man of mean character endures spending to please the devil with complete patience, and is not willing to spend the least to please Allah. He is prepared to bear all sorts of hardships to fulfil his desires and to please the devil that is his enemy, but is not ready to bear the smallest trouble for the pleasure of his Lord. He is ready to tolerate all kinds of humiliating remarks about his honour in working for the devil and is not ready to stand criticism about him if put to trial for the sake of Allah. He runs away from engaging in enjoining the good and forbidding the evil because he is afraid of being the target of abuse for working for the cause of Allah. Meanwhile, he is willing to put his honour at risk for the sake of his desire and the pleasure of his soul, and exercises patience with whatever is said about him. He is also prepared to sacrifice his status and rank in order to fulfil his desire and to achieve what he is after, but is not ready to offer any sacrifice to attain the pleasure of Allah and to obey Him. In fact, he is very staunch in giving away all that he has to please the devil and to achieve what he wants, but incapable of doing so in the cause of Allah.

This is the greatest meanness and a man of this nature can never have any honour with Allah Almighty. He will not be among the people of honour who will stand up when called on the Day of Judgement to be seen by all the people. It will be announced: *Where are the people who were fully conscious of Allah? Let the assembly know who are the real people of honour today!*

Chapter

Twelve

Techniques that help in exercising patience

As Allah, the Exalted has commanded His servants to be patient, He has also provided means to help people to exercise it and measures to achieve it. This is the methodology of Allah, the Most High; He does not merely ask people to do things, but aids them, sets up the means that will support them, and makes it easy to carry them out. He did not create an illness but that He created a medicine for it, and insured through its usage a cure.

Exercising patience is hard and unpleasant for humanity, yet it can still be achieved. Patience has two elements: knowledge and practice. These two are also essential ingredients of all medicines, which aid in the treatment of hearts and bodies. From these two ingredients is the medicine of patience prepared.

Knowledge includes knowing the benefit, the advantage, the pleasure and the excellence that the ordained act carries within it. It also involves realization of the evil, the harm and the damage that are found in the prohibited act. When a person acquires full knowledge of these two matters, he will be able to add true dedication, noble intention, human dignity and a sense of honour. When he puts all these elements together, he will acquire the quality of patience. He will endure life's troubles with

patience, bear its bitterness and feel its pain turn into pleasure.

It has been stated earlier that patience is a struggle between the incentive of reason and religion and the urges of desire and the soul. The way to guarantee one of the sides engaged in this struggle is to strengthen the side that is intended to win, and weaken the other. It is exactly like the conditions of health and illness.

For instance, consider the case of a person whose intention of illicit sexual desire has become very strong and he is unable to control his organ or restrain his sight or his heart. Bad thoughts dominate his heart, he continues thinking and harbouring promises and desires, which turn his heart away from the realities of remembrance and thinking about what is going to be beneficial for him in this world and the Hereafter.

If such a person is determined on the treatment and getting rid of the malady, then he should try to curb the intensity of his erroneous thoughts by taking the following steps:

Examine the source of the power of the desire. If it lies in the types of food which stimulates his sexual desire because they are stimulating themselves, or by its quality, or quantity or abundance, then he should take measures to reduce its strength by reducing the amount of food. If this does not work, then he should resort to fasting. This will weaken the intensity of his desire and curb its power, especially if he is moderate in his eating at the time of breaking his fast.

He should avoid the causes of desire, namely gazing. He should harness the rein of his eyes as much as possible, because the motive of intention and desire is stimulated by gazing. Looking stirs the heart with lust. The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "The glance is a poisoned arrow of the devil."¹

The devil casts that arrow toward the heart, which has no armour to stop it. The armour is created by nothing more than lowering the gaze or turning aside and moving away from the direction of the arrow. The devil hurls his arrows from the bow of the attractive forms. If you avoid looking at these forms, the arrow will miss its target. If, however, you expose your heart as a target it is very likely that one of the devil's poisoned arrows will hit and kill it. One should endeavour to fulfil his desire through permissible means instead of prohibited ways. Any desirable thing can be achieved through

1 Hakim (4/313)

the means allowed by Allah, the Exalted. This is a very useful cure in the case of the majority of the people, as advised by the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

The first method resembles preventing a defiant animal and a savage dog from food in order to curb their strength.

The second means is like keeping meat away from a dog and barley from cattle so that their desire is not stimulated.

The third is similar to giving them enough food which they would like naturally, when they need to preserve their strength, and make them obey their owner, and not to give them any excess.

One should think about the possible harms that will result from indulging in his carnal desires. Even if there was no heaven or hell, the harm caused by doing what the desire demands should be a sufficient deterrent from approaching it. There are so many destructive effects that originate from it that we are unable to count them, but the eye of lust is blind.

He should consider the ugly side of the figures which his soul is introducing him to, especially if it is known that they respond to him and to others. He should honour his soul by refraining from drinking from a pool that is visited by dogs and wolves. It is said: "I will shun union with you out of honour and dignity, because of the meanness of those who share it."

A poet said: "When plenty of flies surround a meal, I keep my hand away from it, even though my soul likes it. Lions avoid going to a pool of water in which dogs put their mouths."

He should remember that his saliva mixes with the saliva of every wicked person whose saliva is a source of serious sickness. Indeed the saliva of a sinful person is a disease, as said in the following lines: "Find comfort, O heart, from he who is generous in offering himself to everyone who approaches him, like water to which any game can go to drink and like the twig every breeze bends. If such saliva is sweet, remember its bitterness in the mouth of a person with a bad smell, who sucks and sips it."

A person with the slightest sense of honour and dignity will abhor having relations with someone of this type of nature. If his soul does not turn away from him but agrees to share, then he should look at the hidden repulsive qualities beyond visible beauty and attractive colour. After all this, if he lets himself to commit the shameful act, then his soul is worse than the souls of animals. No animal likes it for itself, except the pig. It is said that among all the animals it is the pig alone which is involved in sodomy. In

this way, the above person who gives himself to others is like the pig. This abominable character overshadows all the beauty and elegance of the face and the body. However, the problem is that love makes a person blind and deaf.

12

If the matter concerns a female, she has betrayed Allah, His Messenger, her family, her husband and herself. She is going to pass it on to posterity. She will bear the burden of their sin and shame. The beauty of her figure means nothing in comparison to the ugly face of her character. If you want to know how it looks, see the ugliness that covers the face of the culprit in his old age. How Allah turns their beauty into ugliness and how, as a result, his face is covered by ignominy and gloom.

It has been said: "If a lover considers the end of the beauty by which he is enchanted, he would not have been attracted."

The details of these points are lengthy and it is enough to mention their main points.

The strength of the forces of religion can be acquired in the following ways:

1. To realise that Allah, the Most High, is too high to be disobeyed when He is seeing and hearing you. Whoever realises this reverence of Allah in his heart will never be willing to defy His orders.
2. The vision of the love of the Almighty; this will make him shun His disobedience because of his love for Him. A lover surrenders in obedience to his beloved. The best renouncement is that of lovers, as the best obedience is the obedience of lovers. There is a huge difference between the renouncement and obedience of a lover and the renouncement and obedience of a person who is afraid of punishment.
3. The vision of grace and bounty, and the realisation that a noble person does not repay the one who has been good to him by reprehensible actions. That is the characteristic of mean people. The vision of grace and the bounty of Allah, the Exalted, should deter him from disobeying Him out of shame: that good and Allah's favors are coming to a person are from Him, while rebellion and sinful and evil acts are going from him to Allah. An angel carrying an account of the evil acts rises, while another angel descends holding the grace of Allah. What a stark contrast!

4. The realization of the wrath and punishment of Allah. He should remember that Allah, the Almighty gets angry when a person persistently commits sins. When He becomes angry, nothing can withstand His wrath, let alone weak human beings.
5. The consciousness of loss, i.e., the loss of the good of this world and the Hereafter, which he suffers through his disobedience. He is given blameworthy names because of his negligence, and all praiseworthy titles according to the religion, reason and custom are taken away from him. In this respect, it is enough to realize that the quality of faith, the smallest part of which is far better than this world and what it contains, is lost from him. How can he agree to sell it for carnal desires, the joy of which will soon disappear, while the consequences will remain? The lust will fade but the misery will remain. In an authentic report, the Messenger of Allah, (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), said:

“No adulterer remains a believer when he is committing adultery.”¹

Some Companions explained it by saying that belief is removed from him and remains hovering over his head like a canopy.² When he repents, belief returns to him.

Some followers remarked:

“Belief is taken off from him as a shirt is removed, and when he repents, he puts it on again.”³

This is supported by the following saying of the Prophet, (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), as reported by al-Bukhari:

“The adulterers are naked in the oven (of Hell).”⁴

This is because they took off the dress of belief, and the oven of lust which was burning in their hearts will turn into a real oven in which they will be roasted.

6. The awareness of subdual and triumph: The subjugation of desire and

1 Al-Bukhaari (2475, 5578, 6772, 6810), and Muslim (202)

2 Abu Hurayrah said it as reported in *Shu'ab al-Iman* of al-Bayhaqi (5367). It is also reported from the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) see Abu Daawood (4690) and al-Hakim (1/22)

3 Al-Hakim reported it from the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) (1/22)

4 Al-Bukhaari (7047)

triumph over the devil produces happiness, rejoicing and joy to those who experience it which is greater, sweeter and even more enjoyable than the subjugation of their human enemies. The outcome is akin to the outcome of taking useful medicine, which removes illness from the body and returns it to health and harmony.

- 12
7. The consciousness of reward: This is the recompense which Allah the Most High has promised for the people who abandon prohibited acts for His sake and control their souls from their desires. One should compare the recompense with the one who compensates, choose that which is better, and take it for him.
 8. To reflect on the companionship of Allah: It is of two types: general and specific.

General companionship is to remember that Allah is aware of him, and He is so close to him that none of his affairs are hidden from Him. This has been explained earlier. Here, the company that is meant is specific, as indicated in the following statements of Allah (which mean):

“Surely Allah is with those who endure patiently.” (8/46)

“Surely Allah is with those who are conscious of Him and those who do good deeds.” (16/128)

“Certainly Allah is with those who do good deeds.” (29/69)

His company is better and more advantageous to a person, in this world and the Hereafter, than the pleasure of the man who satisfies his desires and achieves his wishes fully, from the beginning of his life to its end. How can a person not prefer this joy to a disturbing and corrupting short-lived joy, which is just a dream or a moving shadow?

9. The contemplation of a sudden encounter: A person should fear that death will come to him unexpectedly, and Allah may catch him unawares. Allah deprives him of what he wishes of the joys of the Hereafter; rather, the disappointment will be so bitter and hard that only a person who has experienced it can understand it. It is written in some of the early Scriptures:

“O person who is not safe about himself at any time and who is unable to get the happiness of a day, be careful.”
10. The vision of affliction and safety: A person has to remember that the greatest affliction is sin and its consequences, while real safety is in obedience and its outcome. The people who are afflicted are those

who are involved in sins, even if they are safe physically. On the other hand, the people who are safe are those who are dedicated to doing good deeds, even though they may suffer from ill health.

It is reported that some people of knowledge said: "When you see the afflicted people ask Allah for well being."¹ This is because the people who suffer in affliction are those who are involved in sinful acts and are unmindful of Him. Although this is the greatest affliction, the word includes all sorts of people who are afflicted in their bodies and religion. Allah knows best.

11. He should be well trained in the motives and incentives of the religion to be able to challenge and combat the incentives of desire gradually, until his endeavours strengthen his will, and he realizes the joy of victory. It should be noted that when a person tastes the joy of something his determination to achieve it becomes stronger. Getting used to hard work increases power and strengthens capability. It is observed that the strength of porters and people engaged in hard manual work, increases, unlike cloth merchants, tailors, etc. Abandoning the struggle totally weakens the forces of religion and the motive of desire gets stronger in a person. If he accustoms himself to resisting his desires, he will be able to suppress them whenever he wishes.
12. He should work on controlling his evil thoughts. If such thoughts come to his mind, he should repel them and not let them take root and settle in his mind. Once they settle in the mind, they turn into desires, which are the capital of wretched people. When such thoughts are firmly planted in the heart they become wishes, which develop and become intentions, grow further and develop into will and finally become determination, which is connected with the objective. Hence, to get rid from oneself the first thought is much easier and more convenient than trying to resist it from becoming an act, and to prevent the impact of what is decreed after it has happened.
13. Sever all relationships and reasons that induce him to follow the dictates of desire. This is not to say that a person should not have desires, indeed he is required to direct his desires towards what is beneficial to him, and employ them in doing what the Lord Almighty appreciates. In this way, he will be safe from following his desires in doing things which are disliked by Him. Any potential that a person

1 It is reported by at-Tirmithi (3432)

employs in the cause of Allah, the Almighty protects it from being misused by the man himself or the devil. However, if he does not use it for the sake of Allah, he will definitely use it for himself and his desire. Knowledge, for instance, if not employed for the cause of Allah, will be used in the service of the self and desire. The same can be said about actions. If they are not purely for Allah, they will be for the outward show and hypocrisy. Similarly, if money is not spent in matters pleasing Allah, it will be spent in the interest of the devil and desire. If one's prominent post is not employed for the pleasure of Allah, it will be employed to fulfil one's desire and pleasure. Likewise, if power is not used to fulfil the objectives approved by Allah, it will force him to do things that will cause His wrath. When a person trains himself to work for the sake of Allah, he will find it very hard to work for others. Conversely, if someone has accustomed himself to working for his own desire and wishes, he will find sincere dedication to Allah and working for Him alone very difficult. This applies to all types of actions. Therefore, for a person who is accustomed to spending in the cause of Allah, it is very hard to spend for others, and vice versa.

14. Turning one's attention to the wonders of the signs of Allah, which He calls His servants to look at, including the recited verses of the Book and the manifest signs in the universe. When this contemplation takes hold of his mind, there will be no space for the devil's whispering and suggestions. What a huge loss a person suffers, who is able to benefit from the remembrance of Allah, the Most High, the teachings of His Messenger and His Book and the advice of the Companions of the Prophet, but neglects it and chooses the company of the devil from the *Jinns* and humans! There can be no loss greater than this and Allah's help is sought.
15. To think about this world, its sudden end and the proximity of its termination: Since its end is very near, one should not think to take from it, to his permanent abode, the lowliest and least valuable of things. This is the characteristic of a person who is low-minded, despicable in dignity and possessing a dead heart. Such a person's regret will increase when he sees the real value of the provisions he sent forward and realizes their uselessness. How much more regret will he suffer if he abandons what is useful for him, and chooses something that will cause him punishment and severe pain! He will feel even greater regret and disappointment when he takes along only

what is useful in the present and leaves behind something much more beneficial to him in the hereafter.

16. To constantly turn his attention the One Who holds the hearts of people between His two fingers: He is the one who controls everything and to Him is the ultimate return of everything. By a person's constant focus on Him he may perchance find the moment of His gifts. It is said in a report: "Allah has particular moments for bestowing His gifts, so seek those moments and ask Allah to cover up your hidden faults and safeguard you from fears."¹

By getting involved in the search for those moments, a person may be lucky and find that that moment in which Allah does not turn down the prayer of any person. The one who is given the manner of supplication is granted the response as well. If the Almighty did not want to answer the prayers of the servant He would not have inspired the prayer to him, as it is said in the following line: "If you did not want me to receive what I hoped and asked from your generosity, you would not have made me accustomed to asking."

He should not be distressed by unpleasant conditions that he faces at any given moment. Allah, the Almighty treats His servant in the manner of the one who has none like him in action as there is none like Him in His Attributes. He deprives His servant in order to give to him, makes him ill so that He can cure him, makes him poor in order to make him rich, causes him to die in order to bring him back to life, and He did not expel his parents from Heaven but to return them to it in the best of condition. He said: "O Adam! Do not become distressed by my order: Get out of here. I have created you for it and I am going to bring you back to it."

Allah, the Lord of the universe, shows His favour to His servant by afflicting him, depriving him, then giving to him, and giving him health after making him ill. His servant should never be distressed by a condition he does not like, except that which makes him angry with Him and drives Him away from him.

17. The servant should be aware that he has two different sides in him and he is being pulled by each of them in opposite directions. One of them is pulling him in the direction of the highest Companion in the highest

1 Al-Tabarani (720), al-Bayhaqi in *Shu'ab* (1083)

Heaven, and the other is dragging him down to the lowest. Whenever he is pulled to the higher side, he ascends a step up until he reaches the highest place suitable for him. When he yields to the lower side, he descends a step down until he reaches his place in *Sijjin*. If he is interested in finding out where he is, with the highest Companion or the lowest one, he should look where his spirit is in this world. When the soul departs the body, it joins the highest Companion to whom he was pulled in the world, and, therefore, he is more deserving of it. This is because a man is with the one whom he loves by nature, reason and with expectation of some reward. Whoever is interested in anything is by nature drawn to it and its people, as every man is inclined towards whatever suits him.

Allah, the Almighty says (what means):

“Say: every one works according to his manner.”(17/84)

The higher souls are attracted by nature, intention and actions to what is lofty and high, and the lower ones toward the low.

18. The servant should realize that a place must be cleared before the rain of mercy starts falling; the land must be cleansed of weeds to make the plants grow faster. If the place is not clear, the rain of mercy will not find a place to drop in, and if the place is clear and suitable for the rain, but not cleansed of the weeds, the plants will not grow properly. Bushes and shrubs may overwhelm or overshadow the plants. This is exactly like a man who prepares his land and makes it suitable for planting; he sows seeds in it and waits for rain to drop. In the same way, when the servant cleans his heart and frees it from evil thoughts and vicious intentions, and sows the seeds of remembrance, contemplation, love and sincerity, exposes it to the winds of mercy and waits for the rain of mercy, in time, he is likely to reap the harvest. As the hope for the rain to fall gradually grows stronger, the hope for receiving the bounty of the Most Beneficent in the noble hours and selected conditions becomes stronger. This is so especially when intentions are combined together, hearts supporting one another in a large congregation, like the people gathering in Arafat or on Friday, or coming together for performing the prayer for rain. The assembly of minds and souls are causes set by Allah, the Exalted, to receive goodness and make mercy rain down, as He has set causes that produce the effects. The causes of mercy in this case are stronger than the material causes that produce their effects.

The servant, however, due to his ignorance, sees what is in front of his eyes, and ignores the hidden good. He wrongly prefers the impact and result of this material cause over the impact and result of the spiritual one. If the servant cleans the place, prepares and makes it ready, he will be able to see the wonders. Nothing can stop the bounty of Allah except the obstacles found in the servant himself. If those obstacles are removed, Divine grace will flow to him from every direction. Consider a big river that waters every land through which it passes, but some barrier and a heavy dam block its way to some barren land. As a result, the owner of this land complains of drought while the river flows at the side of his land.

19. The servant should understand that Allah, glory be to Him, has created for him eternal existence without end, honour free of disgrace, security free of fear, affluence removed from poverty, joy without pain and perfection free from any defect. He, blessed be He, tries him in this world with life that ends quickly, with honour accompanied by disgrace, followed by humiliation, with security mixed with fear and followed by consternation. The same applies to the conditions of affluence, enjoyment, happiness, delight and comfort; all of them are mixed in this world with their opposites which follow them, and they vanish quickly. Most people make mistakes in this place, where they seek comfort, long life, honour, power and rank and so miss the place they should be searching for. Rarely do people find what they are searching for; and all they are able to achieve is a little pleasure, which disappears quickly.

The Messengers of Allah, (peace be upon them) came with the mission to call the people to permanent comfort and a lasting abode. Those who responded to their call received a greater enjoyment and pleasure in this world. Their life in this world was more pleasant than the life of their kings and their equals. Showing indifference to this world is an existing sovereignty. This is a favour for which the devil greatly envies the believer, and he tries by all means, to place obstacles in his way to stop him from reaching it. He knows that if the servant controls his desire and anger and surrenders them to the motives of the religion, he is a real sovereign, and becomes totally free, while the king, who is slave to his desires and anger, is not free. He is a subservient slave in the form of an owner dragged like a camel by the reins of desire and anger.

The people who are deceived and misled see only a visible authority, which looks like a kingdom but in reality is slavery. They are captivated by desire, the beginning of which is enjoyment, and its end is regret. Nevertheless, the acutely aware and guided people ignore what they see, from beginning to end, and from causes to effects, and this is the bounty of Allah, which He grants to whomever He wishes. Allah is of great bounty.

20. The servant should not be misled by thinking that only awareness of what we have said is sufficient in reaching the goal. He has to make an effort to put this knowledge into practice and do his utmost to act accordingly. The core of that is the abandonment of accustomed practices, because they will remain obstacles in the way of perfection and success. A person who cannot rid himself of his usual habits can never succeed. He must also remove himself from anything that is contaminated by sin in order to rid himself of his usual activities.

The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

*“Whoever hears about the Antichrist should keep away from him.”*¹

There is no better way of protecting oneself from evil than avoiding its sources and places.

The devil employs a clever trick that only the wise can escape from; he tries to show some good in the sources of evil and tempts people to come closer to them. When they approach, he catches them in his net.

And Allah knows best.



1 Ahmad (4/431,441), Abu Daawood (4319) and al-Hakim (4/531)

Chapter

Thirteen

Explanation of the fact that human beings can under no circumstance dispense with patience

In a man's life, he alternates between commands that he is required to obey and complete, and prohibitions that he is ordered to shun and avoid. He lives in the shadow of a Divine decree that takes place accidentally, and a bounty that he is required to acknowledge by expressing gratitude to the Benefactor. Since a person is always surrounded by these conditions, he has to persevere in patience throughout his life. All that a man encounters in this world comes under one of the two following categories:

- That which is in accordance with his wishes and desires
- That which is against his wishes;

In both the above situations, he needs patience. Where conditions are in accordance with his wishes and desires, such as health, safety, rank, wealth and all kinds of permissible enjoyments, he should exercise patience in the following ways:

He should not be complacent and should not be deceived by possessing them. They should not lead him to show pride, arrogance and unlawful delight, which Allah does not like.

He should not exhaust himself in obtaining them, nor exert all his efforts in acquiring them, because they turn into their opposites. A person who goes to the extremes in eating, drinking and sexual intercourse, is afflicted with the opposites of these habits, and will be deprived of the pleasure of eating, drinking and sexual intercourse.

He should be steadfast in fulfilling the dues to Allah Almighty in them, and be careful in being neglectful of them; otherwise, He may take them away from him.

He should avoid using this favour of Allah in unlawful ways. He should control himself in letting his soul follow its desires, as it would lead him to indulge in what is unlawful. If he is extremely careful and succeeds in keeping away from prohibited things, he is still likely to fail in a reprehensible manner. It is only righteous, strictly observant people who remain steadfast when in a state of happiness.

Some scholars of the past said: "In tribulation, both believers and unbelievers exercise patience, but it is only the truly righteous people who remain steadfast in the time of happiness."

Abd al- Rahman bin 'Awf said:

"We were put to trial with adversity and we were able to sustain it, but when we were tried with prosperity we failed to show patience."¹

For this reason Allah, the Exalted, has warned His devotees from the trial of wealth, spouses and children. He said (what means):

"O believers, your wealth and your children should not turn you away from the remembrance of Allah." (63/9)

The Almighty also said (what means):

"O believers, you have an enemy among your wives and children. Beware of them." (64/14)

The enmity in the above verses is not what many people think. It is not the enmity of hatred and opposition; rather, it is the enmity of love that prevents parents from undertaking migration, *Jihad*, learning the religion,

¹ At-Tirmithi (2464)

giving out charity and other religious duties and righteous acts. At-Tirmithi reported on the authority of 'Ikrimah that a man asked Ibn Abbas about the meaning of the following verse (which means):

“O believers, there are enemies among your wives and children.”

He said: It talks about some people of Makkah who embraced Islam and intended to join the Messenger of Allah in Madinah, but their wives and children did not permit them do so. When ultimately they arrived in Madinah, and joined the Messenger of Allah, they found that others had exceeded them learning in the religion; so, they intended to punish their family members. Then this verse was revealed (which means):

“O believers, among your wives and children there are enemies for you.”
(64/14)

At-Tirmithi declared this report as good and authentic.¹

How many opportunities for success and perfection a person misses because of his wife and children!

A *Hadeeth* states:

*“The child is a cause of miserliness and cowardliness.”*²

Imam Ahmad reported in his *Musnad* that Buraydah told the following story:

Once the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was addressing us and al-Hasan and al-Husayn came in walking and stumbling; they were wearing red shirts. The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) came down of the pulpit, held them and placed them before him and said:

“Allah has spoken truth: ‘Your wealth and your children are a trial for you.’ (64/15)

I watched these two boys walking and stumbling and could not help stopping my speech and holding them.”³

This was the utmost mercy of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and his kindness and overwhelming love for young children.

¹ At-Tirmithi (3317)

² Ahmad (4/172), Ibn Majah (4666), al-Hakim (3/164)

³ See Ahmad (5/354), see also Abu Daawood (1109) at-Tirmithi (3774), An-Nasaa'i (1413), Ibn Majah (3600) Ibn Hibban (6038) and al-Hakim (4/189)

He did so in order to teach his community to be kind, compassionate and affectionate to the young.

13 **Exercising** patience, when prosperous, is very difficult because it is connected with power. A hungry person is more capable of showing steadfastness when food is not available to him, than he is when it is there. Similarly, a person full of sexual desire is more in control of his desire in the absence of a woman than he would be when she is available.

As for the things which are not the subjects of a man's desires, they may be such that he has power to choose, such as doing good or bad deeds; or they are of the type in which he has no choice in their first stage, or perhaps he has a choice in the initial stage but has no power to remove them once he is involved in them.

Thus, there are three categories here:

The first category is connected with matters that are within the power of a man. This includes all acts of a person that fall under the categories of good or bad deeds. In the case of good deeds, he is required to remain steadfast in carrying them out because the soul has an aversion by its nature to acts of submission. In the case of performing the regular prayers this is due to laziness and love of comfort in its nature, particularly if this attitude is coupled with hardness of the heart, its blockage by sins, inclination to follow desires and mixing with heedless people. With such obstacles at work, the servant will exhibit little interest in performing the prayers. If ever he does perform them he will be doing it reluctantly, with his mind elsewhere, eager to finish it quickly, like a person sitting next to a dead body.

In the case of *Zakat* he shows disinterest because his soul by its nature is inclined toward greed and avarice. The same applies to performing the pilgrimage and undertaking *Jihad*. The servant in these cases needs to show steadfastness in three stages:

- A. Before he embarks on any work, he has to arrive at a sincere and genuine intention, keep himself away from the causes of ostentation and publicity, and be fully determined to carry out the duties in the correct manner.
- B. While carrying out the duties he should remain steadfast and

avoid negligence and distraction. He should, throughout his work, remember his intention and keep the heart aware of the Lord Almighty, without forgetting Him in his affairs. The most important thing is not carrying out a duty, but that the person does not lose sight of his Lord when fulfilling His command. He should constantly keep his Benefactor in his mind. This is the way in which devoted servants perform their duties to Allah.

The servant is in need of patience in giving the acts of submission their full dues by completing them with all their required basic elements, obligatory parts and acts, as recommended by the *Sunnah*. He is also required to keep thoughts of Allah foremost in his mind and not to let himself become distracted from Him. The engagement of his heart in the remembrance of Allah should not prevent other parts of his body from carrying out the acts of worship, nor his body's engagement keep his heart away from the remembrance of Allah.

- C. The third stage is to exercise patience after completing the work. This can be done in three ways:
- i. Control, by refraining from doing something that may spoil his work. Allah, the Exalted said (what means):

"O believers don't destroy your charities by reproach and abuse." (2/264)

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- ii. The importance does not lie in doing the duty, but in protecting it from being destroyed.
- ii. Refrain from thinking about it, being proud of it and regarding it as a great achievement. These things are more damaging to his work than many clear acts of sin.
- iii. Desist from bringing it out from secrecy to openness. A man does something secretly known only to him and Allah, and that act is recorded in a secret register. If he talks about it, it is transferred to the register of open acts. He should not think that the duty of patience ends with the completion of the act.

AS for controlling oneself from sinful acts, the position is clear. The greatest support in this respect comes from abandoning habits one is accustomed to and dissociating from sitting and talking with those who help in committing sinful acts. Abandoning customary practices helps in

avoiding sins because habits become second nature. When desire and habit join, they become the forces of the devil and the force of the religion fails to overcome them.

The second category of things that are against the desire of a man includes acts which are not within his power, and he has no means to remove them, such as the tribulations like the death of a beloved person, loss of his wealth, his illness, and the like, which a person has no power to ward off.

They are of two kinds:

- One in which no human being is involved
- And the other, which is caused by a man, like abuse, beating and so on.

The first condition has four stages:

- a. The stage of incapacity, which consists of anguish, complaint and exasperation. This is the work of people who lack reason, religion and dignity and this is the greater of two calamities.
- b. The stage of endurance, whether for the sake of Allah or for human dignity.
- c. The stage of contentment, which is higher than the stage of steadfastness. Whether it was obligatory or a disputed matter among the scholars, whereas there is no dispute about the obligatory status of steadfastness.
- d. The stage of thankfulness, which is higher than the stage of contentment. A person in this stage considers a mishap a grace and expresses thanks over it.

The second type which is caused by a human being also has the above four stages plus another four stages, which are as follows:

Pardon and forgiveness

Keeping the heart free from the intention of revenge, venting anger and keeping the mind free from the trouble of perpetually thinking of the crime and feeling distressed about it.

Realization of the divine decree, and remembering that the person who caused you pain was unjust, but the One who decreed it for you and executed it at the hand of this unjust person, was not unjust. The suffering of people is like suffering from cold and heat that cannot be removed; a

person who is annoyed by the discomfort of cold and heat is not a resolute man. Everything takes place according to the Divine decree, although the means and causes may be different.

Doing good to the person who has done wrong to you, and repaying his wrongdoing with noble acts; this stage includes so many benefits and advantages that they are only known to Allah. If a servant misses this high stage, then at least he should not agree with the lowest and the basest of them.

The third category of things that are not in line with the desires is that which is acquired by the choice of a person, but once it gets hold of him, he becomes helpless and finds no means of ridding himself of it. The best example is love, the first stage of which is optional but the end is exigency. Another example is a person who exposes himself to the causes of disease and pain and when they afflict him, he does not know how to get rid of them easily, as is the case when being intoxicated after taking intoxicants. In these cases, it is required of the person afflicted to be steadfast and refrain from such actions in the first place. If he fails to exercise patience in the first stage, it only remains for him to persevere in patience to the end and resist the causes of desire and craving.

The devil plays his amazing tricks here. He makes the affected person think that taking a small amount of what is prohibited is necessary for him and it is allowed for the purpose of treatment. The objective is to seek treatment by imbibing wine or other forbidden substances. Some jurists have given permission for this, which is the result of total ignorance. This type of treatment does not remove the disease, but rather increases and intensifies it. Many people have used this type of treatment and they ended up in loss of both this world and the hereafter. The only effective medicine for such disease is patience and consciousness of Allah. Allah has said (what means):

“If you hold to patience and be conscious of Allah that is the resolute affair.” (3/186)

He also said (what means):

“Whoever shows patience and is conscious of Allah (should know) that Allah does not make the reward of those who do good deeds wasted.” (12/90)

Patience (*Sabr*) and consciousness of Allah (*Taqwa*) are the medicines for every disease connected with the religion. They cannot be separated.

A question may be asked here: Will a person be rewarded on being patient if he is grossly involved in committing sinful acts and indulging in serious offences? Will he deserve punishment for the ensuing results of his actions, which resulted without his choice?

The answer is that he will be rewarded if he remained patient for the sake of Allah and expressed regret on being engaged in prohibited acts. Here is a struggle against his soul, which is a good deed, and Allah does not destroy the reward of a person who does good deeds.

As for the punishment that resulted from his actions, he deserves to receive punishment for the causes and effects, as a drunk has to face the consequences of his actions while drunk. If the cause is a prohibited thing then he is not to be excused, because Allah Almighty punishes the use of prohibited causes and their effects, and rewards obligatory causes and their effects. By the same reasoning, whoever calls people to an act of innovation or error will bear the sin of his action, and the actions of all those who followed him, because they followed him and committed those evil acts. This is why the son of Adam, who killed his brother, bears part of the responsibility of the crime of every murderer until the Day of Judgement.

Allah, the Exalted has stated in the Qur'an (what means):

"They will bear the full weight of their own burden as well some of the burden of those they misled with no true knowledge." (16/25)

"They will bear their burdens and other burdens with their own." (29/13)

The question then arises, how will a person repent for an action that is not done by his choice, when a man does return to Allah in repentance of what he has done by his will?

The answer is that his repentance will be shown by showing regret, refraining from succumbing to its incentives and causes, and controlling his self from repeating it. If the effect generated is connected to another person, the repentance will not be complete until it is as far removed from him as possible. This is why a person, who calls others to sinful acts, is required, in order to make his repentance acceptable, to declare that what he was promoting was an act of innovation and error. Allah, the Most High, attached the validity of the repentance of the people of the book,

whose crime was hiding the evidences and guidance which Almighty has sent down, in order to misguide the people, with amending their attitude and declare what they hid. Allah says about them (what means):

“Certainly those who conceal the proofs and guidance that We revealed after We made them clear in the Scripture, they are those whom Allah curses and the people who are entitled to curse, unless they repent, make amends and declare the truth. I will certainly accept their repentance: I am the Ever Relenting, the Most Merciful.” (2/159,160)

This is exactly like the case of the hypocrites who tried to confuse the minds of the weak believers and join the Jews and polytheists, the enemies of Allah, and declared themselves Muslims, only for outward show and to seek popularity. Their repentance was attached to repair what they had damaged and align with Allah instead of the disbelieving Jews and polytheists. They were also required to sincerely submit to Allah instead of claiming to be Muslims for outward show and the gaining of acceptance. The real essence of repentance and its conditions should be understood in this way. We seek Allah’s help.



Chapter

Fourteen

*The most difficult type of
patience that people can
bear*

The hardship of exercising patience depends on the strength of the causes for the work and the ease of the act for the person carrying it out. If both these factors come together in an act, then to refrain from doing it becomes a most difficult thing for him; but if both of them are missing, then keeping away from it becomes easier.

If only one of the factors is available and the other is missing, being patient becomes easy from one side and difficult from another side. Hence, if a man does not have any incentive to kill, steal, drink wine, or commit other sinful acts nor is it easy for him, then avoiding such acts is easy for him. It is the most difficult thing for a man who has a powerful incentive for doing them and they are easy for him. For this reason the self control of a ruler in avoiding oppression, the restraint of a young man from committing adultery and the self control of a rich man from not engaging in enjoying and satisfying his desires, are of the great value with Allah Almighty. It is recorded in the *Musnad* of Imam Ahmad and other collections of *Hadeeth* that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

*"Your Lord is amazed at a youth who does not have sensual desire."*¹

This is explained in the Prophetic *Hadeeth* describing the seven types of people who will be under the shade of the Throne on the Day of Judgement.² It is their perfect endurance, which they exercised despite its hardship, which raised them to this high status. Let us see their patience. For a ruler, who has total power, to deal with justice with his subjects and give them what is due to them, is not an easy thing. The same applies to a youth who devotes himself to the worship of Allah and suppresses his desires, the man who remains in the mosque most of the time and does not want to leave it, the person who gives out charity and hides it even from the parts of his own body, and the self-control of the man who a woman of rank and beauty tries to seduce. The others who will be honoured by Allah include two persons who love one another for His sake; their union and separation are for Him, and the patience of the person who cries out of fear of Allah and tries to hide it from the people; they also struggle hard in controlling themselves and being patient.

It also explains the reason behind the severe punishment of an old man who commits adultery, the king who tells lies and the poor person who is arrogant, since it was easy for them to restrain themselves from these prohibited acts as their desires were weak in them. It was clear that they did not restrain themselves, although it was easy for them, and went ahead because of their arrogance and rebellion.

It shows that being steadfast and avoiding sins, which are connected with the tongue and sexual organ, are the most difficult type of endurance, since their motives are very powerful and the acts are easy to commit. The sins connected with the tongue, such as defamation, calumny, telling lies, vain argument and self-praise (openly or secretly), tale bearing, disparaging those who are not liked, praising those who are liked and so on, are the amusement of the tongue. Here the motives are strong and moving the tongue is easy; as a result, the power of endurance becomes weak. The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) advised Mu'ath to control his tongue upon which he asked:

"Are we going to be accountable for all that we speak?" "And what else brings people down on their nose in the Hell except the harvest of their

1 See al-Musnad (4/151), al-Tabarani (17/266), Abu Ya'la (1749), Majma' al-zawa'id (10/270)

2 See Al-Bukhaari (660, 1423, 6806) and Muslim (2380)

tongues?" the Prophet replied.¹

14 In particular, when offences of the tongue become a matter of habit for a man, they become very difficult to resist. It is common to find a man who, even if he is noticed for keeping the night vigil, fasting in the daytime and avoids leaning against silk cushions even for a moment, yet he lets his tongue loose and engages in slander, defamation and making fun of the people. Often he targets the people of piety and those who have knowledge of Allah and His religion, and speaks concerning Allah that which he does not know.

You may witness some people who keep away from the tiniest prohibited thing, and protect themselves from a drop of wine and a needle's eye's equal of filth; still they do not mind committing adultery. It is said about a man who was alone in private with a strange woman, and when he came to have intercourse with her, said to her: "Cover up your face because looking at the face of a woman is prohibited."

A man approached Abdullah bin 'Umar and asked him about killing a mosquito (by a man in the condition of *Ihram*). Abdullah said:

"Look at these people! They are asking me about the compensation for the killing of a mosquito, and they are the ones who killed the grandson of the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)."²

I also faced a similar incident. I was in the state of *Ihram* and a group of Bedouins, who were notorious for murdering people and looting their belongings, came to me and asked me about the rule governing the killing of lice by a man in the state of *Ihram*.

I remarked: "How astonishing! The people who do not refrain from killing people, which Allah Almighty has prohibited, ask me about killing lice in the state of *Ihram*!"

The point is that the degree of hardship when exercising patience from committing sins depends on the strength or weakness of the motives for that sin.

1 Abd al-Razzaq (11/194), Ahmad (5/231), at-Tirmithi (2616) and Ibn Majah (3973)

2 Al-Bukhaari (3753, 5994)

It is reported that Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, said:

“Patience is of three kinds: patience in calamity, patience of doing good deeds, patience against committing sinful acts. A person who controls himself and remains steadfast when calamity hits him, Allah will record for him 300 degrees. For a man who remains persistent on doing good deeds perfectly Allah will give him 600 rewards, and a man who keeps away from sinful acts out of fear of Allah and having hope in His reward, Allah will honour him with 900 rewards.”¹

Maymun bin Mihran said: “Patience is of two types: showing patience in affliction is good, but to remain steadfast and refrain from committing sin is much higher than that.”²

Al-Fudayl bin ‘Iyad explained the statement of Allah (which means):

“Peace be upon you for the patience you demonstrated”. (13/24)

He said: “They exercised patience on carrying out what they were commanded and in keeping away from what they were prohibited.”³

Al-Fudayl seems to have regarded patience in affliction as part of the duties which are commanded. Allah knows best.

pleased steadfast
 good deeds patience good deeds
 in calamity pleased refrain
 patience sinful acts steadfast
 reward patience
 Honour

1 Ibn Abi al-Dunya in “al-Sabr” (24)
 2 Ibid (18)
 3 Ibid (29)

Chapter

Fifteen

Patience (Sabr) in the verses of the Holy Qur'an

Imam Ahmad said: "Allah, the Exalted, has mentioned patience in 90 places in the Qur'an."

We are going to point out the categories in which it has been mentioned. These are of different kinds:

1. Allah Almighty has commanded it. He said (what means):
"Exercise patience; your patience comes by Allah." (16/127)
2. He, glory be to Him, prohibited acts which are opposed to patience. He said (what means):
"Do not be in hurry concerning them." (46/35)
"Do not be weak and don't grieve." (3/139)
"Do not be like the man of the whale." (68/48)
3. Success has also been attached to it. The Almighty said (what means):
"O believers, be patient, vie with each other in perseverance, be firm and be conscious of Allah, so you may succeed." (3/200)
Success has been attached to all four acts mentioned in this verse.
4. The reward for steadfast people is to be several times greater when

compared with other actions. In this respect the Qur'an announces (what means):

"They will be given their rewards twice over because they were steadfast." (28/54)

"Those who are steadfast will be given their rewards without measure." Sulayman bin al-Qasim said: "The reward of every act is known, except steadfastness, as Allah has said (what means): ***'Those who are steadfast will be given their rewards without measure.'***"

He added: "It will be like gushing water."

5. Leadership in religion and a firm belief are both attached to it. Allah said (what means):

"We made those leaders guiding others according to Our command when they became steadfast and believed firmly in Our signs." (32/24)

The above verse shows that leadership in religious matters is achieved with steadfastness and firm belief.

6. The patient people are honoured with the company of Allah. He said (what means):

"Allah is surely with those who are patient." (2/153; 8/46)

Abu Ali al-Daqqaq said: "The people who persevere in patience succeeded in getting honour in both worlds, because they achieved the company of Allah."

7. Allah promised the people of patience three good things that He has not promised anyone else. They are: blessings, mercy and guidance from Him.

He said (what means):

"Give good tidings to those who persevere in patience, those who say when afflicted with a calamity: 'Surely we belong to Allah, and surely we shall return to Him. They will be given blessings and mercy from their Lord and it is they who are rightly guided.'" (2/155-157)

One of the pious persons said, when he was consoled for a calamity that befell him: "Why shouldn't I exercise patience when Allah has promised me three rewards for it? Each of them is better than this world and what it contains."

8. Allah, blessed be He, has made patience a source and cause of support,

and ordered people to seek help through it. He said (what means):

“And seek help with patience and prayer.” (2/45)

It follows that a person who has no patience will not receive help.

9. Allah has attached victory to patience and consciousness of Allah. He said (what means):

“Yes, if you exercise patience and are conscious of Allah, and they (i.e. the enemy) attack you suddenly, your Lord will reinforce you with 5000 imposing angels.” (3/125)

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) confirmed it by saying:

“Be certain that the victory is attached with patience.”¹

10. Allah made patience and consciousness of Allah a strong shield against the tricks and stratagem of the enemy; the human being has no stronger shield than that. He declared (what means):

“If you remain steadfast and mindful of Allah their scheming will not harm you in the least.” (3/120)

11. The Lord Almighty told us that the angels will greet in Paradise those who were steadfast:

“The angels will go to them from every gate, (saying): peace be upon you because you remained steadfast. What an excellent reward is this abode of yours!” (13/23, 24)

12. Allah Almighty allowed His servants to retaliate in proportion to the aggression, but He affirmed by oath, that to restrain and control themselves is better for them.

“If you retaliate to an aggression, make your retaliation proportionate, but if you remain steadfast, it is best for those who remain steadfast.” (16/126)

Consider the affirmation of the statement by various methods.

13. The Lord Almighty has made the result of patience and good deeds forgiveness and great reward. He declared (what means):

“Except those who remain steadfast and do good deeds, they are those

1 Ahmad (1/307)

for whom there is forgiveness and big reward.” (11/11)

These are exceptions made by Allah from the bad category of human beings, who are characterized as showing despair and disbelief at the time of affliction, and happiness and arrogance on receiving favours. Condemnation is avoided by patience and good deeds, as forgiveness and great rewards are achieved through them.

14. Allah, the Exalted made restraints on calamities among resolute matters, which are considered high, because of their noble status and respectable grade. He said (what means):

“The one is patient and forgives, that surely is of the resolute matters.” (42/43)

Luqman taught his son (what means):

“Command what is right, forbid what is wrong, bear anything that happens to you in patience; these are things that are of the resolute matters.” (31/17)

15. Allah, the Almighty promised the believers victory and success. This is His good word that has gone forward for them, and He declared that He made them achieve it because of their steadfastness. He said about the children of Israel (what means):

“The good promise of your Lord was fulfilled for the children of Israel because of their patience.” (7/137)

16. Allah, the Exalted attached His love to patience and fixed it for the people who are patient. He said (what means):

“Many Prophets have fought with large bands of godly men alongside them who, in the face of their sufferings for Allah’s cause, did not lose heart or weaken or surrender; Allah loves those who are patient.” (3/146)

17. Allah mentioned good things which are attained only by the people who are patient, in two places in His Book: in Chapter 28 in the story of Qaroon (Corah), where He told us that the people who were given knowledge said to those who wished to get wealth, like Qaroon:

“Alas for you, Allah’s reward is better for those who believe and do good deeds: only those who remain steadfast will attain it.” (28/80)

The second place is Chapter 41, in which He commanded the servant to

repel evil with what is good; when he does this, his enemy will become a close friend. Then He said (what means):

“Only those who show patience and those who have great luck will get it.”

18. Allah stated that only the people of perfect patience and gratitude benefit from His signs. He said (what means):

“We sent Moses with Our signs: ‘Bring out your people from the depth of darkness into light. Remind them of the days of Allah; there truly are signs in this for every steadfast, thankful person.’ (14/5)

He also said in Chapter Luqman (31) (what means):

“Don’t you see that ships sail through the sea by the grace of Allah, to show you some of His wonders? Truly there are signs in this for every patient, thankful person.” (31/31)

He said in the story of Sheba (what means):

“We made their fate a byword, and scattered them in countless fragments. There are signs in this for every patient, thankful person.” (34/19)

He said in Chapter 42:

“Among His signs are ships, sailing like floating mountains: if He willed, He could bring the wind to a standstill and they would lie motionless on the surface of the sea; there are truly signs in this for every patient thankful person.” (42/32, 33)

These are four places in the Qur’an which clearly state that only the people of patience and thankfulness take benefit from the signs of the Lord Almighty.

19. Allah praised His servant Ayyoob (Job) greatly because of his steadfastness saying (what means):

“We found him patient in adversity; an excellent servant! He always turned to Allah.” (38/44)

He described him as excellent because of his patience. This indicates that if a person does not behave with patience in adversity he is an unworthy person.

20. Allah, the Almighty has passed a general judgement of being in loss for every person who does not believe and is not among the people of

truth and patience. The people who gain are those who have the above qualities.

He said (what means):

“By the declining day, man is in deep loss except for those who believe, do good deeds, urge one another to the truth and urge one another to be patient.” (103/1-3)

Imam ash-Shafi’i said: “If the people pay attention to this chapter, it will suffice them.”

This is because the excellence of a person lies in the perfection of his two potentials: the power of knowledge and the power of action, which are embodied in belief and good deeds. Moreover, just as he is in need of reaching the state of excellence he is also required to make others reach that stage. This could be done through teaching the truth and by encouraging others to be patient. The foundation, pillar and axis on which all this rests are patience.

21. Allah, the Exalted assured us that the people of the right hand are those who exercise patience and show kindness, who are firm in these two qualities and enjoin others to acquire them. He said (what means):

“Then he became among those who believe and urge one another to be patient and compassionate. They will be on the right-hand side.” (90/17, 18)

Here it is stated that the people of the right hand consist exclusively of those who have the above mentioned two qualities. The people in this regard can be divided into four categories, those having patience and compassion being the best of them. The worst are those who lack patience and show no mercy, followed by those who have patience but lack mercy, and lastly those who have mercy and kindness but have no patience.

22. Allah, the Almighty linked patience with the pillars of Islam and the stages of belief. He mentioned it together with prayer, and said (what means):

“Seek help by prayer and patience.” (2/45)

He linked it with good deeds, and said (what means):

“...except those who exercise patience and do good deeds.” (11/11)

He joined it with consciousness of Allah, when He said (what means):

“Surely, the one who exercises patience and is conscious of Allah...”
(12/90),

He also linked it with truth, as He said (what means):

“..And enjoined one another truth and taught one another patience.”
(103/3),

and with mercy when He said (what means):

“.. And urge one another on patience and urge one another on mercy.” (90/17)

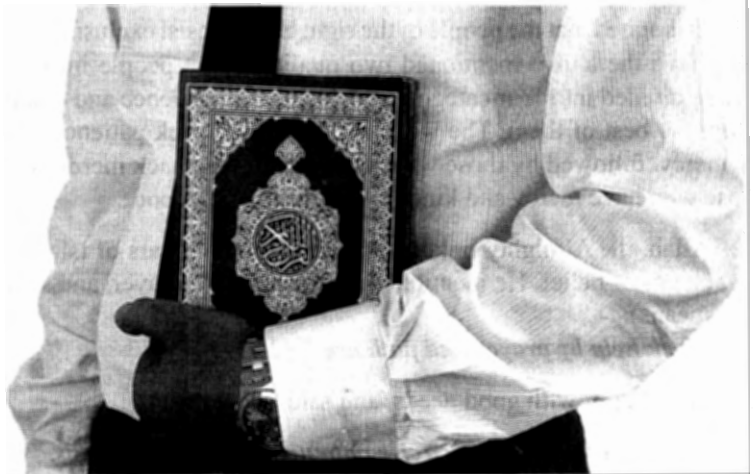
Allah the Most High associated patience with firm belief. He said
(what means):

“...when they showed patience and believed in our signs.” (32/24),

Putting it alongside truthfulness, as He said (what means):

“..And those who are truthful among the men and women and those who are patient among the men and women.” (33/35)

He declared patience to be a cause of His love, company, help, support and good reward, and that is enough to show its nobility and importance.



Chapter

Sixteen

Patience in the narrations of the Sunnah

It is reported in the two *Saheehs* (Al-Bukhaari and Muslim) on the authority of Anas bin Malik that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) passed by a woman who was crying at the loss of her child and the Messenger (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said to her: “*Be mindful of Allah and have patience.*” She said: “What concern do you have about my suffering?” When the Messenger (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) left, someone told her that it was the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) himself who had passed by. She was shocked and rushed to the house of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). She did not find any gatekeeper at his door. She said to him: ‘Messenger of Allah, I did not recognize you.’ The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said to her: “Real patience is at the first shock.”¹

In another *Hadeeth*, the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) states:

1 Al-Bukhaari (1283, 7154) and Muslim (2140)

"A strong person is not the one who wrestles another down, but the one who controls himself at the time of anger."¹

16 It is noted that the sudden shock of a calamity has such an impact on the heart of a person that it leaves it completely distressed and disturbed. If a person is able to control himself when a calamity first strikes the shock is reduced and its power curtailed, and he becomes capable of remaining steadfast after that. In addition, when a calamity strikes the heart of a person suddenly, and he is not prepared for it, he naturally becomes distressed. If something happens after that, the heart is more ready to sustain it, being aware that there is no escape from it. Man, therefore, finds himself forced to exercise patience.

In the above case the woman, when she realized that her anxiety was not going to help her, came to apologize to the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as though she was telling him that she was patient now, and the Messenger (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) told her that the real patience is one which is demonstrated at the first shock.

This meaning is attested to by a report from Abu Hurayrah who said that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) passed by a woman who was sitting near a grave and crying, and the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said to her:

"O handmaiden of Allah, be conscious of Allah and be patient."

She replied: 'O servant of Allah, I am a bereaved woman who has lost her son.'

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said again: *"O handmaiden of Allah, fear Allah and exercise patience."*

She answered: 'If you were afflicted as I have been you would have excused me.'

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said again: *"O handmaiden of Allah, be conscious of Allah and be patient."*

She said: 'Servant of Allah, you have spoken your words, now go away from me.'

The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)

1 Al-Bukhaari (6114) and Muslim (6643)

left her and went. One of the Companions went to the woman and asked her: ‘What did that man say to you?’

She told him what the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) had said and how she replied. The Companion asked her: ‘Do you who realise who he was?’

‘No’, she replied.

He said: ‘He was the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)’.

She jumped up and rushed to the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and when she reached him she said: ‘I am patient, I am patient, O Messenger of Allah.’

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Real patience is at the first strike, real patience is at the first strike.”¹

This narration explains the meaning of this *Hadeeth*.

Abu ‘Ubayd said:

‘The meaning of the *Hadeeth* is that every person stricken with calamity comes to end with patience, but he is praised when he exercises patience at the time of intensity and rage of the affliction.’

I say: This *Hadeeth* teaches a number of lessons:

1. To have patience when afflicted by calamities is obligatory. It is a part of consciousness of Allah which the servants are commanded.
2. The duty of commanding what is good and prohibiting what is evil is to be fulfilled in every situation. The intensity and harshness of a calamity do not excuse a man from carrying this duty out.
3. To continue preaching again and again until the duty is fully complete.
4. The above report has been used to argue that women are allowed to visit graves because the Messenger (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did not object to her being in grave yard, he only asked her to be patient. If the visiting of graves was prohibited, he would have told her. This incident took place in the last days of the life of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and is reported by Abu Hurayrah, who embraced Islam in the year seven.

1 Abu Ya’la (6067) with a weak chain.

The argument is refuted by a counter argument that the Messenger (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) asked her to be conscious of Allah and exercise patience. It means that he was not happy with her visit and crying. It is supported by the fact that when she learned that the person who was asking her to stop crying was the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) whom she was obliged to obey, she immediately stopped. As for Abu Hurayrah, he did not say that he witnessed the incident, so one cannot say that it took place after he became Muslim. Even if Abu Hurayrah had witnessed the incident, the prohibition and curse of the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) on women visiting graves and considering them as mosques, and lighting them up, came after this incident at the time of his time of his final illness from which he died.

It is also to be noted that the Messenger (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did not identify himself in that situation when she was unable to control herself, out of mercy and kindness to her. It was possible that if he had identified himself, she might not have listened to him and it would have been disastrous to her. Her disobedience to him, being unaware of his person, was lighter in gravity than her sin if she had rejected his advice after being aware of him. This was the absolute consideration of her by him.

It is reported in *Saheeh Muslim* on the authority of Umm Salamah who said: ‘I heard the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) saying:

“No Muslim is afflicted with a calamity and says what Allah has asked him to say, that is: ‘Surely we belong to Allah and to Him is our return, O Allah, give me a reward for this calamity and compensate me with something better’ but Allah will give him something better than he has lost.”

Umm Salamah went on: ‘When Abu Salamah died; I thought who could be better than Abu Salamah? He came from a family, which was from among the first emigrants to join the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in Madinah. However, I said what the Messenger (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) had recommended. Then Allah gave me in place of Abu Salamah the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) himself. He sent Hatib bin Abi Balta’ah to propose to me. I said that I had a daughter and I happened to have a jealous nature. The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) replied:

“As far as her daughter is concerned, I will pray to Allah and she will be well taken care of and as far as she is concerned I will pray to Allah to remove her jealousy.”

So, I married the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).¹

Abu Daawood reported the same *Hadeeth* in the following way:

The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“When one of you is afflicted with a calamity, he should say: ‘Surely we belong to Allah and to Him we will return. O Allah I expect reward from you for my affliction, give me reward and compensate me with something better.’

Umm Salamah said: When Abu Salamah died, I said: ‘O Allah, give me in my family someone who is better than me.’

When he passed away, she said: ‘Surely we belong to Allah and surely we are going to return to Him. I expect the reward of my affliction from Allah’.²

Consider the result of patience, trust in Allah, dedication to the Messenger of Allah and contentment with Allah’s decree which brought the best to Umm Salamah and she married Allah’s noblest creation.

In a report in *Jami’ At-Tirmithi, Musnad* of Imam Ahmad and the *Saheeh* of Ibn Hibban Abu Musa al-Ash’ari narrated that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“When a child of a Muslim passes away, Allah asks His angels: ‘You took away the child of My servant?’

‘Yes’, they will reply.

He says:

‘Did you take the fruit of his heart?’

‘Yes’, they will reply.

‘What did my servant say?’ Allah asks.

‘He praised You and expressed his trust in You,’ they will reply.

Allah then will say:

‘Build a house for my servant in Paradise and give it the name “House of praise.”³

1 Muslim (2126)

2 Abu Daawood (3119), at-Tirmithi (3511), Ibn Majah (1598) and Ahmad (6/317)

3 At-Tirmithi (1021), Ahmad (4/415) and Ibn Hibban (2948).

Al-Bukhaari reported in his *Saheeh* on the authority of Anas that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“Allah, the Exalted says: ‘When I put my servant in a trial by taking away his two dearest parts (meaning his eyes) and he remains steadfast, I will recompense him with Paradise.’”¹

The same report found in *At-Tirmithi* cites the following words:

“When I take away the two dear parts (i.e. eyes) of my servant in the world, there will be no recompense for him except Paradise.”²

In another version of *At-Tirmithi*, reported from Abu Hurayrah, the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Allah, the Most High says: ‘Those whose dearest parts I take and he remains patient and expects reward from me, no reward less than Paradise will do.’”³

Abu Daawood related in his *Sunan* on the authority of Abdullah bin ‘Amr that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“When Allah takes away a man’s dearest friend on earth and he expects a reward from Allah for that, Allah will not give him anything less than Paradise.”⁴

A similar *Hadeeth* is found in *Saheeh Al-Bukhaari* on the authority of Abu Hurayrah, in which the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“Allah, the Almighty says: ‘There is no recompense for My believing servant whose closest relative in the world I take away and he remains patient expecting a reward from Allah, other than Paradise.’”⁵

Al-Bukhaari also related in the *Saheeh* that Ata’ bin Abi Rabah said that Ibn Abbas asked him: ‘Shall I not show you a woman of Paradise?’ ‘Surely’, I replied.

He pointed out to a woman saying: ‘It is that black woman. She came to

1 Al-Bukhaari (5653)

2 At-Tirmithi (2400)

3 Ibid (2401) See also Ibn Hibban (2932)

4 This report is not in Sunan of Abu Daawood, it is in An-Nasaa’i (1871)

5 Al-Bukhaari (6424)

the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and said to him:

‘Messenger of Allah, I suffer from epileptic fits and become exposed, pray to Allah for me.’

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) replied:

“If you wish, you can bear it with patience, and you will get Paradise as a reward, but if you like, I can pray to Allah to cure you.”

She said: ‘I will bear it in patience.’

Then she said: ‘My body becomes exposed in that condition, so pray to Allah to save me from that.’

The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) prayed to Allah for that.¹

Imam Malik recorded in his *al-Muwatta* a report by ‘Ata’ bin Yasar that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“When a person falls ill, Allah sends two angels to him and asks them to note what he is saying to his visitors. If he praises Allah and glorifies Him, they pass it to Allah – though He knows it – and He says: ‘My servant has a right on me; if I cause him to die I will make him enter Paradise, and if I cure him I will change his flesh with better flesh and his blood with better blood, and will erase his sins.’”²

It is recorded in the *Sahifah* of ‘Amr bin Su’ayb that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“When Allah will gather the people on the Day of Judgement a caller will call: ‘Where are the people of patience?’

A small group of people will stand up and move hastily to Paradise; the angels will meet them and ask: ‘We see that you are hurrying to Paradise; who are you?’

They will reply: ‘We are the people of favour.’

‘What was the cause of your favour?’ they will ask.

They will say:

‘Whenever we were wronged we remained patient, when we were ill-treated, we forgave, and when someone acted cruelly toward us, we showed forbearance.’

They will be told: ‘Enter Paradise; excellent is the reward of those who do good deeds.’”³

1 Al-Bukhaari (5654) and Muslim (6571)

2 See *al-Muwatta* (2/940)

3 Ibn Abi al-Dunya in *al-Hilm* (56) and in *al-Sabr* (5)

A report in the two *Saheehs* describes that Allah's Messenger (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) distributed some money and some people remarked that his distribution was not done according to Allah's pleasure. When the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was told about that remark he said:

"May Allah show mercy to Moosa, for he was hurt in harsher ways but he endured with patience."¹

It is also reported in the two *Saheehs* on the authority of 'A'ishah that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "*No calamity strikes a Muslim even a thorn that pricks him but Allah erases his sins in exchange for that.*"²

Abu Sa'id and Abu Hurayrah narrated, as recorded in two *Saheehs* that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"*A Muslim is not afflicted by any type of hardship or worry or distress or anxiety or grief or trouble even a thorn that pricks him but Allah erases some of his sins by it.*"³

Muslim related in his *Saheeh* that 'A'ishah narrated the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as saying:

"No thorn or even a smaller object hurts a believer but Allah raises his status a degree higher for that and obliterates one of his sins."⁴

In the *Musnad* of Imam Ahmad the following report of Abu Hurayrah is recorded:

'The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"*The tribulation of a believing man or woman concerning their body, their wealth and their children continues until he or she meets Allah without having any sin.*"⁵

Sa'd bin Abi Waqqas, according to a report, asked the Messenger (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him): "O Messenger of Allah, which people are tested the most severely?"

He replied:

"*The Prophets, then righteous people, then the next best and then the next: A man is tested in accordance with his strength in religion. If he is strong*

1 Al-Bukhaari (3150, 3405, 4335, 6059, 6291, 6336) Muslim (2447)

2 Al-Bukhaari (5640) Muslim (6565)

3 Al-Bukhaari (5641) Muslim (6568)

4 Muslim (6562)

5 Ahmad (2/487), It is also related by at-Tirmithi (2399), Abu Ya'la (9512) and Ibn Hibban (2913)

in it, then his trial is increased, but if he is weak, then his trial is reduced. The trial of a believer continues until he walks on earth without having a single sin.”¹

According to a narration in the two *Saheehs*, Abdullah bin Mas’ood said: ‘I called on the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and noticed that he was in great pain. He said: ‘You are in great pain, O Messenger of Allah!’

He replied:

“Yes, I suffer like two amongst you.”

I said: ‘This is because you have double reward.’

He said:

“That is true. By the One who holds my life in His hand no Muslim living on earth is afflicted by distress from illness or anything else but Allah wipes out his sins by it as a tree sheds its leaves.”²

It is reported in the two *Saheehs* that A’ishah stated:

“I noticed the pain of the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) more severe than others.”³

In another *Hadeeth* the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“A man has a status allocated to him, which he does not attain by actions until he is put to trial in his body and then he gets it.”⁴

A’ishah reported that the Messenger of Allah said:

“When a believer falls ill, his illness clears him from his sins as the bellows cleans the dirt from iron.”⁵

Al-Bukhaari related Khabbab bin al-Aratt as saying:

‘We complained to the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) while he was reclining on a garment in the shade of the Ka’bah, and asked him: ‘Why don’t you ask Allah to help us? Why don’t you pray for us?’

He replied:

1 Ahmad (1/174, 180, 185), at-Tirmithi (2398) Ibn Majah (4023) An-Nasaa’i (7481)

2 Al-Bukhaari (5647, 5648, 5660, 5661, 5667) Muslim (6559, 6560)

3 Al-Bukhaari (5646) Muslim (6557)

4 Abu Ya’la (6095), Ibn Hibban (2908) al-Hakim (1/344)

5 Al-Bukhaari in Adab (497) Ibn Hibban (2936) and al-Tabarani (4123, 5351)

“A man, from the among the people before you, was taken and fixed in a pit dug purposely for him, then a saw was placed on his head and he was cut in two pieces; he was combed by an iron comb which peeled his flesh off from his bones, but he remained firm in his faith. By Allah, Allah will bring this religion to its complete victory, to the extent that a traveller will travel from San’a’ to Hadramawt without having fear of anything except Allah and the wolf on his goats. But you are in a hurry.”¹

In the version of Al-Bukhaari it is related as follows:

‘I called on the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and he was reclining on a garment in the shade of the Ka’bah. This was the time we suffered greatly by the torture of the unbelievers, and we said to him:

‘Why don’t you pray for us?’

He sat down and his face became red, then he spoke:

“A man in the past was combed with iron combs to strip off his flesh from his bones, but that did not make him turn away from his religion.”

Some people of knowledge have taken up the following statement of Khabbab: ‘We complained to the Messenger of Allah about the heat of the ground, but he did not listen to us’² to mean that the Companions complained to him about the heat of the ground that was hurting their foreheads and hands when the unbelievers tortured them, but he did not solve their complaint, and asked them to bear it with patience.

This interpretation is more appropriate than to say that they complained about the heat of the ground during prostration.

Some scholars held that a person’s forehead must touch the ground during prayer based on this report. That is rejected for three reasons:

There is no evidence in the report to prove that.

The Companions have stated that while they prayed with the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and if one of them was unable to prostrate on the ground he would spread his garment and put his forehead on it. The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) must have been aware of it and approved it.

The heat in the Hejaz does not allow touching the ground with the forehead and palms, as it is so intense that it can roast the forehead and the palms, therefore a person may not be comfortable. In such a case, concentration

1 (Al-Bukhaari (3612, 3852, 6943)

2 Reported by Muslim (1406)

will not be possible in the prayer, nor will it be comfortable to prostrate. In that condition, the body will suffer and be exposed to disease, and the *Shari'ah* does not command such acts.

Consider the report of Khabbab and the one cited before it and look at its words and meaning. Do not be disturbed by the statement, "he did not do anything to remove our complaint." He did not pay attention to their complaint but told them about the patience of the people before them. Allah knows best.

Usamah bin Zayd says, as reported in the *Saheeh*:

"The daughter of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) sent for him saying: 'My son is about to die, so please come.'" The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) sent her his greeting and said:

"It is for Allah what He takes and what He gives, everything with Him has an appointed time. Then let her be patient and expect the reward from Allah."

She sent back the message asking him emphatically to come. He stood up to go and with him went Sa'd bin 'Ubadah, Mu'adh bin Jabal, Ubayy bin Ka'b, Zayd bin Thabit and some other people. When he arrived the child was given to him, he placed him in his lap, his breath rattling like a waterskin. The Prophet's eyes filled with tears.

Sa'd said: What is this, O Messenger of Allah?

He replied:

"This is the mercy that Allah puts in the hearts of those whom He wills of His servants. Allah shows mercy to the merciful of His servants."¹

Ibn Abbas reported as recorded in the *Sunan* of an-Nasaa'i:

'A young daughter of the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was about to die, the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) held her, drew her to his chest and put his hand on her. Umm Ayman started crying. The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) spoke to her:

"Are you crying when the Messenger of Allah is with you?"

She responded: 'Why shouldn't I cry when the Messenger of Allah is crying?'

The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"I am not crying but this is mercy."

1 Al-Bukhaari (1284, 5655, 6655, 7377, 7448) Muslim (2135)

Then he added:

*"If a believer is good in all conditions, his soul is taken from his body while he is praising Allah, the Exalted."*¹

Al-Bukhaari relates in his *Saheeh* that Anas said:

'A son of Abu Talhah fell ill and died while Abu Talhah was out. When his wife noticed that the child had died, she covered him and put him in a corner of the house. When Abu Talhah returned, he asked: 'How is the son?'

'He is quiet and I hope he is at rest.'

Abu Talhah believed her. He slept with her. In the morning, he took his bath and prepared to leave. His wife told him then that the son had passed away. He went to the mosque and performed prayer with the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and told him the whole story. The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "It may be that Allah blesses you in your night."

Ibn 'Uyaynah (one of the narrators) reported a man saying: 'I saw nine children of his, all of whom had memorised the Qur'an.'²

Malik's *Muwatta*³ has the following report from al-Qasim bin Muhammad who said:

One of my wives died and Muhammad bin Ka'b al-Qurazi dropped in on me to condole with me. He said:

'There was a man of the children of Israel very learned, devoted, a jurist and expert of religious learning. He had a wife whom he loved very much. She died and the man feeling highly distressed, withdrew from the people and locked himself in a house. Nobody was able to enter and see him. A woman of the children of Israel heard about him and called on him. She said: 'I have a problem and want his opinion about it. I must see him to explain.'

All other people left but she remained at the door. He was told about her and he allowed her in. She said: I came to enquire about a matter.

He asked: What is that?

She said:

'I borrowed a piece of jewellery from a neighbour which I used for some time and lent it to others. Now she is asking for her jewellery back. Should I return it to her?'

1 An-Nasaa'i (1844), Ahmad (1/273-274)

2 Al-Bukhaari (1301)

3 See (1/237)

He replied: 'Yes, you must.'

She said: 'But it had been in my possession for so long.'

He said: 'Then it is better for you to give it back to her now.'

She said: 'May Allah show mercy to you! Then how are you worried about something which Allah lent you then took it back while He has right to do that?'

The man then realized and Allah gave him benefit by her advice.

In *Jami'* of at-Tirmithi¹ the following report of a man of Banu Murrah is recorded:

'I arrived in Kufa and was told about Bilal bin Abu Burdah. I said he was an exemplary man. So, I called on him and found him imprisoned in the house he had built. Everything in him had changed as a result of torture and torment and he was in a pitiful condition. I said:

'Praise be to Allah, Bilal. I remember seeing you pass by us holding your nose to protect it from dust and today you are in this condition. How do you cope with it?'

He asked where I came from. I told him I belonged to Banu Murrah bin Abbad.

He said: 'Should I tell you a *Hadeeth*, perhaps Allah will help you with it?'

I said: 'Bring it.'

He said: Abu Burdah reported to me from Abu Musa who said that the Messenger of Allah, (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "*No servant of Allah is afflicted with a calamity small or big but because of a sin, and what Allah ignores is more.*" Then he recited (what means): "*Any calamity that strikes you is a result of doing and He forgives many of that.*" (42/30)

In a report found in the two *Saheehs* Abdullah bin Mas'ud narrated:

'As though I watch the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) giving an account of a prophet who was beaten by his people, he was bleeding and wiping the blood from his face and saying: "O Allah forgive my people because they do not know."²

This prayer included a request for forgiveness for them, prayer for them, apology on their behalf and seeking sympathy for them with the word 'my people'.

1 See (3252)

2 Al-Bukhaari (3477, 6929), Muslim (4646)

It is reported in *al-Muwatta*¹ that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“Let my tribulation be a source of consolation for Muslims when they are put to trials.”

16

At-Tirmithi² reported that Allah’s Messenger (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“A believer who mixes with the people, and bears in patience their harm, is better than the one who does not mix with them, and is not patient with their harm.”

Al-Bukhaari and Muslim reported on the authority of Abu Sa’id al-Khudri that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“Nobody was given a gift better and wider than patience.”³

It is also reported in some sources that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“Allah, the Most High, says: ‘When I cause my servant an affliction to his body or wealth or children and he receives it with good patience, I feel shy on the Day of Judgement to set a scale for his accounting.’⁴

At-Tirmithi reported the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) saying:

“When Allah loves a people He tries them; for the one who is content there is contentment and for the one who is displeased there is displeasure.”⁵

In another source the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is reported to have said:

“When Allah wills goodness for a servant He pours down calamities on him.”⁶

Jabir reported in the *Saheeh* of Muslim that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) visited a woman and asked her why she was moaning. She replied: ‘It is fever, may Allah not bless it!’

The Messenger (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

1 See (1/236)

2 At-Tirmithi (2507) It is also related by Ahmad (5/365), Al-Bukhaari in Adab (388) and Ibn Majah (4032)

3 Al-Bukhaari (1469, 6470), Muslim (2424)

4 Chech al-Jami’ al-saghir (6043)

5 At-Tirmithi (2369) It is also reported by Ibn Majah (4031)

6 Ibn Abi al-Dunya in *al-marad* (220)

“Do not curse fever because it takes away the sins of the children of Adam as the bellows cleanses the dirt of iron.”¹

It is reported on the authority of Abu Hurayrah that Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“Whoever suffers from pain one night and is pleased with Allah Almighty, he will get out of his sins like the day his mother gave him birth.”²

Al-Hasan remarked: ‘By one night’s fever all the sins of a servant are wiped out.’

Abu Sa’id al-Khudri reported as it is recorded in *Musnad* and other sources saying:

‘I called on the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and put my hand on the garment and I felt the heat of fever; I said: How severe your fever is, O Messenger of Allah!

He replied:

“We prophets are like that. The pain is doubled for us so that we are given double reward.”

Then I asked: ‘Which people are affected with the most difficult trials?’

He replied: *“The Prophets.”*

I asked: ‘Then who?’

He replied: *“The righteous people. A man of them was afflicted with poverty to the extent that he did not have a dress except his wrap and this he made suitable to wear. Some of them were tried by lice which killed them, but they were more pleased with all that than you are with a present given to you.”³*

‘Uqbah bin ‘Amir reported that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“Every act of a person is recorded. So, when a believer falls ill, angels say: ‘Our Lord, You have stopped your servant so and so from working. Allah would say: Record for him like the act he was engaged in until he is cured or dies.”⁴

Abu Hurayrah said:

‘When a Muslim is taken ill, the angel on the right side is called by Allah and told: ‘Write the good deeds of My servant the way he was doing when

1 Muslim (6570)

2 Ibn Abi al-Dunya in *al-sabr* (180) and *al-Marad* (83)

3 Ahmad (3/94) Ibn Majah (4024) and al-Hakim (4/307)

4 Ahmad (4/146) al-Tabarani (17/226)

he was well' and the angel on the left side is told: 'Leave My servant as long as he is in My fetter.'¹

Hilal bin Yasaf related:

'We were sitting with 'Ammar bin Yasir and the people mentioned diseases, a Bedouin said: 'I have never fallen ill.'

Ammar said to him: 'You are not one of us. A Muslim is afflicted with distress, which clears from him his sins as the leaves of a tree are dropped. On the other hand when an unbeliever is tried he is like a camel, which if released does not know why it was released, and if tied does not know why it is tied.'²

Abu Ma'mar al-Azdi said:

'Whenever we heard something undesirable from Ibn Mas'ud we kept quiet until he explained it to us. He said to us one day:

'No reward is written for an ill person.' We did not like it and considered it grave. Then he said: 'But his sins are wiped out.' We felt happy with this news and liked it.'³

This was due to his perfect knowledge and understanding, because the reward is earned by acts that are done by will and what they produce. Both these categories are mentioned by Allah Almighty in the Qur'an in Chapter 9 when He mentioned spending and traversing a valley and what comes out of feeling thirst, distress, hunger and the unhappiness of unbelievers. The reward is attached to these two kinds. As for illnesses and calamities, their reward comes in the form of cleansing of sins.

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said about calamities by which Allah erases a person's sins, and he also said: "*Illness is alleviation.*"⁴ Good deeds raise the status while the tribulations erase the sins. This is why he said:

*"Whomsoever Allah wills good for, He puts him to trial."*⁵

*"Whoever Allah wills good for him, He gives him understanding of religion."*⁶

Thus, one thing raises the man's rank and the other cleanses his sins.

1 Ibn Abi al-Dunya in *al-Marad* (14)

2 Ibid (15)

3 Ibid (16) See also *Majma' al-Zawa'id* (2/301)

4 Ahmad (1/195, 196) al-Hakim (3/265)

5 Al-Bukhaari (5645)

6 Al-Bukhaari (71, 3116, 7312) Muslim (2389, 2392)

Yazid bin Maysarah said:

‘If a person is taken ill and he has not done any good deeds, then Allah reminds him of some of his past sins and if a tiny drop of tears, like the head of a fly comes out of his eyes, out of the fear of Allah; if he is cured, Allah makes him completely pure, and if He causes him to die, he dies pure.’¹

Ziyad bin Abu Ziyad narrated to one of the Companions of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

‘We visited the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) while he was suffering from fever. We said: ‘May our mothers and fathers be ransomed for you, O Messenger of Allah! How bad is your fever!’

He said:

“We group of prophets are placed in bigger tribulation.”

We exclaimed: ‘Glory be to Allah!’

He said:

“Are you surprised? There were prophets who were killed by lice.”

We said again: ‘Glory be to Allah!’

“Are you surprised? The people who suffer most are the prophets, then the righteous people, then the next best and then the next.”

We said: ‘Glory be to Allah!’

He said:

*“Are you surprised? Those who were afflicted felt happy in their tribulation as you are pleased by your comfort.”*²

An-Nasaa’i related from Fatimah who said:

‘I went with some women to see the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) while he was ill. There was a water bag hanging and its water dropping on him to reduce the severity of fever from him. We said to him: ‘We wish you pray to Allah to take this condition away from you.’ He replied:

*“The people who are tried the hardest are the prophets, then those who are close to them, then those who follow them.”*³

‘A’ishah said:

‘I did not see any one who was in more pain than the Messenger of Allah

1 Ibn Abi al-Dunya in *al-Marad* (5)

2 Ibid

3 An-Nasaa’i (4/355, 379) Also reported by Ahmad (6/369) and al-Hakim (4/404)

(may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Sometimes his illness was very severe and he was not able to sleep for fifteen nights. He suffered sometimes from kidney pain. We said to him: Pray to Allah to release the pain from you, Messenger of Allah! He replied: "We the group of prophets, suffer from the hardest pain so that our sins are wiped out".¹

Abu Sa'id related that a man asked the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him): "These diseases we suffer from, what are we going to get out of them?"

"They are atonements," he replied.

Then Ubayy bin Ka'b asked: Even if they are minor ones, Messenger of Allah?"

He replied: "Even a thorn or something less than that."

Upon which Ubayy bin Ka'b prayed for himself to be subjected to suffering until his death, but it should not stop him from pilgrimage, *Umrah*, participating in *Jihad* and performing regular prayers in congregation.

The reporter said: It so happened that anyone who touched his body after that noticed its high temperature. He remained like that until he died.²

Abdullah bin 'Amr related the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as saying:

"When a person is doing good deeds and falls ill, the angel assigned to him is told to keep an account of his acts, as if he was in good health until he joins his Lord."³

Abu Umamah al-Bahili reported the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as saying:

"Allah puts one of you to test – and He knows better about him – as one of you tests his gold by fire. Then some people come out like pure gold, these are the ones whom Allah has cleansed from sins; others come out like gold below the first one, they are those who have some doubt; and some come out like black gold and they are those who have been led from the right course."⁴

Al-Hasan al-Basri reported from the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) that he said:

1 Ibn Abi al-Dunya (9)

2 Ahmad (3/23) An-Nasaa'i (7489) Ibn Hibban (2928) and al-Hakim (4/308)

3 Ibn Abi al-Dunya (26) Also reported by Abd al-Razzaq (11/196), and Ahmad (2/203)

4 Ibn Abi al-Dunya (27) Al-Tabarani (7698) and al-Hakim (4?314) also reported it.

“Allah wipes out all the sins of a believer for the fever of a single night.”¹ For this reason, the people hoped for the fever of one night for the obliteration of all the past sins.

Anas narrated that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) visited a man who was ill and asked him to say:

*“O Allah, I ask You for quick recovery, patience during Your trial and getting out of this world to your mercy.”*²

‘A’ishah related the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as saying:

*“Fever wipes out the sins as a tree drops its leaves.”*³

Abu Hurayrah went to visit a person who was ill and said to him:

‘The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) has said:

*“Allah, the Exalted says: ‘It is My fire I inflict on my believing servant in the world to make it his share of fire in the Hereafter.’”*⁴

Mujahid said:

“Fever is the share of every believer from the fire”. Then he recited (what means): ***“There is no one of you but he is going to come to it, this is a decided compulsory matter.”*** (19/71)

Mujahid did not intend to interpret *Wurud* by this, because the context does not allow a reference to fever, but to say that Allah, the Exalted has promised all His servants to approach Hell; the fever of a believer erases his sins and as such makes it easy for him to come to Hell on the Day of Judgement and escape it quickly. Allah knows best.

This is supported by the *Hadeeth* of Abu Rayhanah who reported the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as saying: *“Fever is from the bellows of Hell, and that is the share of a believer from fire.”*⁵

Anas related that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“The likeness of a believer when he is taken ill and then recovers is like the

1 Ibn Abi al-Dunya (28)

2 Ibid (30)

3 Ibid (32) It is supported by a *Hadith* in Al-Bukhaari (5648) and Muslim (6559)

4 Ahmad (2/440) at-Tirmithi (2088) Ibn Majah (3470) and al-Hakim (1/345)

5 Al-Bukhaari in *Tarikh* (7/63) al-Tahawi in *Mushkil* (2217) and Ibn Abi al-Dunya (21)

hail in its colour and clearness, which falls from the heaven."¹

Abu Umamah reported that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

*"No Muslim is taken ill but recovers from it, being clean and pure."*²

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) also said:
*"The likeness of a believer when he is stricken by pain is like a piece of iron, which is cast in the fire, and its dirt goes away but its good remains."*³

He also said:

*"When a servant is taken ill, Allah inspires His angels saying: "My angels, I have enchained my servant with fetters; if I take him to Me I will forgive him, and if I release him, he will be a forgiven body without any sin."*⁴

Sahl bin Anas al-Juhani reported through his father from his grandfather who said:

'I visited Abu 'ad-Darda' when he was ill and said to him: 'Abu al-Darda', we like to remain healthy and not to be ill.'

Abu al-Darda' said: 'I heard the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) say:

*"Headache and weariness attack a believer and remain with him; they do not leave an atom's weight of sin with him even though he had sins like the mountain of Uhud."*⁵

Umm Salamah narrated that she heard the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) say:

*"Allah does not afflict a servant with a trial which he does not like but makes it a source of cleanliness and purity for him, as long as he does not attribute it to someone other than Allah or calls upon someone other than Allah to remove it."*⁶

'Atiyya bin Qays narrated:

'Ka'b fell ill and some people of Damascus went to see him; they asked him: 'How do you find yourself, Abu Ishaq?'

'Better,' he replied, 'it is a body which is punished for its offence; if it's

1 Ibn Abi al-Dunya (22) also reported by al-Bazzar (762)

2 Ibn Abi al-Dunya (23), see also al-Tabarani (7485)

3 Ibn Abi al-Dunya (24), see *Majma' al-Zawa'id* (2/302)

4 Ibn Abi al-Dunya (25), and al-Hakim (4/313), see *Majma'* (2/291)

5 Ibn Abi Dunya (41, 219). See also Ahmad (5/198) and al-Tabarani (634, 3119)

6 Ibn Abi Dunya ((43)

Lord wished He would torment it and if He wished He would spare it and release it as a new creation without any sin.”¹

Sa’id bin Wahab said:

‘We went with Salman al-Farsi to visit a man of Kindah who was taken ill, Salman told him:

‘A Muslim is afflicted and it becomes an atonement for his past mistakes and a source of reproof for future, while an unbeliever is afflicted and his likeness is like a camel, if released it does not know why it is released and if tied does not know why it is tied.’”²

Abu Ayyoob al-Ansari reported that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) visited a man from the helpers, bent down to him and asked him about his condition. He complained: ‘O Messenger of Allah, I have not been able to sleep for seven nights.’

The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said to him:

‘My brother, have patience, my brother, have patience. You will get out of your sins as you got involved in them.’ He further said: ‘The hours of illness overwhelm the hours of sins.’”³

Abu Hurayrah related that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) asked a Bedouin:

‘Have you ever been afflicted by Umm Mildam?’

He enquired: ‘What is Umm Mildam, O Messenger of Allah?’

‘A kind of heat a person feels between the blood and the skin’, the Prophet, (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) replied.

The Bedouin said: ‘I have never felt that.’

‘Have you ever suffered from a headache?’ the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) asked him.

‘O Messenger of Allah, what is a headache?’ the Bedouin asked.

He replied: ‘A vein which strikes a man in his head.’

‘I have never experienced it’, the man said.

When he left the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

‘If anyone wants to see a man of Hell, he should look at this man.’”⁴

1 Ibid (44)

2 Ibid (45). Also reported by Al-Bukhaari in Adab (493) and Ibn Abi Shaybah (3/231)

3 Ibn Abi al-Dunya (34)

4 An-Nasaa’i (7491), Ahmad (2/332), Al-Bukhaari in Adab (495), Ibn Hibban (2916) and al-Hakim (1/347)

Umm Sulaym narrated:

‘I was taken ill and the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) came to see me. He asked:

“Umm Sulaym, do you know fire, iron and dirt of iron?”

‘Yes’, I replied.

Then he said: “Take good tidings, Umm Sulaym. If you get out of this pain, you will be like iron which is cleansed of its scum.”¹

One of the Companions went to visit his friend when he came to know that the friend was ill. When he reached him, he said to him:

‘I came to visit you and I carry good tidings for you.’

He asked: ‘How could you combine all these together?’

He replied: ‘I left my home with the intention of paying you a visit, then I learnt about your illness, so it became a patient’s visit, and I am giving you the good tidings which I heard from the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

He said:

*“If a rank is decided by Allah for a servant which he could not attain by his deeds, Allah afflicts him with distress in his body or children or wealth, and makes him bear it in patience until he achieves that rank which was written for him.”*²

Al-Hasan mentioned pain and said:

‘By Allah, it is not a bad thing. Days of pain are the days in which a man’s path is lighted and he is reminded of his return, which he may have forgotten, and in addition his sins are wiped away by it.’³

A pious man of the past said:

‘If there were no troubles in the world we would go to the Hereafter insolvent.’

Anas reported:

‘The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) reached a tree and shook it; its leaves fell as many as Allah willed, then the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“Calamities and pains cause the sins of my nation to drop faster than the leaves from this tree.”⁴

1 Ibn Abi al-Dunya (33)

2 Ahmad (5/272), Abu Daawood (3090)

3 Ibn Abi al-Dunya (55, 154), see also az-Zuhd of Imam Ahmad (338)

4 Abu Ya’la (4299) and Ibn Abi al-Dunya (57)

Abu Hurayrah reported the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as saying:

“There is no Muslim who falls ill but Allah assigns two angels for him who do not leave him until Allah decides one of two good things for him: death or recovery. When his visitors ask him: How do you feel?

If he replies: ‘Praise be to Allah. I feel better, thanks to Allah!’

The angels say to him: ‘Take glad tidings of blood better than your current blood and health better than your present health.’

But if he says in reply to his visitors’ question: I feel tired and in severe distress, the angels say: Take the news of blood worse than your blood and affliction harder than your present affliction.”¹

This is not a contradiction of the words of the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) when in his illness: ‘Oh, my head!’², and of Sa’d: ‘O Messenger of Allah, my pain has become severe and I am a man of wealth,’³ and ‘A’ishah’s moaning: ‘Oh my head!’ These statements were issued as information, not as complaints to Allah, to the visitors. If an ill person praises Allah and speaks of his illness, it is not considered a complaint from him. However, if he speaks of it out of annoyance and disgust, it will be regarded as a complaint. It means that a single word spoken can be a source of reward or punishment for a man, depending on his intentions and motives.

Thabit al-Banani related:

‘We walked with al-Hasan to visit Safawan bin Muhriz. When we arrived at his house, his son met us and said to us: “He has a gastric ailment, you may not see him.’

Al-Hasan said to him: “If your father’s blood and flesh are renewed, this is better than to be eaten by the earth.”⁴

Thabit also related:

‘We visited Rabi’ah bin al-Harith and found him in a serious condition. He said:

‘When a man is in my condition, the thought of the Hereafter occupies his heart and the world becomes smaller than a fly in his eyes.’⁵

1 Ibn Abi al-Dunya (47)

2 Al-Bukhaari (5666), 7217)

3 Al-Bukhaari (1295, 3936, 4409, 5668, 6373) Muslim (4209)

4 Ibn Abi al-Dunya (50)

5 Ibid (51)

Anas narrated the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as saying:

“If a person is ill for three days, he is as sinless as the day he was born.”¹

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) also said: “The prayer of an ill person is not dismissed until he recovers.”²

Ibn Mas’ud related:

‘While I was sitting with the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) he smiled, and we asked: ‘Why did you smile, O Messenger of Allah?’

He replied: “Being surprised at a Muslim worrying because of his illness; if he were to know what reward there is for him in his illness, he would like to remain ill until he meets Allah.”

He smiled again and raised his head toward the heavens.

We asked him again:

‘Why did you smile and raise your head to the heavens, O Messenger of Allah?’

“I was surprised by two angels,” he replied, “who came down from the heavens looking for a person who used to pray in his place and they did not find him there. They went up and reported to Allah, saying: ‘Our Lord, your servant so and so, we used to register such and such acts in the day and night for him; we found that you have put him in fetters, and we were unable to record any good deed for him.’

Allah said to them: Write down for my servant the acts he used to do during the day and night, and do not leave anything out. I will give him the reward of My detention and he will have the reward for what he was doing.”³

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) also said: “Whoever was afflicted with pain for a night and sustained it in patience and felt content, he will come out of his sins like the day he was born.”⁴

Yahya bin Abi Kathir narrated:

The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) missed Salman and asked about him and was told that he was ill. The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) went to visit him.

1 Ibid (61), also reported by al-Tabarani in *al-Saghir* (1/188-189)

2 Ibn Abi al-Dunya (70)

3 Ibid (75), see *al-Majma’ al-Zawa’id* (2/304)

4 Ibid (83)

He said to him: “May Allah remove your disease, make your reward bigger, forgive your sins, and grant you health and well being in your body and your religion until your last day. There are three things in your illness: First that it is a reminder from your Lord, He reminds you through this; secondly, it is an expiation of your sins; and thirdly, you ask whatsoever you wish, because the ill person’s prayers are answered.”¹

Ziyad bin al-Rabi’ reported:

‘I said to Ubayy bin Ka’b: ‘A verse in the Qur’an is causing me concern.’

He asked: ‘Which one?’

I replied (what means): **“Whoever does an evil act, he will be recompensed.”** (4/123)

He said: ‘I considered you more intelligent than what I see. A believer is not afflicted with a slip of the leg or the quaking of a vein but that it is due to some sin, and what Allah forgives is more.’²

‘A’ishah was asked about the above verse and she said: I asked the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and he said: “‘A’ishah, it is the punishment of Allah through fever, headache, the pricking of a thorn, breaking of his shoes laces, even something which he puts in his pocket and then he does not find it, and becomes worried; it is to the extent that a believer exits from his sins, just as red gold comes clear from the bellows.”³

Wahab bin Munabbih said:

‘A man cannot be regarded as knowledgeable in the true sense until he regards affliction as a favour, and affluence as a trial. This is so because a person in misfortune waits for affluence and a person of affluence waits for misfortune.’⁴

It is in one of the Books of Allah:

‘Allah afflicts a man with something which he dislikes, but Allah loves him and wants to see how he beseeches Him.’⁵

Ka’b said:

- 1 Ibid (31), see al-Tabarani (6106)
- 2 Ibid (100)
- 3 Ibid (101), also reported by Ahmad (6/218) and at-Tirmithi 2991)
- 4 Ibid (93)
- 5 Ibid (94)

I find in the Torah: 'If it were not for the reason that my believing servant will get worried I would have tied him with a bandage of iron that will prevent him from having headache.'¹

Ma'ruf al-Karkhi said:

'Allah tries His servant with illness and pain, and he complains about them to his friends; Allah the Blessed and Exalted, says: 'By My honour and greatness, I did not put you to trial by these illnesses and pain but in order to wash you up from your sins. So do not complain about me.'

A man asked the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him): 'What are diseases?'

He asked him: "Have you never been taken ill?"

'No', the man replied.

"Then get out from here; you are not one of us", the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) remarked.²

Once Abdullah bin Mas'ud was taken seriously ill and some of his friends went to visit him, while his wife was saying: 'My soul be ransom for you! We are unable to give you food and drink!' He spoke to her in a faint voice: 'The hipbones are decayed and lying is prolonged. By Allah I do not wish the pain to be reduced even the size of the cutting of a nail.'³

Khalid bin al-Walid divorced a wife and yet, he spoke highly of her and praised her. The people asked him: 'Why did you divorce her?'

He replied: 'I did not divorce her because something made me suspicious or I did not like her, but because she was never taken ill when she was with me.'⁴

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"No believing man's vein quakes but Allah writes a good deed for him, drops a sin, and raises his rank a degree higher for that."⁵

This is not opposed to what we said earlier: that tribulation is the only source of obliteration of the sins no more, because here the acquisition of the good deed is the result of his patience by his will.

1 Ibid (103)

2 Ibid (196), also reported by Abu Daawood (3089)

3 Ibid (197), also related by Ibn al-Mubarak in *az-Zuhd*(463)

4 Ibid (203)

5 Ibid (207), also related by al-Tabarani (2460) and al-Hakim (1/347), see *Majma'* (2/304)

A man from the Emigrants visited a patient and said to him:

‘A patient has four benefits: The pen stops recording, his rewards are recorded in the same way as he was doing when he was healthy, the illness enters every joint of him and takes sins out from there, if he survives, he lives as forgiven; and if he dies, he dies also as forgiven.’

Hearing this, the patient said: ‘O Allah, make me lie longer.’¹

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“By the One in whose hand is my soul, Allah does not decide for a believer anything but that it is good for him. If he gains prosperity, he thanks Allah and it is good for him; if he is attacked by adversity, he remains patient and that is good for him. This good opportunity is available only to a believer.”²

In another wording, it is as follows:

“The matter of a believer is amazing. If he gains prosperity, he expresses thanks and that is good for him; and if he is stricken by adversity, he shows patience and that is good for him.”



1 Ibn Abi ‘al-Dunya (209)

2 Ahmad (4/332; 6/15), it is recorded in Muslim (7500)

Chapter Seventeen

The sayings of the Companions and their followers about patience

Imam Ahmad related on the authority of Abu al-Safar:

‘Abu Bakr was taken ill. The people visited him and asked him:

‘Should we call for a doctor?’

He replied: ‘The doctor has already seen me.’

‘What did he say to you?’ they enquired.

‘I am going to do what I wish’, he replied.¹

Mujahid reported ‘Umar as saying:

‘We found the best way of living by being patient.’²

He also said:

‘The best living was by patience; if patience were a man, he would have been a noble one.’³

Ali bin Abu Talib said:

‘The position of patience in connection with belief is like the position of the head to the body. If the head was chopped off, the body would not

1 *Az-Zuhd* (140)

2 *ibid* (146)

2 Ibn Abi al-Dunya in *al-Sabr* (6)

3 *Ibid* (8)

survive.’

Then he raised his voice and said:

‘A person who has no patience, lacks faith.’¹

He also said:

‘Patience is a mount which does not stumble.’

Al-Hasan stated:

‘Patience is a treasure of good; Allah does not grant it except to the person who is dear to Him.’²

‘Umar bin ‘Abd al-’Aziz said:

‘Allah does not give a man a bounty and then take it away from him while giving him patience in its place; however, what He gives him is better than what He takes away from him.’³

Maymun bin Mihran said:

‘No one, including a Prophet attains something worthy except by patience.’⁴

Sulayman bin al-Qasim said:

‘The reward of every deed is known except patience, Allah said about it:

“Those who patiently persevere will be given their reward without measure.” (39/10)

He added: ‘It will be like gushing water.’⁵

A pious person kept a piece of paper in his pocket and every now and then, he used to look at it. It had the following verse written in it (which means):

“Wait patiently for your Lord’s judgement; you are under Our watchful eyes.” (52/48)

‘Umar bin al-Khattab said:

‘If patience and thankfulness were two camels, I would not mind which one I chose for riding.’⁶

Whenever Muhammad bin Shubrumah was stricken by a calamity, he would say:

‘It is a cloud of summer which will soon disperse.’

Sufan bin ‘Uyaynah explained the statement of Allah Almighty (which

1 Ibid (16)

2 ibid

3 ibid (19)

4 ibid (20)

5

6 Ibid (7)

means):

“We appointed them leaders guiding others by Our command when they exercised patience”, (32/24:)

‘Since they took hold the head of the matter, We appointed them leaders.’

Al-Ahanaf bin Qays was asked:

‘What is forbearance?’

He replied: ‘To remain patient with something you do not like.’¹

Wahab said:

‘It is written in words of wisdom:

The outcome of foolishness is fatigue; the result of forbearance is comfort; and the end of patience is success.’²

‘Urwah bin al-Zubayr went to visit al-Walid bin ‘Abd al-Malik, who was accompanied by his son Muhammad who was extremely handsome. One day he called on al-Walid having an embellished dress and two plaits of hair, with which he was playing with his hand.

Al-Walid remarked, saying: This is how the youths of Quraysh are supposed to be!’ He cast an evil eye on him, and the young man left the place feeling drowsy and entered the stable of the animals, which trod him underfoot until he died.

Later on Urwah suffered from a gangrenous sore in his foot, and al-Walid sent doctors to treat him. They said: ‘If the foot is not cut off the infection will spread to the rest of the body. So, he decided to get it amputated. They used a saw; when the saw reached the bone, he put his head on a pillow for a while and fainted. Then he regained consciousness and his entire face was sweating and he was glorifying and praising Allah. He took the amputated part and turned it around in his hand and said:

‘By the one who made you carry me, He certainly knows I did not walk on you to an unlawful act or a sin or a matter that was going to cause the anger of Allah. He then ordered it to be washed, perfumed and wrapped in a piece of cloth. He then sent it to the graveyard of the Muslims where it was buried.

When he returned from al-Walid’s palace to Madinah, the members of his family and his friends went to see him and started consoling him. He did not say more than: ‘We encountered hardship on this journey.’

He said: ‘I am not going to Madinah because I will face people who will either rejoice at my plight or feel jealous at the favours I enjoy.’

1 Ibn Abi al-Dunya in *al-Hilm* (73)

2 Ibid (72)

Therefore, he proceeded to a palace in al'Aqiq and stayed there. When he entered his palace, Isa bin Talhah visited him and exclaimed, 'May your enemies perish! Show me this mishap for which we are consoling you.' When he opened up his knee, Isa said to him:

'By Allah, we were not preparing you for wrestling. However, Allah has preserved most of your parts, your reason, your tongue, your eyes, your hands and one of your legs.'

He said to him:

'Isa, no one consoled me the way you did.'

When they decided to cut his leg off, they said to him:

'We would like you to have some drink so that you will not feel much pain.'

He replied:

'Allah afflicted me in order to see the degree of my patience; how can I go against His decision?

His son Hisham was asked:

'What did your father do with the amputated leg when he performed ablution?'

He replied: 'He used to pass his wet hand over it.'¹

Imam Ahmad reported Qatadah as saying:

'Luqman was asked: Which quality is the best?

He replied 'Patience, which is not followed by abuse.'

'Which man is the best? he was asked.

'The one who is content with what he has been given,' he replied.

'Which person is the most learned? he was asked.

He answered, 'The one who adds the knowledge of other people to his own.'

Then the people asked, 'Which treasure is better: money or knowledge?'

He replied: 'Glory be to Allah! It is the learned believer who if approached for good, it is found with him, but if it is not with him, he controls himself. It is enough for a believer to be in control of himself.'²

Hibban bin Abu Jabalah said, 'The one who speaks of his grief is missing patience.' Although Ibn Ab al-Dunya attributed this statement to the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) then if it is authentic it applies to the person who complains to the people, not the one who complains to Allah.

1 See the story in *al-Marad* (139,141) and *al-Sabr* (154) by Ibn Abi al-Dunya

2 *Az-Zuhd* (1/154)

Hibban-bin Jabalah also said concerning the Qur'anic verse (which means): **“For me good patience is more becoming”** (12/18) ; it is the patience which is not accompanied with any complaint.’ Mujahid said: ‘It was good patience without anxiety.’ ‘Amr bin Qays explained it as ‘Agreement and contentment over the misfortune’.

Hammam narrated from Qatadah that he said (what means): **“His eyes went white with grief and he was filled with sorrow”** (12/84) means that he controlled himself in his grief and only uttered good words.

Al-Hasan said:

‘There are no dosages loved and appreciated more by Allah than the following two: A dose of affliction full of pain and distress, which is sustained with patience and composure; and the dose of anger repelled by forbearance.’

Sa’id bin Jubayr said:

‘Patience means that the servant should acknowledge that it is Allah who causes him misfortune, and expect a reward and recompense from Him. Sometimes a man is worried, but struggles to remain patient without complaining or being anxious.’²

Below is the explanation of his statement:

‘The acknowledgement that it is Allah who caused him this suffering’ is like the explanation of Allah’s teaching (which means): **“We belong to Allah.”** By saying that a man acknowledges that he is possessed by Allah, Who treats him in the manner He likes. ‘Expecting reward from Allah’ is an explanation of His saying “and to Him we are going to return.” That we will return to Him and He will reward us for our patience and will not let the reward of tribulation be lost. ‘A man may be worried, but struggles to remain steadfast’ means that patience is demonstrated by not showing resignation; but by controlling the heart from showing discontent over the decree and the tongue from complaining. A man, who demonstrates endurance but his heart is discontent with the Divine decree, is not a patient man.

1 As-Sabr (110), also related by al-Tabari (18883)
2 Az-Zuhd of Ibn al-Mubarak (111)

Yunus bin Yazid said: 'I asked Rab'ah bin Abd al-Rahman: 'What is the utmost limit of patience?' He replied: 'That you remain, when stricken by a calamity, as calm as you were before.'¹

Qays bin al-Hajjaj said in an illustration of the following verse (which means): **"Have a goodly patience" (79/5),** 'It commands that the man, afflicted by a calamity, should remain among the people without being known.'²

Shammar used to say when consoling a man in trouble: 'Bear in patience the decree of your Lord.'

Abu 'Aqil said: 'I saw Salim bin Abdullah bin 'Umar when Waqid bin Abdullah bin 'Umar was dying holding a whip in his hand; whenever he heard someone crying he would whip him.'

Ibn Abi al-Dunya³ reported a woman from Quraysh saying: 'By the One Who alone is Eternal and has no equal in mighty honour, if the beginning of patience is bitter in taste, its results produce sweet fruit.'

'Amr bin Bukayr said: 'I exercised patience and in the end it was good. Why should I show anguish when it is not going to help me? I controlled the tears in my eyes and stopped them pouring forth, so my eyes are shedding tears in my heart.'

Ahmad bin Musa al-Thaqafi said: 'I was told that Khawlah was worried because calamities had struck. Don't worry, Khawlah, and be patient, noble people are raised on patience.'

Abdullah Muhammad bin Ismai'I al-Tamimi said: 'A man offered condolences to another over the death of his son and said to him: 'Allah certainly fulfils His promise to the man who bears in patience the misfortunes for His sake. You should not combine the misfortune you

1 Al-Sabr (114)

2 Ibid (115)

3 Ibid (169)

endured with the loss of reward. That will be the greater calamity and more painful disaster for you. Peace be upon you.'

Ibn al-Sammak comforted a man saying:

'Hold on to patience. This is what a person who expects reward does, and this is the resort of all who are in distress.'

'Umar bin 'Abd al-'Aziz said:

'Being content is a difficult and formidable state, but Allah out of His mercy has provided a good support in patience.'

When his son 'Abd al-Malik passed away, he performed the funeral prayer over him, then said:

'May Allah have mercy on you! You were a helper and a supporter to me.'

He spoke those words without having a single drop of tears in his eyes while the people around him were crying.

Mutarraf bin Abdullah lost his son and some people went to offer him their condolences. He came out to receive them in a very happy mood and said:

'I feel ashamed of Allah to be shaken by a disaster.'

Amr bin Dinar reported 'Ubayd bin Umayr saying:

'Anguish is not having tears in eyes and grief in heart; it is rather bad words and bad thoughts.'

Al-Hasan bin 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Jarawi said:

'A very dear son of mine passed away; I said to his mother: 'Be mindful of Allah, expect reward from Him and have patience.'

She responded: 'My affliction is greater than to be spoiled by anxieties.'

Al-Hasan bin al-Husayn, the father of Abu 'Ubaydullah bin al-Hasan passed away when Ubaydullah was the governor and the judge of Basra.

A large number of people visited him to offer their condolences, and they discussed how patience could be distinguished from worry. They came to the conclusion that when a person abandons his normal routine in life after being afflicted, then he is worried.

Khalid bin Abu 'Uthman al-Qurashi said:

'Sa'id b' Jubayr offered his condolence over the loss of my son; then he noticed me going round the Ka'bah covering my face; he removed the cover and said to me:

'Being miserable is part of worry'.

Many jurists hold the view that there nothing wrong in a person, afflicted by a disaster, to cover his head with a cloth and to be known and consoled, because consolation is *Sunnah*; and this act will make people aware that he was affected and they will be able to fulfil their duty. This view is open to question and our Shaykh rejected it.

There is no doubt that our pious predecessors did not practice it. Nothing of this sort has been reported from any of the Companions or their followers, and the reports that have been cited do not support it. Ishaq bin Rahwayh did not approve of a person, during a misfortune, abandoning his normal dress. He said that it was a part of worry.

In short, it was not the custom of the early people to change their dress after being afflicted with a calamity or to abandon doing things they did normally. All such actions are opposed to patience. Allah, the Exalted knows best.



Chapter

Eighteen

Actions connected with affliction like crying, wailing, tearing the clothes, actions of pre-Islamic period and the like.

Crying and wailing over a dead person:

Ahmad and Abu Hanifah have given permission for that, before and after death. It is also endorsed by Abu Ishaq al-Shirazi. On the other hand, al-Shafi'i and many of his followers consider it undesirable after death, but permissible before it. They based their view on the following report of Jabir bin 'Atik:

'The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) went to visit Abdullah bin Thabit and found that he was unconscious. He called out to him, but he did not reply. The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: 'We belong to Allah, and to Him we are going to return'. He further said:

"We have been overcome, Abu al-Rabi'."

The women of the house started wailing and crying and Ibn ‘Atik tried to stop them. The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“Leave them, but when death occurs nobody should cry.”¹

The report of Ibn ‘Umar also supports this view, which says:

The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“A dead person is punished because of the crying of his family over him.”² He said “dead”, which applies to the condition after death not before it.

Ibn ‘Umar reported that when the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) returned from Uhud, he heard the women of Banu Abd al-Ashhal wailing over their dead, he said:

“But there is no one to cry over Hamzah.”

When the women of the Helpers heard it they came in and started wailing over Hamzah. The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) woke up and said:

“Woe to them! They came here to wail! Ask them to go away and not to wail over a dead person after today.”³

This shows clearly that the permission granted earlier had been abrogated. The difference between crying before death and after it, is that before death there remains hope, so people cry showing their caution, but when the person is deceased there is no more hope. The decree has taken place and crying cannot be of any use.

The people who allowed it refer to the following report of Jabir bin Abdullah:

“My father was killed on the day of Uhud. So, I started crying; the people around were asking me to stop, but the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did not do so. Then my aunt Fatimah started crying and the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said to her:

“Whether you cry or not, the angels shade with their wings until you take him away (to the grave).”⁴

It is recorded in both *Saheehs*.

- 1 Abu Daawood (3111), An-Nasaa’i (1847)
- 2 Al-Bukhaari (1286), Muslim (2149)
- 3 Ahmad (2/92), Ibn Majah (1591) and al-Hakim (3/195)
- 4 Al-Bukhaari (1244, 1293, 2816, 4080) Muslim (6354)

Another report from the two *Saheehs*¹ which is narrated by Ibn ‘Umar says:

S’ad bin ‘Ubadah fell ill and the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) went to visit him with Abd al-Rahman bin ‘Awf, Sa’d bin Abi Waqqas and Abdullah bin Mas’ud. When he entered the house, he found him unconscious, and he asked: “Has he died?”

They replied: “No, Messenger of Allah.”

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) started crying. When the people noticed his crying, they started crying as well.

He said: “Do you not realise? Allah does not punish for the tears of the eyes or grief of the heart, but for this” -- and he pointed to his tongue -- “unless He shows mercy.”

Usamah bin Zayd narrated, as reported by both Al-Bukhaari and Muslim, that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) visited one of his daughters whose son was about to die. When the child was brought to him, his breath rattling as though it was in a water skin, the eyes of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) poured with tears.

Sa’d asked: ‘What is that, Messenger of Allah?’

He replied: “This is the compassion which Allah has put in the hearts of His servants, and Allah shows mercy to those of His servants who are compassionate.”²

Ibn Abbas related that when Ruqayyah, the daughter of the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) passed away, the women present there started crying and ‘Umar started hitting them with his whip. The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said to him:

“Let them cry, ‘Umar, and you women, avoid screaming like the devil.”

He also said:

“What comes from the eyes and from the heart is from Allah and part of compassion, but what comes from the use of the hand and tongue is from the devil.”³

‘A’ishah reported that when Sa’d bin Mu’adh passed away, the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) came to him as

1 Al-Bukhaari (1304) Muslim (2137)

2 Al-Bukhaari (1284, 5655, 6655, 7377, 7448) Muslim (2135)

3 Ahmad (1/237, 335)

did Abu Bakr and ‘Umar.

She said: ‘By the one who holds my soul in His hand, I could recognize the crying of Abu Bakr from that of ‘Umar in my room.’¹

Abu Hurayrah reported that a funeral passed by the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and I was with him and some women were crying. ‘Umar was there as well and he rebuked the women. The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Leave them, Umar, because the soul is hurt, the eyes are full of tears and the time of affliction is close.”²

At-Tirmithi narrated on the authority of Jabir bin Abdullah that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) held the hand of Abd al-Rahman bin ‘Awf and went to see his son Ibrahim. He found that the boy was about to die. He held him in his lap and cried. Someone said to him: ‘Are you crying? But did you not prohibit crying?’

He replied: “No, but I prohibited two immoral foolish sounds: a sound at the time of tribulation accompanied by scratching the face and tearing the clothes, and the screaming of the devil.”³

It is reported in authentic narration that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) cried and made others cry when he visited the grave of his mother.⁴ It is also reported that he kissed ‘Uthman bin Madh’un when he died and tears fell on his face.⁵ He is reported to have announced the news of the death of Ja’far and his companions whilst his eyes were shedding tears.⁶ Abu Bakr kissed the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) when he died, and he was crying.⁷

These are twelve proofs to show that crying is not forbidden. The reports forbidding crying have to be referred to crying accompanied by screaming and wailing. That is why the report of Ibn ‘Umar has the following words: “The dead person is punished because of some of the crying of his family.” Another version has: “He is punished because of the wailing over him.” According to a report of Al-Bukhaari⁸, Umar said:

1 Ibid (1/141)

2 Ibid (2/333), see also An-Nasaa’i (1860) and Ibn Majah (1587)

3 At-Tirmithi (1005)

4 See Muslim (2259)

5 Ahmad (6/43) Abu Daawood (3163), at-Tirmithi (989) (and Ibn Majah (1456)

6 Al-Bukhaari (1246, 3063, 3630, 3757, 4262)

7 Al-Bukhaari (1241, 4452)

8 Al-Bukhaari See Fath al-Bari (3/160) also reported by Abd al-Razzaq (6685) and

‘Let the women cry over Abu Sulayman (Khalid bin Al-Walid) as long as they do not yell or put dust on their heads.’¹

As for the claim of abrogation in the report concerning Hamzah, it is not true, because its meaning is that after today no one should cry for any of the dead persons killed in Uhud. This is proved by the fact that most of the traditions allowing crying came later than the battle of Uhud. Among them is the *Hadeeth* of Abu Hurayrah who became a Muslim in the seventh year after Hijrah; crying for Ja’far and his companions took place in year eight when they were killed; the Prophet’s daughter Zaynab’s death happened in the same year, i.e., eight. Sa’d’s death was in the fifth year and the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) visited his mother’s grave in the eighth year.

To say that crying was allowed before death as a precaution is not acceptable, because a person cries before the death in distress, which becomes more severe after death. He, therefore, should be allowed to cry in the condition where there is no more hope. The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) indicated that sense when he said: “The eyes are shedding tears, the heart is distressed, but we do not say what may anger our Lord. We are indeed in great distress because of you, Ibrahim.”¹

AS for wailing and lamentation, Imam Ahmad has declared them to be unlawful. He said, as reported by his son Hanbal, wailing is a sin. The followers of ash-Shafi’i also consider wailing unlawful. According to Ibn Abd al-Barr there is a consensus among the scholars that wailing is not allowed for men or women. Some later followers of Ahmad consider it reprehensible. Abu al-Khattab said in al-Hidayah:

“Wailing, lamentation, scratching of the face and tearing of clothes are reprehensible.”

The correct view is that it is unlawful on the basis of Abdullah bin Mas’ud’s report in the two *Saheehs*² that the Prophet said:

“He is not one of us who beats the cheeks, tears the clothes and behaves like the people of the pre-Islamic period”

It is also recorded in the two *Saheehs*³ that Abu Burdah narrated that Abu

Ibn Abi Shaybah

1 Al-Bukhaari (1303) Muslim (6025)

2 Al-Bukhaari (1294, 1298, 3519) Muslim (285)

3 Al-Bukhaari (1296) Muslim (287)

Musa was taken ill and he passed out while his head was in the lap of a woman from the family. The woman cried, but he could not say anything to her. When he came round, he said: *ALLAhu raghaabahu* O' maid of mine 'I am free from that which the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) declared his freedom from. The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) announced his freedom from al-Saliqah, the woman who shaves her head and the one who tears her clothes.

Al-Mughirah bin Shu'bah reported as recorded in two *Saheehs* that he heard the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) saying:

"Those on whom wailing is done will be punished because of it."¹

Umm 'Atiyyah said that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) commanded us in our pledges not to wail, but only five women fulfilled that commitment.²

Al-Bukhaari narrated from Ibn 'Umar that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"A dead person is punished in his grave because of the wailing over him."³

Muslim reported on the authority of Abu Malik al-Ash'ari that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "*Four matters of the pre-Islamic period will persist in my community; they will not abandon them, and they are: boasting of their family background, defamation of the family trees, seeking rain through stars, and wailing.*"

He also said:

"*If a wailing woman does not repent before her death, she will be raised on the Day of Judgement having a garment of tar and a coat of scabies.*"⁴

Abu Daawood related on the authority of Asid bin Abu Asid that a woman from among the Emigrants said that the things for which the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) took our pledges, and for which we were asked not to disobey him were: not to scratch the face, not to wail, and not to tear off garments or to pull out hair.⁵

1 Al-Bukhaari (1291) Muslim (2157)

2 Al-Bukhaari (1306, 7215) Muslim (2163)

3 Al-Bukhaari (1292), Muslim (2143)

4 Muslim (2160)

5 See *as-Sunan* (3131)

Anas narrated that when the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) took a pledge from the women, he asked them not to wail. They said to him: ‘O Messenger of Allah, some women in pre-Islamic period helped us in wailing, shouldn’t we join them now in Islam?’

He replied: “There is no help of this kind in Islam.”¹

We have earlier noted his sayings:

“What is done by the hand and the tongue comes from the devil.”

“I have been prohibited from two immoral foolish sounds: a sound at the affliction accompanied by scratching the face and tearing the garments; and the screaming of the devil.”

Abu Musa related that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“The dead person is punished because of the wailing of living people. When a wailing woman cries: ‘O helper! O supporter! O provider of clothes!’ The dead person is pulled and asked: ‘Were you her helper? Were you her supporter? Were you her provider?’”²

Al-Bukhaari related on the authority of al-Nu’man bin Bashir that Abdullah bin Rawahah fainted and his sister ‘Amrah started crying and saying: ‘O mountain! O so and so! She enumerated his merits. When he recovered, he said to her:

‘You said nothing but I was asked: ‘Are you like that?’

When he died, she did not cry over him.³

How can these acts not be forbidden when they are indicative of being displeased with the Lord and lack of patience. They also include causing harm to the body by striking the face, shaving or plucking the hair, calling for destruction, complaining about Allah, the Almighty and wasting money by tearing garments. In addition, the dead person is described by qualities that were not in him. Strict prohibition results from some of these acts.

The people who hold that mere wailing and crying are allowed, though undesirable, argue on the bases of the following reports:

It is reported that Wathilah bin al-Asqa’ and Abu Wa’il listened to wailing and kept quiet.⁴

1 Ahmad (3/197), An-Nasaa’i (1853) Ibn Hibban (3146)

2 Ahmad (4/414) at-Tirmithi (1003)

3 Al-Bukhaari (4267)

4 See Ibn Abi Shaybah’s *al-Musannaf*

Umm ‘Atiyah stated that when the following verse was revealed (which mean): **“O Prophet, when the believing women come to make pledge to you... and do not disobey you in good matters.”** (60/12), wailing was included in it; I said to the Messenger of Allah: “Except for the family of so and so; they had helped me in the pre-Islamic period and I feel obliged to repay them.” The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) accepted that exception.¹

In a report of Al-Bukhaari and Muslim from Umm ‘Atiyah who said: ‘We gave our pledge to the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and he told us not to associate partners to Allah and not to wail. A woman from the group pulled her hand back and said: ‘So and so helped me and I want to pay her back.’ The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did not say anything. She went away, then came back and made the pledge.’

They said: This permission from the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) to some women shows that this action is in fact disapproved. However, this must be taken as when wailing is free from these excesses.

The scholars who consider wailing unlawful, argued back saying that, the *Sunnah* of the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) cannot be challenged by anyone no matter who he is, and his *Sunnah* is not to be contested one against another. The traditions we have cited are clear and do not need any explanation. The consensus of the scholars is also established on it. The woman to whom the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) gave permission and the one about whom he kept silent are two special cases for two reasons: First he told another woman that there was no help in wailing over the dead in Islam; secondly, he allowed them because they were new to Islam and they were not able to distinguish between what was permissible and what was unlawful. To delay explanation from the time of need is not allowed. So, it was proved that the permission was mainly for those two women.

A few words that are true and spoken not for wailing or showing resentment to Allah, are not prohibited, and do not clash with the required patience. It is supported by the following report of Anas found in the *Musnad* of Ahmad: “Abu Bakr went to the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) after he passed away and put his mouth between the eyes of the

1 Al-Bukhaari (1306, 4892, 7215) Muslim (2165)

Prophet, and his hands on his earlobes and said: 'O Prophet! O friend! O closest man to me!'

Al-Bukhaari² reported that Anas said:

'When the condition of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) became serious, he underwent severe pain. Fatimah said: 'Oh the pain of my father!'

He responded:

'Your father is not going to suffer from any pain after today.'

When he passed away, she cried: 'O father who acceded to the Lord who called him! O father, Paradise is his abode! O father, to Gabriel we announce his death!'

When he was buried Fatimah said:

'Anas, did it please you to throw earth on the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)?'

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "We are grieved by you, Ibrahim."

This is the type of statement that does not imply complaints about fate or express unhappiness with Allah or make Him angry, but is considered as merely crying.

The statement of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) that a dead person is punished because of wailing over him, is reported by 'Umar bin al-Khattab, his son Abdullah and al-Mughirah bin Shu'bah. Similar statements are narrated by 'Imran bin-Husayn³ and Abu Musa⁴. The scholars' reaction to this was as follows:

A group of them said that the actions of Allah are not to be questioned. He does what He wants to His creatures. There is no difference between being punished because of wailing over the dead, or punishment because of what is attributed to him. He is the Creator of everything and He causes children, animals and the insane to experience pain without any offense.

Another group claimed that the attribution of these reports to the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is not correct. 'A'ishah, the Mother of the Believers, rejected them on the basis of the statement of Allah, the Almighty in the Qur'an (which means):

100 Ahmad (6/31,219), also related by Abu Daawood (2137) An-Nasaa'i (11350) JA*

2) Al-Bukhaari (4462).

3) See An-Nasaa'i (1855), and Ibn Hibban (742)

4) See Ahmad (4/414), Ibn Majah (1594), at-Tirmithi (1003)

“No burdened soul can bear the burden of another.” (6/164; 35/18; 39/7)

When she heard the reports of ‘Umar and his son she commented: ‘You are narrating not being liars or accused, but the ear can make mistakes. It was when the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) passed by the grave of a Jew and said:

“The man inside is punished and his family is wailing over him.”

She also reported that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“Allah increases the punishment of an unbeliever because of the wailing of his family over him.”

She added: The Qur’an is sufficient for you, it says (what means):

“No burdened soul can bear the burden of another.” (6/164; 35/18; 39/7)¹

A third group held that this punishment is to be applied to the people who ordered their people to do it, as it was their custom. It is recorded in their poetry; Tarafah said:

“When I die announce with what is suitable for me and tear off the garment, daughter of Ma’bad.”

Labid said:

“Stand up and say things which you know, but do not scratch your face or shave your hair. Say that he was a man who did not abandon his friend nor cheated or betrayed a trust. Do that for a year then peace be on you (i.e. stop). Whoever cries for one complete year has fulfilled his duty.”

Another group said that the warning applies to a person in whose community it is a common practice, and he did not ask them to abandon it. His silence is taken as a proof of his agreement with it.

This is the view of Ibn al-Mubarak and his colleagues.

Abu al-Barakat Ibn Taymiyyah said: This last view was the correct one because when a person felt that the people were going to wail after his death and he did not forbid them, it was a sign that he endorsed it. He becomes like a man who abandoned forbidding an evil when he had the power to do so. If he left a clear instruction for not engaging in wailing and they did not follow his instruction, but became involved in it, then Allah is Merciful and would not punish him. In this way, the Qur’anic verse will remain valid, and the Prophetic traditions may also be applied in many cases.

‘A’ishah’s rejection of the report of the reliable person is not acceptable. She may not have been in a place where they may have been, and they may

1 Al-Bukhaari (1288), 1289) Muslim (2149, 2150)

have been able to witness incidents that she did not. It is very unlikely that those five senior Companions could have been mistaken or forgotten.

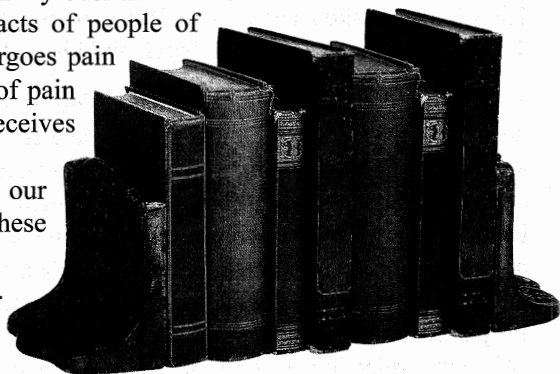
What the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said about the Jew does not bar us from believing that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) spoke to those five Companions at other times. Then 'A'ishah's argument is defeated by her report that Allah increases the punishment of an unbeliever because of the wailing of his people over him. If an unbeliever is given additional punishment because of the acts of other people, then what would stop a Muslim's punishment? We know that Allah does not wrong an unbeliever; neither does He wrong a Muslim.

These traditions do not need these explanations, and they do not clash with the Qur'an or any principle of the *Shari'ah*. The rule does not include the punishment of a person for the offence of another. The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did not say that a dead person is punished because of the wailing and yelling of his family over him. He said that he was tormented by it, which means that it is causing him pain and suffering. '*Adhab* is the pain which he feels; it is more general than the word '*Iqab*, and a general word does not necessarily include the particular meaning. The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Travelling is a part of torment."¹

This torment affects both the believer and unbeliever equally. A dead person suffers because of his neighbour who is punished in his grave. His feels pain like a man feels it when he sees his neighbour being tortured. When the family of a dead person cry over him in the manner that has been forbidden, like the acts of people of pre-Islamic days, he undergoes pain in his grave. This feeling of pain is the punishment he receives because of the crying.

This is the method of our Shaykh in explaining these traditions.

And Allah's help is sought.



1 Al-Bukhaari (1804, 3001, 5429) Muslim (4961)

Chapter

Nineteen

Patience is half of faith

Faith is composed of two halves: One half is patience and the other is gratitude.

Many early scholars have confirmed that patience is half of the faith.

Abdullah bin Mas'ud is reported to have said: 'Faith has two parts: half is patience and the other half is thankfulness.'¹

It is attested by the fact that Allah, the Almighty joined them together in the following verse (which means):

"Surely there are signs in this for every patient, thankful person." (14/5; 42/33; 31/31; 34/19)

These two qualities are joined together for a number of reasons.

Faith consists of statement, deed, and intention altogether. They ultimately revolve around performing an act or leaving it. The former means to act in accordance with Allah's command; this is the essence of thankfulness; the latter to be steadfast in resisting sinful acts. The whole religion lies in these two items: doing what is commanded and abandoning what is prohibited. Faith is based on two pillars: certainty and patience. Allah, the Exalted has

1 See al-Tabarani (8544)

referred to these two in the Qur'an when He said (what means):

"We raised leaders among them when they became steadfast and believed firmly in Our messages, guiding them according to Our command." (32/24)

Through certainty, the real essence of command and prohibition and reward and punishment is understood; through patience a man carries out what he is commanded and refrains from what is made unlawful for him. He is unable to be certain that the command and prohibition come from Allah the Most High, and that He is the one who will reward or punish him except through firm belief. He cannot remain firm and constant in doing what is commanded and resisting what is forbidden except by patience. In this way patience becomes half of the faith, the other half being thankfulness by being able to do duties that are obligatory and avoid what is prohibited.

Faith is composed of statement and action. Statement comes from the heart and tongue while action emanates from the heart and limbs.

Let us explain this further. A man who acknowledges Allah in his heart but does not declare it by his tongue is not regarded as a believer, as Allah Almighty has stated about the people of Pharaoh (what means):

"They rejected them ignorantly and arrogantly though their souls were certain of them." (27/14)

He said similar things about the people of 'Ad and Thamud (which mean):

"And the people of 'Ad and Thamud; their fate is made clear to you by their dwelling places. Satan made their deeds seem pleasing to them and barred them from the right way in spite of their intelligence." (29/38)

Moses said to Pharaoh (what means):

"Surely you know very well that the Lord of the heavens and earth had sent them down as clear proof." (17/102)

All the above groups had acquired the knowledge of the heart by being sure about Allah, but they were not considered believers because they did not confirm their belief.

The same applies to a person who declares with his tongue but does believe in his heart; he will not be counted as a believer; he will be regarded as a hypocrite. Even a person who has belief in his heart, and declares it by the tongue, will not be considered a believer unless he makes his heart willing to love and hate, and make a friend of an enemy as required. The believer loves Allah and His Messenger, makes the friends of Allah his friends, declares those who are enemies of Allah as his enemies, surrenders his

heart to Allah alone and commits himself to follow His Messenger and to abide by his *Shari'ah* openly and secretly. Even when he does all this, he needs to further perfect his faith by doing them in the best way. These four pillars, which were described above, are the pillars of faith on which it stands, and all of them revolve around knowledge and action. Included in action is the control of the self, which concerns prohibition. Neither knowledge nor action can be achieved without patience. Therefore, faith consists of two halves, one being patience, and the other which is produced by it in the form of knowledge and action.

The soul has two powers: that of embarking on an action and the power to refrain from it. It is permanently moving between these two powers, embarking on that which it loves and refraining from that which it hates. The religion in fact revolves between proceeding and retreating: proceeding to that which is a good deed and retreating from that which is a bad and sinful deed. Neither of the two can be achieved without patience.

The whole religion can be seen as a combination of hope and fear. It is the believer who has hope and fear. Allah says about the believers (what means):

"They used to hasten to good deeds and call upon us with hope and fear." (21/90)

Al-Bukhaari¹ reports a supplication which a person should say at bed time and it includes the following words:

"O Allah, I surrender my soul to You, turn my face to You, entrust my affairs to You, and shelter my back to You, with hope and fear of You."

A believer is never without hope and fear; and these two rest fully on patience.

Fear encourages him to have patience and hope leads him to be thankful. All that a believer does in this world is either good or beneficial for him in this world and in the Hereafter, or is harmful for him in both worlds, or is good in one of them and harmful in the other. The best option is to do what will be of benefit in the hereafter and abandon what will cause it harm. This is the real essence of the faith. Doing what is beneficial for one is thankfulness and leaving what is harmful is patience.

A man in this world passes his life in doing what he is commanded, abandoning what he has been ordered to avoid, and submitting to the Divine decree. In all these three conditions he is required to be patient and

1 Al-Bukhaari (247, 6311, 6313, 6315, 7488) Muslim (6882)

thankful. Doing what he is commanded is thankfulness, and leaving what is forbidden and accepting the decree is patience.

A believer has two urges, one calling him to the world, and its desires and joys, and the other pulling him to Allah and the hereafter, and to what Allah has prepared there for His righteous servants. To resist the urge of lust and desire is patience, and to give oneself over to the side of Allah and the hereafter is thankfulness.

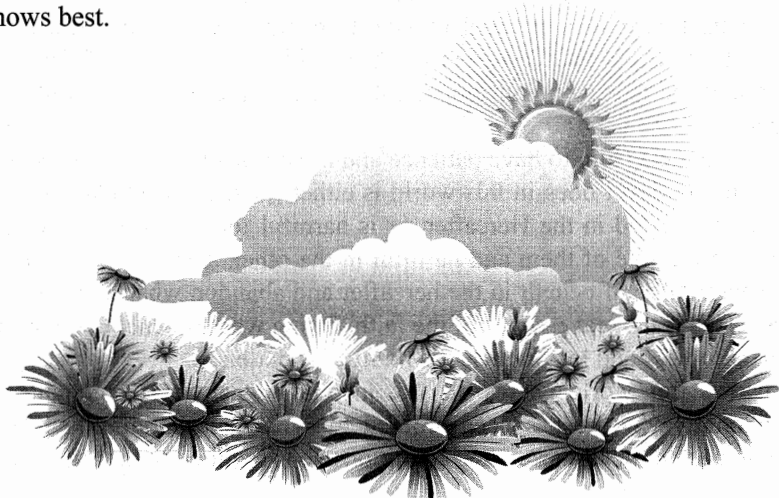
The religion is based on two principles: determination and steadiness. They are the ones mentioned in the *Hadeeth* reported by Ahmad and an-Nasaa'i in which the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: *"O Allah, I ask you for steadfastness in my affairs and determination on righteousness."*¹

The origin of thankfulness is right determination and the origin of patience is unfailing steadiness. Once a servant is supported by determination and steadiness, he has surely attained help and support.

The religion is also based on a further two basic principles; truth and patience. The Qur'an has put them together in the following verse (which means):

"And they advised one another to the truth and they advised one another to patience." (103/3)

Since the servant is required to follow the truth in his dealings with himself and with others, which is the real essence of thankfulness, he is obliged to exercise patience. In this manner patience becomes half of faith. Allah knows best.



1 Ahmad (4/125), at-Tirmithi (3407), An-Nasaa'i (1305)

Chapter

Twenty

Exposition of the controversy regarding which one is better: patience or thankfulness

Abu al-Faraj Ibn al-Jawzi cited three views in this respect:

- Patience is better
- Thankfulness is better
- They are equal.

‘Umar bin al-Khattab said; ‘Had patience and thankfulness been two camels, I would not have minded which one I chose to ride.’

We are going to cite the arguments of each group and reveal the strengths and weaknesses of their reasoning with the help and support of Allah.

The advocates of patience said:

‘Allah, the Exalted, has praised and lauded patience and its people. He has commanded that you practice it and attached the success of the world and the Hereafter to it. Allah Almighty mentioned it in about 90 places in His Book. The texts cited earlier, from the Qur’an and the *Sunnah*, about

its merit and superiority of its practitioners clearly indicate that it is better than thankfulness. The statement of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) that ‘a person who eats and is thankful is like the one who fasts and is patient’,¹ is sufficient to establish its superiority. He said it in the context of indicating the excellence of patience and placing it above thankfulness. He linked the thankful person with the patient one and likened the latter with the former. It is an established fact that an object with which another is compared is higher in rank. For example, the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

*“An addict to wine is like the worshipper of an idol.”*² The worship of idols is no doubt the greater offence than drinking. There are many other examples.

The supporters of the superiority of patience over thankfulness argued that if we were to compare the texts related to patience with those connected with thankfulness, we would notice that the former are much more numerous than the latter. This is also seen in the case of prayer and *Jihad*, since they are the best actions, traditions speaking about them are found in every section. Chapters dealing with prayer and *Jihad* are far more numerous in the Prophetic traditions than chapters dealing with other subjects.

They further said:

‘Patience is present in every section, rather in every issue of the religion. This is what makes it in relation to the faith like the head to the body.’

They went on further: ‘Allah, the Exalted attached additional merit to thankfulness; He said (what means):

“Your Lord proclaimed: If you give thanks, I will give you an increase.” (14/7)

He promised an unlimited reward for patience.¹

Allah, the Most High, spoke in general terms about the recompense of those who are thankful when He said (what means):

“Allah will reward the thankful.” (3/144)

He described the recompense of the patient as being the best; He said (what means):

“We will recompense those who bear in patience in proportion to the best of what they used to do.” (16/96)

1. Abd al-Razzaq (10/424) Ahmad (7/241) at-Tirmithi (2486), Ibn Majah (1764) Ibn Hibban (315), see also *Fath al-Bari* (9/582)

2. Ibn Majah (3375) Al-Bukhaari in *Tarikh* (1/129)

They also said: *'The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is reported in an authentic report as saying:*

*Allah Almighty says: "Every act of the son of Adam is for him except fasting. That is for Myself and I alone will give its reward."*¹

In another version:

*"Every act of the son of Adam gets a multiple reward, a good deed is rewarded ten times more. Allah The Almighty said: Except fasting; it is for Myself and I alone will give its reward."*²

This exceptional treatment of fasting was due to the fact that it restrains the fasting person and keeps him away from his desires. As stated in the another tradition, Allah says: "The fasting man leaves his desires, his food and drink for My sake." For this reason the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said to a person who asked him which deed was best:

"Hold on to fasting; there is nothing like it."³

Since patience is meant to restrain the soul from the inducement of desires, which is the real essence of fasting, as it involves controlling the soul against the inducement of the desires for food, drink, and sexual act, the word *Sabr* in the following verse of the Qur'an was interpreted as fasting (which means):

"Seek help through patience and prayer." (2/45)

The fasting month of Ramadhaan is given the name of the 'month of patience'.

Some early scholars said that fasting is half of patience. They justified their statement by saying that patience is to control the soul from responding to the motives of desire and anger. The soul longs for a thing because it feels pleasure with its acquisition, and it feels angry as it hates a thing that causes pain. Fasting only restrains from the motive of desire, which is the desire of the belly and genitals. It is not concerned with the side of anger. However, the perfect and complete fast requires control of the soul from the urges of both. The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) pointed this out in an authentic *Hadeeth* when he said:

"When one of you is fasting, he should not behave foolishly and should not

1 Al-Bukhaari (1904, 5927), Muslim (2704)
 2 Muslim (2707)
 3 Ahmad (5/248-249, 255, 258), An-Nasaa'i (2222-2225) Ibn Khuzaymah (1893) Ibn Hibban (3425, 3426)

shout. If someone tempts him into abuse or vilification, he should respond by saying: 'I am fasting.'"¹

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) advised him to keep a balance between the urge of desire and that of anger. He taught that a fasting person should take precautions during his fast for two reasons: one is spoiling his fast and the other the destruction of its reward. He also gave warning in another *Hadeeth* saying:

*"Whoever does not desist from telling lies and acting according to it, Allah has no need of him abandoning food and drink."*²

The supporters for the case for patience continued their argument by stating that it was enough to prove the excellence of patience over thankfulness by quoting what Allah, the Almighty said about His successful servants (what means):

"Today I have rewarded them for their patience so that they are the ones who are successful." (23/111)

Here success is the result of being patient.

The Almighty also declared (what means):

"Allah is with those who are patient." (2/249)

Nothing can be compared with being in the company of Allah and His servants.

Some learned people said:

'The patient people took the good of the world and the Hereafter because they attained the company of Allah.'

Allah said to His Messenger (what means):

"Wait in patience for the judgement of your Lord; you are before Our watchful eyes." (52/48)

That includes the acts of watching over, caring and the protection afforded because of being patient with His judgement.

In addition, Allah has promised the people who are patient three things each of which is better than this world and what is in it. They are: His blessings for them, His mercy on them and their selection for guidance.

This promise came in His statement (which means):

"They are those on who are the blessings of their Lord and His mercy; they are those who are guided." (2/157)

The last sentence indicates that guidance is restricted to them alone.

1 Al-Bukhaari & Muslim

2 Al-Bukhaari (1903, 6057)

The Almighty also stated in two verses of the Qur'an that patience is among the resolute firm attributes, and He commanded His Messenger (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) to follow the path of the patience of the messengers of firm resolution. This has been mentioned earlier.

They also said that it was proved by evidences that lack of interest in the material world and being satisfied with little is better than amassing abundant worldly wealth. Showing indifference to the world is the characteristic of the patient people, while being immersed in it is that of the thankful ones.

They further said that Jesus Christ (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was asked about two men who happened to pass by a treasure: one of them paid no attention to it and passed by it, while the other took it and spent it on good and beneficial purposes: which one of them was better?

He replied:

'The one who did not pay any attention to it and ignored it is better in the sight of Allah Almighty.'

They argued that the truth of the above story is attested by the fact that the keys of the treasures of the earth were offered to the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) but he did not take them and said:

"I would rather keep hungry one day and eat another day."

Had he taken them, he would certainly have spent them in matters and ways that please Allah, but he preferred to remain in the state of patience and showed no interest in them.

They also argued that it is well known that the perfection of human being lies in three things:

The knowledge he acquires, the acts he performs, and the state produced by his knowledge and actions.

The best knowledge, action and state is to know Allah, His Names, His Attributes and His actions; to act in a way which He likes and turn the heart to Him with love, fear and hope. This is the noblest thing in the world and its reward will be the most honourable one in the hereafter.

The most glorious objective to achieve is to be aware of Allah and to love Him, to like His Company, have the desire to meet Him and enjoy remembering Him. This is the greatest happiness of the world and the Hereafter. This is the goal that is sought for its own sake. A person will

20

realize its full importance only when the veil is lifted and he departs from this world and enters the realm of the Hereafter. As long as he is in this world his realization of this will not be complete, though he may feel some of it, due to his being surrounded by contradictions and afflictions by which he is put to trial. Real happiness is nothing other than that. All other categories of knowledge and understanding are subordinate to that realization and they are sought for in order to attain it. The disciplines of learning are graded in accordance with their ability to take a man to this realization. A discipline that leads immediately to the understanding of Allah, His Names and His Attributes, is higher than others. The same applies to the condition of the heart. The condition that is closer to the goal for which it is created is nobler than other conditions. It is the same with actions; any action which leads to the achieving of this goal quickly is better than other actions. Since prayers and *Jihad* lead a person rapidly to acquire this objective, they are regarded as the highest merit.

This is how it should be. A thing that is nearer to the goal is definitely better than the one which is far from it. Actions that prepare the heart and set it up for the knowledge of Allah, His Names and Attributes, His love, fear and hope, are superior to those which are not working in that direction. If a number of actions join together to help the man to reach that noble goal, the best among them will be that which is closest to the goal. Since all good deeds share this aim, they are required by Allah. On the other hand, sinful acts collaborate in covering the heart and prevent it from reaching that goal. The impact of good or bad deeds in this respect is in proportion to their degree of strength.

There is a point here worth considering: that a particular act may be better for a person than another act that may be better for others. A rich person may have acquired a large amount of money, but his soul does not let him spend it; for him giving out in charity and helping others is better than fasting voluntarily in the day and keeping vigil at night. A strong brave person whose assault frightens the enemy, his standing in the battlefield for an hour and engaging the enemies of Allah in fighting is better than performing voluntary pilgrimage, fasting and giving charity. For a learned scholar who has knowledge of the *Sunnah*, knows what is lawful and unlawful and the ways of good and bad, it is better for him to mix with the people, educate them and give them advice in religious matters than keeping away from the people, dedicating his time for prayer, reciting the Qur'an and engaging in glorification of Allah. For a ruler whom Allah

gave authority to administer the affairs of the people, it is better for him to sit for a while to look into the cases of injustice, give back the rights of the oppressed, establish the ordained punishments, support the people who are right and suppress those who are wrong than to engage in worship for years. In the same way a man in whom sexual desire is predominant, it is more beneficial for him to fast than to engage in the remembrance of Allah and spending in charity for others.

Look at the actions of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). He appointed 'Amr bin al-'As, Khalid bin al-Walid and some other Companions as governors and commanders, but did not give any post to Abu Dharr and said to him:

*"I see you are a weak person, and I love for you what I love for myself. Never be an emir over two people and never accept the trust of an orphan's wealth."*¹

He advised him and some other Companions to fast. He said: *"Stick to fasting, there is nothing like it."*² He ordered another person not to get angry;³ and told a third one to keep his tongue engaged with the remembrance of Allah.⁴ When Allah decides for a person to reach perfection, He helps him exert all his efforts in the works he is capable of doing and has potential for them. When he perseveres in this, he gets ahead and surpasses the rest of the people. It is said (in a line of poetry):

"He continued getting ahead of others until the people who were jealous of him said: This is a short route to loftiness."

It is like an ill person who suffers from a stomachache; if he takes the proper medicine for that illness, he will benefit, but if he instead takes a drug for headaches, then he will not be cured. The predominance of avarice is so destructive that it cannot be removed by fasting for a 100 years or keeping the night vigil for the same period. The same could be said about the following of desires and self-conceit, which cannot be treated by excessive reading of the Qur'an and making all efforts in learning, having remembrance of Allah and piety. The cure will come only by removing those tendencies from the heart.

If a person asks which is better: water or bread? The answer will be that

1 Muslim (4720)

2 Ahmad(5/249, 255, 258) see p.

3 Al-Bukhaari (6116)

4 Ahmad (4/190) at-Tirmithi (3375) Ibn Majah (3793) Ibn Hibban (814) and al-Hakim (1/495)

one is better in its place and the other in its place.

When you have learned this principle then remember that giving thanks through spending money is a good deed, which produces a good condition in the heart and frees it from niggardliness and avarice and takes away the love of worldly wealth from it. As a result, the heart becomes ready to gain knowledge of Allah and acquire His love. By giving thanks, in the way mentioned above, the curing of the heart from the disease that was posing a barrier from reaching the goal is achieved.

The poor person, who has no interest in the world, is saved from this disease and does not need the treatment, and he is able to devote all his strength to achieving his desired goal.

The supporters of the case for patience over gratitude posed a question here; if patience in itself is enough why does the religion encourage people to do good deeds?

The answer is that when a doctor praises a drug, he does not mean that the drug is meant for itself or it is better than the cure resulting from it. In our case, actions are the treatment for the diseases of the heart, which are not noticed easily, so, the encouragement for action is made which may cure the heart. A poor needy man who receives charity from you pulls out the disease of miserliness from you, just like the cupper extracts harmful blood from your body.

They concluded that only after it was understood would it be known that the state of the patient is like the state of a person who takes care of his health and strength, and the case of the thankful person is like the case of a person who uses various drugs to get rid of the symptoms of the disease.

The supporters of the excellence of thankfulness over patience said: You went beyond your limits and tried to give preference to a state that is lower than the other. You placed the method above the goal and gave priority to a matter which is sought for other reasons over a matter which is only sought for itself. You attempted to put a perfect object ahead of what is more perfect and an excellent thing above one that is more excellent. You failed to give thankfulness its full due and fell short of recognizing its status fully.

When Allah, the Exalted, mentioned being thankful in His Book, He joined it with His remembrance, which is the aim of the creation. Both of them, remembrance and gratitude, are the purposes of creation and command. Patience is only a tool to serve them and a means and support to them.

Allah, the Almighty said (what means):

“Remember Me, I will remember you; be thankful to Me and do not show ingratitude.” (2/152)

He, blessed be He, mentioned thankfulness together with belief and declared that He had no desire to punish His creatures if they are thankful and have faith. He said (what means):

“Why would Allah punish you if you are thankful and have faith?” (4/147)

The meaning is that if you fulfil the duties you have been created to carry out i.e. being thankful and having faith, what would He gain by punishing you after that?

He also informed that it is the thankful people, from all His servants, who are singled out to receive His favour. He said (what means):

“This is how We tried some of them by others, so they say: Are these the people whom Allah has favoured from among us? Does Allah not know the thankful ones best?” (6/53)

Moreover, Allah, the Exalted, divided people into thankful and unthankful. The most hateful matter to Him is ingratitude and the people involved in it, and the most beloved to Him is thankfulness and the people who express it. He thus spoke about human beings (which means):

“We have shown him the way, and then he is either grateful or ungrateful.” (76/3)

His Prophet Sulayman (Solomon) said (what means):

“This is the grace of my Lord, to test me whether I show gratitude or be ungrateful. He who is grateful, he is grateful for himself and as for him who is ungrateful my Lord is free from need, the Generous.” (27/40)

Allah, the Almighty also said (what means):

“And your Lord proclaimed: if you show gratitude, I will give you more; but if you are ungrateful, My punishment is severe.” (14/7)

He said in another place (what means):

“If you are unthankful, Allah is independent of you. He does not approve ingratitude for His servants; and if you show thankfulness, He will appreciate it from you.” (39/7)

There are many places in the Qur'an where Allah has placed thankfulness and thanklessness opposite one another to indicate that they are diametrically opposed.

Allah, the Most High, said (what means):

“Muhammad is but a messenger. Messengers have passed before him. Was he to die or be killed would you turn back on your heels? Whoever turns back on his heels, he will not harm Allah at all. Allah will reward those who are thankful.” (3/144)

The thankful were those who remained firm and did not turn back on their heels.

He, glory be to Him, attached more importance to being thankful, and this has no limit as there is no limit for being thankful to Him.

The Almighty has made many of His recompenses conditional to His will.

He says for example (what means):

“Allah will make you rich by His favour if He so wishes.” (9/28)

He said regarding the answering of a supplication (what means):

“He removes that for which you call upon Him, if He wills.” (6/41)

He said concerning provision (what means): ***“He provides to whom He wills” (3/37).***

He said about forgiving (what means):

“He forgives whom He wills.” (3/37)

And about turning to those who repent He said (what means):

“Allah relents towards whom He wills.” (9/15)

However, He left the reward for gratitude without any qualification whenever He mentioned it. He said (what means):

“Allah will reward those who are thankful.” (3/144)

“We will reward the thankful ones.” (3/145)

When Allah’s enemy, the devil, became aware of the position of thankfulness and knew that it was the highest and loftiest act, he took it upon himself to turn people from it. He said (what means):

“Then I will come to them from before them, from behind them, from their right and their left, and You will not find most of them grateful.” (7/17)

Allah, the Almighty declared that the grateful among His servants were few (which means):

“A few of My servants are grateful.” (34/13)

Imam Ahmad narrated ¹that ‘Umar bin al-Khattab heard a person saying:

¹ See *Az-Zuhd* (142)

‘O Allah, make me among the few ones.’

‘Umar asked him:

‘What is that?’

He replied:

‘Commander of faithful, Allah, the Exalted said (what means):

“...and did not believe with him but a few.” (11/40)

“Only a few of My servants are grateful.” (34/40)

“Except those who have faith and do good deeds; and they are very few.” (38/24)

‘Umar said: ‘You are right.’

Allah, the Exalted, praised the first Messenger He sent to the people living on earth for being grateful saying (what means):

“The progeny of those We boarded (on ark) with Noah. He was surely a grateful servant.” (17/3)

By singling Noah out for mention here and telling the people that they are his progeny is an indication that they should follow him as he was their second father. Allah, the Almighty did not let the people grow after the flood except through Noah’s progeny. He stated (what means):

“We made his progeny to survive.” (37/77)

He commanded his progeny to emulate their father in giving thanks, as he was a thankful servant.

The Lord Almighty told us that he who gives thanks to Him is the real devoted servant of His, and the one who does not thank Him is not one of those who dedicated themselves to His worship. He commanded (what means):

“Be thankful to Allah, if you worship Him.” (2/172)

He commanded His servant Moses to receive with thanks the honours that Allah granted him that He made him a Prophet and Messenger and spoke to him. He said to him (what means):

“Moosa, I have preferred you above mankind by My message and by My speaking to you. So, hold that which that I have given you and be among the thankful.” (7/144)

The first order Allah gave to man after he was endowed with the faculty of reasoning was to give thanks to Allah and to his parents. He said (what means):

“We enjoined upon man concerning his parents; his mother bears him

in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning is in two years- give thanks to Me and to your parents. To Me is the return.” (31/14)

He also informed that His pleasure lay in giving thanks to Him. The Lord said (what means):

“If you are thankful, He prefers that for you.” (39/7)

He praised His friend Ibraheem (Abraham) for giving thanks to Him for His favours saying (what means):

“Ibraheem was certainly a nation obedient to Allah, by nature upright, and he was not of the idolaters, thankful for His bounties. He chose him and guided him to a straight path.” (16/120, 121)

In this verse Allah told us that Abraham was a nation unto himself, i.e. a model to be emulated in good; and that he was obedient, firm in his obedience; ‘by nature upright’ indicates that he was devoted to Allah, avoiding others except Him. The Almighty concluded His description by saying that he was thankful for His bounties. Thus, He made being thankful the ultimate aim of His friend Ibrahim.

The Almighty told us that giving thanks was the purpose of His creation and His command and is the objective for which He created humankind. He said (what means):

“Allah brought you forth from the womb of your mothers, knowing nothing, and gave you hearing and sight and hearts that perhaps you might give thanks.” (16/78)

Thus, it was the objective of creation and command, as Allah said (what means):

“Allah gave you victory at Badr, when you were lowly. So observe your duty to Allah in order that you may be thankful.” (3/123)

The phrase “in order that you may be thankful” may be a justification for His decision to grant the Muslims victory or His command of observing their duty to Him or for both of these two things. This last option seems more likely because giving thanks is the objective of creation and command. Allah has declared that it was the objective of His command and the purpose of sending the messengers as He said (what means):

“Even as We have sent to you a messenger from among you, who recites to you Our revelations and purifies you and teaches you the Scripture and wisdom and teaches you that which you did not know. Therefore, remember Me, I will remember you; give thanks to Me and do not be thankless.” (2/151, 152)

The supporters of the superiority of gratitude over patience also argued that giving thanks was sought only for its self but having patience was desired for other reasons. Patience is praised because it leads to gratitude. It is, therefore, subservient to thanksgiving.

It is reported in the two *Saheehs* that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) kept standing in prayer until his feet were cracked. It was said to him: ‘Why do you do this when Allah has forgiven all your past and future sins?’

He replied:

“Should I not be a thankful servant?”¹

It is reported in the *Musnad* and from At-Tirmithi that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said to Mu’adh:

“By Allah, I love you. So, do not miss saying after every prayer: ‘O Allah, help me in remembering You, thanking You and worshipping You beautifully.’”²

Ibn al-Munkadir said that one of the supplications of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was:

“O Allah, help me in remembering You, thanking You and worshipping You beautifully.”³

Ibn Abbas narrated the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as saying:

“Whoever is given the following four things, he has been given the good of this world and the hereafter: a thankful heart, a remembering tongue, an enduring body on trials and a wife who does not try to betray her husband concerning herself or his money.”

‘A’ishah narrated that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“There is no one to whom Allah has shown favour and he acknowledges it as being from Allah, but the Almighty will record his thanksgiving for it. No one whom Allah knows that he feels regret for a sin he committed but the Almighty will forgive him before he asks Him for forgiveness. A man buys clothes for a dinar and wears it and praises Allah while that dress does

1 Al-Bukhaari (1130, 4836, 6471), Muslim (7124)

2 The report is not in at-Tirmithi, it is in Musnad of Ahmad (5/244-245), and reported by Abu Daawood (1522), An-Nasaa’i (1304), Al-Bukhaari in Adab (690), Ibn Khuzaymah (751), Ibn Hibban (2020), al-Hakim (1/273)

3 Ibn Abi al-Dunya in *al-Shukr* (34), also reported by al-Tabarani (11/109)

not reach his knees but he is forgiven.”¹

Muslim related in his *Saheeh*² that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“Allah is pleased with a man who eats food and praises Him for it; and takes a drink and praises Him for it.”

This is the great reward which is the best type of recompense, as Allah, the Exalted, has said (what means):

“The Good Pleasure of Allah is greater.” (9/72)

It is given for giving thanks to Him by praising Him.

Utarid al-Qurashi reported the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as saying:

“Allah does not grant a man the gift of thankfulness and deprives him of more, because He has promised (what means):³

“If you give thanks, I will give you increase.” (14/7)

Al-Hasan al-Basri said:

‘Surely Allah grants favours as He wishes, but if it is not acknowledged by giving thanks, He turns it into torment.’

It is for this reason that they called gratitude a protector because it protects the existing bounties and they called it procurer because it procures the missing bounties.⁴

‘Ali bin Abu Talib said to a man of Hamdan:

‘Bounty is attached to the giving of thanks, and being thankful is linked with an increase; they are bound together. Therefore, the increase from Allah will not cease unless the gratitude of the servant stops.’⁵

‘Umar bin ‘Abd al-’Aziz said:

‘Tie the favour of Allah by giving thanks to Allah.’⁶

That is why it is said:

‘Giving thanks is the chain of the favour.’

Mutarraf bin Abdullah stated:

1 *Al-Shukr* (47) also reported by al-Hakim (4/253)

2 See (6932)

3 *Al-Shukr* (3)

4 *Ibid* (17)

5 *Ibid* (18)

6 *Ibid* (27)

‘To be in comfort and give thanks is dearer to me than to be afflicted and have patience.’¹

Al-Hasan said:

‘Mention constantly these favours, for mentioning them is giving thanks.’² Allah Almighty commanded His Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) to speak of His Lord’s grace by saying (what means): **“Speak of the bounty of your Lord.”** (93/11)

Allah, the Most High, loves to see the effect of His grace upon His servant as it is giving thanks in mute expression.

Ali bin al-Ja’d said: ‘I heard Sufyan al-Thawri say:

‘Daawood (David) said: ‘Praise be to Allah as is suitable to the honour of His face and the glory of His sovereignty.’

Allah revealed to him: ‘Daawood, you have surpassed the angels.’³

Abu Raja’ al-’Utardi reported:

Imran bin al-Husayn came out to us wrapped in a silk shawl which we had not seen on him before and said: The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: *“When Allah does a favour to a person, He likes to see its signs on him.”*⁴

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is reported to have said:

*“Eat, drink and give charity without showing arrogance or squandering; Allah loves to see the signs of His favours on His servant.”*⁵

Abu al-Ahwas reported his father saying: ‘I went to the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) while I was in a shabby state. He asked me: “Do you have wealth?” ‘Yes’, I replied. “What type of wealth?” he asked. ‘Every type of it’, I replied, ‘Camels, horses, slaves and sheep.’ He said: “When Allah has given you wealth, then let its signs be seen on you.”⁶

In another version the following statement occurs:

1 Ibid (28), 64, 181) see also *Az-Zuhd* of Ahmad (297)

2 Ibid (33) see also *Az-Zuhd* of Ibn al-Mubarak (1434)

3 Ibid (37)

4 Ibid (50), also reported by Ahmad (4/438), al-Tahawi in *Mushkil* (8/37), al-Tabarani (18/112)

5 Ibid (51) related also by Ahmad (2/182), at-Tirmithi (2219), An-Nasaa’i (5/79), Ibn Majah (3605) and al-Hakim (4/135)

6 Ahmad (3/473) Ibn Abi al-Dunya (52) al-Hakim (4/181)

“Allah love to see the signs of His bounty on His servant in his food and drink.”

Bakr bin Abdullah reported the following as the saying of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him):

“Whoever receives favour from Allah and it is seen on him, he is called the beloved of Allah who speaks of the favour of Allah; whoever was shown favour from Allah and it is not noticed on him, he is called the enemy of Allah, disobedient to Allah.”¹

Fudayl bin ‘Iyad said:

‘It was said that he who acknowledged the favour of Allah by his heart and praised Him by his tongue, would very soon see more coming to him because Allah has said (what means):

“If you give thanks, I will give you an increase.” (14/7)

He further said: ‘Talking about the favour is part of thanks giving.’²

Allah, the Almighty said (what means):

‘Beware, son of Adam, do you lead a life of ease and comfort and commit sins, being overcome by your sins. Son of Adam, be mindful of Me and rest wherever you wish.’

Al-Sha’bi said:

‘Giving thanks is half of the faith and certainty is the whole of faith.’³

Abu Qilabah said:

‘The world would not cause harm to you if you give thanks for it.’⁴

Al-Hasan said:

‘When Allah confers favour on a people, He asks them to give thanks. If they thank Him, He has the power to give them more; but if they show ungratefulness, He has the power of turning His favour into a punishment.’⁵

Allah, the Almighty has condemned an ungrateful person (*Kanood*), who does not give thanks for His bounties.

Al-Hasan explained the verse (which means): **“Surely mankind is ungrateful to his Lord, (100/6)”** by saying that he counts the calamities

1 Al-Shukr (54)

2 Ibid (56)

3 Ibid (67)

4 Ibid (59)

5 Ibid (60)

and forgets the bounties.’¹

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said that women were the majority of the people of Hell for this very reason of being ungrateful. He described them in the following words:

“If you treat one of them with favours all the time and she encounters something from you, which she does not appreciate, she will say: ‘*I never saw any good from you.*’”²

If this is the result of being ungrateful for the favours of the husband, which in reality are from Allah, what will be the result of abandoning gratefulness toward Allah’s favours?

“O one who is unfair in his actions, remember that injustice goes back to the one who commits it; how far and until when will you complain about calamities and forget the favours?”

Al-Nu’mān bin Bashir related that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“To speak about favours is giving thanks, and neglecting it is being ungrateful. He who does not give thanks for a little will not be thankful for plenty. He, who does not thank people, does not thank Allah. The community is a blessing and disunity is a torment.”³

Mutarrif bin Abdullah said:

‘I looked in safety and gratitude and discovered the good of the world and the Hereafter in them. To be healthy and give thanks is more beloved to me than to be afflicted and be patient.’⁴

Bakr bin Abdullah al-Muzani once saw a porter carrying a load on his back and saying: ‘Praise be to Allah; I seek forgiveness from Allah.’ He waited until he put down his load and asked him: ‘Don’t you have anything else to say?’ He replied: ‘I do. I know many good things and I read the Book of Allah; however, the servant is between a favour and a sin. So, I praise Allah for His favours and ask for His forgiveness for my sins.’ Upon hearing this Bakr said: ‘This porter is more knowledgeable than Bakr.’⁵

1 Ibid (62) see also Tafsir al-Tabari (37833)

2 Al-Bukhaari (29, 1052, 5197) Muslim (2109)

3 Al-shukr (63), also related by Abdullah b. Ahmad in his addition of *Musnad* (4/278, 375)

4 Ibid (64), see also *Az-Zuhd* of Ahmad (297)

5 Ibid (65)

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At-Tirmithi¹ reported Jabir bin Abdullah as saying: ‘The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) came out to his Companions, and recited *Surah ar-Rahman* (Chapter 55) from the beginning to the end to them and they were silent. He said: “I read this *Surah* to the *Jinns*, the night I met them and they responded better than you. Whenever I came upon the verse: ‘Which of the favours of your Lord do you deny?’ They said: ‘None of Your favour we deny, our Lord, and for You is the praise.’”

Mis’ar said:

‘When the family of David was asked (what means): “**Work gratefully, family of Daawood.**” (34/13) no time passed on them but that some of them were engaged in prayer.”²

‘Awn bin Abdullah said:

Some jurists said: ‘I looked into my affairs and found out that there was nothing good without having an evil with it except wellbeing and thanksgiving. There are those who give thanks while they are in trouble, and people who are well but not thankful. So, when you ask Allah, ask Him for both of them.’³

Abu Umamah narrated:

‘Umar bin al-Khattab once put on a new shirt, when it reached his collarbone he said:

‘Praise be to Allah who provided me with dress to cover my private parts and adorn myself with it.’ Then he extended his hand and noticed a piece that exceeded his hand, he cut it and said: ‘I heard the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him say: “Whoever wears a new dress and says when it reaches his collarbone –or he said: before it reaches his knees – what I have just said, and he takes his old dress and gives it to a poor person for using it, will be protected by Allah, taken in the care and shelter of Allah, during both his life and after his death, as long as a thread of that dress remains.”’⁴

‘Awn bin Abdullah said:

1 See (3291), reported also by al-Tabari in his *Tafsir* (32928) and Ibn Abi al-Dunya in *al-Shukr* (67)

2 *Al-Shukr* (73)

3 *Ibid* (76)

4 *Ibid* (74), reported also by Ibn al-Mubarak in *Az-Zuhd* (749), Ahmad (1/44), at-Tirmithi (3560) and al-Hakim (4/193)

‘A man put on a new shirt and praised Allah, and Allah forgave him.’ Hearing this, another man said: I will not go home until I buy a shirt, wear it and praise Allah.¹

Shurayh said:

‘No man is afflicted with a calamity but that he is covered by three favours from Allah: he was not afflicted in his religion; it was not greater than it was; and that it was decreed by Allah to happen.’²

Abdullah bin ‘Umar binAbd al-Aziz said:

‘Never did ‘Umar binAbd al-Aziz look at Allah’s favour on him, but he would say:

‘O Allah, I seek refuge in You from repaying Your favour through ungratefulness, from being ungrateful after knowing it and from forgetting and not praising You for it.’³

Rawh bin al-Qasim said:

‘A man decided to adopt the religious way of living and said:

‘I will not eat mishmash because I will not be able to give thanks for it.’ Al-Hasan, after being told about it remarked: ‘He is foolish. How can he fulfil the duty of thanksgiving for cold water?’⁴

According to some Divine narrations Allah, the Most High says:

‘Son of Adam, My good is descending incessantly to you and your evil is ascending to Me. I am wooing you by favours and you are making yourself hateful to Me by sins. A noble angel ascends constantly with an evil act from you.’⁵

Abu ‘Ali said:

‘I heard one of my neighbours saying in the night: ‘My Lord! Your good is always coming down to me and my evil is going up to you. Many a noble angel ascended with an evil act from me to you. Despite being free of me, You are wooing me by favours, while I, with my need and poverty, am making myself hateful to You through my sins. Yet in these conditions you restore me, cover me up and provide for me.’⁶

1 *Al-Shukr* (75)

2 *Ibid* (79)

3 *Ibid* (66)

4 *Ibid* (71) see also Ahmad in *Az-Zuhd* (323)

5 Ibn Abi al-Dunya (43) see *Hilyat al-Awliya* of Abu Nu’aym (2/377)

6 *Al-Shukr* (44)

Whenever al-Mughirah was asked: 'How do you find yourself this morning, Abu Muhammad?' He would reply: 'We entered the morning drowned in bounties, unable to give thanks. Our Lord woos us while He is free from us, and we make ourselves loathsome to Him while we are always in need of Him.'¹

Abdullah bin Tha'labah prayed:

'My Lord! It is your generosity that You are disobeyed and not obeyed; and it is Your forbearance that You are disobeyed as though You do not see. When are You not disobeyed by the people of earth, but You have taken up to shower new favours?''²

Mu'awiya bin Qurrah used to say whenever he donned a new dress;

'In the name of Allah, and praise be to Allah.'³

Anas bin Malik said:

'No believing person puts his full confidence in Allah, the Almighty by serving Him but Allah will make the heavens and earth responsible for his provision. He will make the rest of humankind work for his provision and pass it on to him. If the man accepts it, Allah will make giving thanks obligatory for him. If he rejects it, the Independent and Praiseworthy Lord will transfer it to His poorer servants who will take it and be thankful for it.'⁴

A man said to Abu Tamimah: 'How are you this morning?' He replied: 'I found myself between two favours, I do not know which one was better: sins which Allah has covered up in a way that nobody is able to reproach me for them, and love that Allah has put in the hearts of the people, which my actions could not have won at all.'⁵

Abdullah bin Salam reported:

Moosa (may peace of Allah be upon him) said to Allah: 'My Lord! What is the appropriate way of giving thanks to you?' 'That your tongue be always engaged in My remembrance,' was the reply.⁶

Abu Hurayrah related;

'A man from among the helpers who lived in Quba' invited the Prophet

1 Ibid (45)

2 Ibid (46), see *al-Hilya* (6/246)

3 Ibid (48)

4 Ibid (49)

5 Ibid (40)

6 Ibid (39), see also *Az-Zuhd* of Ibn al-Mubarak (942) and Ibn Abi Shaybah (13/212)

(may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). We also accompanied him; when he finished eating and washed his hands, he said: *“Praise be to Allah who feeds and is not in need of being fed. He bestowed His favour upon us and guided us. He provided us with food and drink. He tested us with every good trial. Praise be to Allah; my Lord is not to be disregarded, nor compensated, nor subjected to ungratefulness, nor ignored. Praise be to Allah who provided the food and supplied the drink. He gave dress to cover the body, guided us out of error, gave eyes to see and preferred us greatly to many of His creatures. Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds.”*¹

Anas reported that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: *“Any servant of Allah whom Allah has bestowed His favours on him through his family, wealth, or children and he says: ‘This is what Allah willed, and there is no power except with Allah’, he would never see any mishap in them except death.”*²

‘A’isha said:

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) visited her and noticed a piece of discarded bread. He picked it up and cleaned it then said: *“A’ishah, be careful with the grace of Allah because it rarely happens that if it turns away from a house that it will come back to it.”*³

Abu al-Jalad narrated:

I read in the prayer of Daawood (peace be upon him) that he said: ‘My Lord! How can I thank you when I am unable to give thanks to you without your favour?’ He was told by inspiration: ‘Daawood, don’t you realize that what you have is also part of my favour?’ Daawood (peace be upon him) said: ‘It is indeed my Lord!’

The answer came from Allah [to say]: ‘I am pleased with what you have as a token of thanksgiving.’⁴

Sa’id bin Abd al-’Aziz said:

One of the supplications of Daawood (peace be upon him) was: ‘Glory be to the One who extracts thanks by favours and extracts supplication by affliction.’⁵

1 An-Nasaa’i in *Amal al-Yawm* ((301), ibn Hibban (5219), al-Hakim (1/546) and Ibn Abi al-Dunya (15)

2 Al-Shukr (1) al-Tabarani (4261), see *Majma’*(10/140)

3 Ibid (2), also reported by Ibn Majah (3352) al-Bayhaqi in *Shu’ab* (4237)

4 Ibid (5), Ahmad related it in *Az-Zuhd* (91), see also *al-Hilya* (6/56)

5 *Az-Zuhd* of Ahmad ((98)

Abdullah bin al-Harith said:

‘Allah revealed to Daawood: ‘Love Me and love My servants, and make My servants love me.’ Daawood asked: ‘My Lord, This is your love and your servants’ love, but how can I make Your servants love You?’ He replied: ‘Remind them of Me, because they do not remember except through benefit from Me.’

Glory be to the greatness of our Lord, Blessed be His Names, High be His grace, Sacred be His Names and Great be His praise. There is no being worthy of worship except Him.

Wahab said:

‘I read in the book of the family of Daawood that Allah said: ‘By My might if a person takes refuge in Me while the heavens with all those who are in them and earth with all those who are on it were to try to cause him harm, I will make for him a way out. However, if a man does not take refuge in Me, I will cut off from him the means of the heavens and make him sink in the ground beneath his feet. I will leave him suspended and leave him to himself. I am sufficient to My servant as a source of wealth. If My servant carries out his duties, I will give him before he asks and answer him before he calls upon Me. I am more aware of his needs than he is himself.’¹

Thabit narrated:

‘Daawood divided the hours of day and night among his family. Thus, there was no time in the day or the night but a member of his family was standing in prayer. That is why Allah, the Exalted, included the entire family in His command (what means):

“Give thanks, family of Daawood; only few of my servants are thankful.”
(34/13)²

Ahmad reported: Daawood (peace be upon him) said: ‘My Lord! Is there any from your creatures who was engaged in Your remembrance during the night longer than me?’ Allah Almighty replied: ‘Yes, the frog.’ Then Allah sent down the commandment (what means):

“Give thanks, family of David; only few of my servants are thankful.”
(34/13)

Daawood (peace be upon him) asked: ‘My Lord! How can I thank you while You are the one who does favours to me, then bestow upon me the

1 Ibid, see also *Az-Zuhd* of Ibn al-Mubarak (318) and *al-Hilya* (4/25)

2 *Al-Hilya* (2/327)

ability to thank You for Your favours, and you honour me by favour after favour? So, the favours are from you and thankfulness is also from you; how then can I be able to thank you? 'Now you know Me, Daawood,' Allah remarked.¹

Ahmad also reported that Allah's Prophet, Daawood said:

'My Lord! If every hair of my body had two tongues engaged in glorifying you constantly day and night I would not be able to fulfil the dues of even one of your bounties.'²

Ibn Abi al-Dunya reported³ that Moosa (peace be upon him) said:

'My Lord! How can I thank you when all my work cannot repay the smallest favour of Yours to me?' Allah then inspired to him: 'Moosa, now you have fulfilled the duty of thanks giving.'⁴

Bakr bin Abdullah said:

'Never does a man say: 'Praise be to Allah' but a favour becomes due to him because of that saying. The return of that favour is to say again: 'Praise be to Allah.' Then another favour follows and the favours of Allah do not cease.'⁵

Al-Hasan said:

'The Prophet of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) heard a man saying: Praise be to Allah for Islam.

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said to him: "You are praising Allah for a big favour."⁶

Abd al-Malik bin Marwan said:

'No one said a word more beloved to me and more perfect in giving thanks than saying: 'Praise be to Allah who bestowed His blessing on us and guided us to Islam.'⁷

Sulayman al-Taymi said:

'Allah, the Exalted, bestowed favours on the people in proportion to His power, and asked them to give thanks according to their capability.'⁸

1 *Az-Zuhd* (88) al-Bayhaqi in *Shu'ab* (4100)

2 *Az-Zuhd* (88)

3 *Al-shukr* (6), it is also in *Az-Zuhd* of Ahmad (85) and *al-Hilya* (6/56)

4

5 *Ibid* (7)

6 *Ibid* (9)

7 *Ibid* (10)

8 *Ibid* (8)

When al-Hasan started his talk, he said:

‘Praise be to Allah. O Allah, our Lord, to You is due the praise because You have created us, provided us, guided us, gave us knowledge, saved us and relieved us. To You is praise due for Islam and the Qur’an. You are to be praised for granting us family, wealth and wellbeing. You suppressed our enemies, extended our provision, demonstrated our safety, brought together our disunity, made our wellbeing good, and anything we asked for You granted us. Praise be to You for all this plenty of praise. Praise be to You for all those favours You did to us in the past and present, secret or open, general or specific, for the dead or the living, present or absent. Praise be to You until you are pleased, and praise be to You when you are pleased.’¹

Al-Hasan narrated:

‘Moosa said: ‘My Lord! How can Adam give thanks for what You did for him: You created him by Your Hand, blew in him from Your spirit, made him dwell in Your garden and ordered the angels to bow down to him, and they did so.’ Allah replied: ‘Moses, Adam knew that all that was from Me, and he praised Me for it. That was enough as giving thanks for all that I did for him.’²

Sa’d bin Mas’ud al-Thaqafi said:

‘Nooh was called a grateful servant because he never put on a new dress or ate food but praised Allah for it.’³

Whenever Ali bin Abu Talib exited the lavatory, he would touch his stomach with his hand and say: ‘What a favour! If only the people knew how to give thanks for it!’⁴

Makhlad bin al-Husayn said: ‘It is said that being thankful was keeping away from sins.’⁵

Abu Hazim said:

‘A favour that does not bring a person close to Allah is a calamity.’⁶

Abu Sulayman said: ‘Talking about favours results in love for Allah.’⁷

1 Ibid (11)

2 Ibid (12)

3 Ibid (14) recorded also by al-Tabari (22042, 220430 and al-Tabarani (5420)

4 Ibid (13)

5 Ibid (41)

6 Ibid (20) see al-Hilya (3/230)

7 Ibid (21)

Abu Burdah narrated:

“I arrived in Madinah and met Abdullah bin Salam who said to me: ‘Would you like to enter a house which was visited by the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and we will serve you *Sawiq* and dates?’ He then said: ‘When Allah gathers people tomorrow on the Day of Judgement, He will remind them of His favours on them. The servant would ask: What is the proof of that? He would reply: The proof is that you were in such and such trouble and called upon Me, and I removed it. Another proof is that you were on a journey and asked me to accompany you, so I accompanied you. The Almighty will continue reminding him until he will recall it. He will also tell him: Another sign is that you sought the hand of so and so and other people also proposed to her but I married her to you and refused her to others. His servant will stand before Him and He will count His favours on him. Abdullah then cried on this point and said:

‘I hope Allah will not make a man stand before Him and then punish him.’”¹

Anas bin Malik reported that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“The bounties will be brought on the Day of Judgement together with good and bad deeds; then Allah will say to one of the bounties: ‘Take your dues from his good deeds.’ Then it will not leave a single good deed but take it.”²

Bakr bin Abdullah said:

‘A tribulation strikes a man and he calls upon Allah for help, and Allah out of His mercy removes it from him. Then the devil approaches him and belittles his gratitude by saying: ‘The matter was easier than you thought.’ Bakr said: Why does the man not say that the matter was more difficult than I thought, but Allah removed it from me?’³

Sadaqah bin Yasar said:

‘While Daawood was in his sanctuary an ant passed by him, he looked at it and thought about its creation. He said in amazement: ‘What does Allah care about it?’ Allah made it speak and it said: ‘Daawood, are you proud of yourself? By the one who holds my soul in His hands, I am more grateful for the favours Allah has done to me than you are for the bounties

1 Ibid (22)

2 Ibid (24)

3 Ibid (26)

He awarded you.’¹

Ayyoob said:

‘The biggest favour of Allah for a person is to be mindful of what the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) has brought.’²

Sufyan al-Thawri stated:

‘It was said that he is not a learned man who does not regard tribulation as a favour and a comfortable life as calamity.’³

Zazan said:

‘What is required of a person who has been shown favour a by Allah is that he should not use it as a means of committing sins?’⁴

Mahmud al-Warraaq said the following lines of poetry:

‘If my thanksgiving of the favours of Allah is a favour for me, then it is obligatory for me to give thanks on its like. How can one offer thanks without His grace even if the time is long and age extended.

When Allah touches the soul with comfort its happiness is all-embracing, and when He causes hardship it is followed by reward.

In both cases there is benevolence from Him which reason, the land and the sea, are unable to contain by thankfulness.⁵

Abu Hurayrah reported that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) narrated Allah as saying:

‘The believer to me is always in the position of good. He praises me even at the time when I pull his soul from his body.’⁶

Muhammad bin al-Munkadir passed by a young man who was winking at a woman, so he said to him: ‘Young man, this is not the repayment of Allah’s favour to you.’⁷

Abu al-’Aaliyah said:

‘I hope that a servant will not perish between two things: a favour for which he praises Allah and a sin for which he is seeking forgiveness from Him.’⁸

1 Ibid (35)

2 Ibid (78)

3 Ibid (80), al-Hilya (7/55)

4 Ibid (81)

5 Ibid (82)

6 Ahmad (2/361), see *Majma’* (10/96)

7 Al-Shukr (85)

8 Ibid (87), al-Hilya (2/319)

When Muhammad bin al-Hasan was appointed as the judge of Raqqah, Ibn al-Sammak wrote to him:

‘Now, let the consciousness of Allah be present in your mind in all situations. Have fear of Allah regarding all the favours He has done to you from showing lack of gratitude and using them for committing sins. In the favours there is proof and responsibility. The proof is to commit sin through those favours and the responsibility is to neglect thanks for them. May Allah pardon you whenever you miss being grateful, commit a sin or ignore a duty?’¹

When Al-Rabi’ bin Rashid passed by a man who was suffering from a chronic disease, he sat down there praising Allah and crying. People asked him: ‘Why are you crying?’ He replied:

‘I remembered the people of Paradise and the people of Hell, and I compared the people of Paradise with the healthy people and the people of Hell with those who are suffering. This is what made me cry.’²

Abu Hurayrah reported that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

‘When one of you wants to realize the value of the favour of Allah to him, he should look at the people below his status and not at the people who are above him.’³

Abu al-Darda’ said:

‘He who does not see Allah’s favour on him except in his food and drink, his actions are little and his punishment is close to him.’⁴

Anas reported that he heard Umar bin al-Khattab greet a man who answered his greeting; then ‘Umar asked him: ‘How are you?’ ‘I praise Allah for your sake,’ answered the man.

‘This is what I expected from you’, ‘Umar said to him.’⁵

Ibn ‘Umar said:

‘Sometimes we met many times in a day and would ask one another about him. We had no intention but to praise Allah.’⁶

1 Ibid (88)

2 Ibid (89), *al-Hilya* (5/78)

3 Ibn al-Mubarak in *Az-Zuhd* (1433), Ibn Abi al-Dunya (90)

4 Ibid (1551)

5 Ibid (205) Malik reported it in *al-Mu’atta* (2/961) and *Al-Bukhaari* in *Adab* (1132)

6 *Az-Zuhd* (207) Ibn Abi al-Dunya (93)

Mujahid explained this saying of Allah (which means):

“He has showered you with His favours both outwardly and inwardly.”
(31/20)

He said that the favours came for saying: ‘There is no god worthy of worship but Allah.’¹

Ibn ‘Uyaynah said:

‘Allah did not do the people a favour higher than making them realize that there was no god worthy of worship but Him. He further said: “There is no god worthy of worship but Allah” in the Hereafter is like water is in this world.’²

One of the early scholars said in his sermon for *Eid*:

‘You are shining while other people are dust-covered; others weave and you wear; they give and you take; they produce and you ride; they grow and you eat. He then cried and made the audience cry also.’³

Abdullah bin Qurt al-Azdi, a Companion of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), said on the pulpit on the day of *Eid* when he noticed people wearing colourful dresses:

‘What a favour! How comprehensive it is! What an honour! How visible it is! Nothing more serious happens to a people than the removal of a favour of whose due they fail to fulfil. The favour remains because of the thanks of the receiver to the one who granted it.’⁴

Salman al-Farsi said:

‘Worldly wealth was given in plenty to a man, then everything was taken away from him. He engaged in praising and glorifying Allah until he lost everything except a bed of mat. He still continued praising and thanking Allah. Another person got the materials of the world, and he said to the poor man: ‘What is that for which you have been praising Allah?’ He replied: ‘I praise Him for what I was given. If I were given in its place what He gave to His creature I would not have been able to give it to them.’ The man asked: ‘What is that?’ He replied: ‘What do you think about your eyes? What about your tongue? Do you see your hands? Do you notice your feet?’⁵

1 Al-shukr (94) see Tafsir al-Tabari (28138-28141)

2 Ibid (95) *al-Hilya* (7/272)

3 Ibid (96)

4 Ibid (97)

5 Ibid (99)

A man went to Yunus bin Abdullah and complained about his poor condition. Yunus asked him: 'Would you like to give away your eyes for 100,000 Dirhams?' 'No', he replied.

'What about your hands for a hundred Dirhams?' 'No', the man said. 'Then your legs for 100,000 Dirhams?' Yunus asked. He said: 'No'. Yunus reminded him of the gifts of Allah to him and said: 'I see that you have hundreds of thousands with you, and you complain of poverty!'¹

Abu al-Darda' used to say:
'Health is kingship.'

Ja'far bin Muhammad said:

'My father lost a mule and said: 'If Allah brings it back to me, I will praise Him with such praises that He will appreciate.' It was not long before he got it back with its rein and saddle. He mounted it and when firmly settled on it and drew together his dress, he raised his head to the sky and said: 'Praise be to Allah!' He did not add anything beyond that. He was asked about what he had said and he replied: 'Did I leave out or miss anything? I made all the praise to Allah.'²

Ka'b bin 'Ujrah reported that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) despatched a contingent of the Helpers and said: "If Allah protects them from harm and grants them victory I will have a duty of giving thanks to Him for that." It so happened that they returned safely with booty from the war. Some of the Companions said to the Prophet, peace be upon him: 'We heard you saying that if Allah protects this contingent and brings them back with booty I will have to thank Allah for that?' He replied: "Yes, I did it by saying: 'O Allah, for you is praise in thanks and for you is the bestowal of favour.'³

Abd al-Rahman bin Zayd bin Aslam related that Muhammad bin al-Munkadir said to Abu Hazim: 'Abu Hazim, so many people meet me and wish me well; I do not know them and never did any good to them?' Abu Hazim said: 'Do not think that it is from you, but look at the One who causes them to do it and thank Him.'

Abd al-Rahman recited the following verse to confirm what Abu Hazim has said (which means):

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- 1 Ibid (100) *al-Hilya* (3/22)
 - 2 Ibid (105), *al-Hilya* (3/186)
 - 3 Ibid (104), *al-Tabarani* (19/130)

“Those who believe and do good deeds, the Merciful will give them love.”
(19/96)¹

Abd al-'Aziz bin Abu Salmah bin al-Majshun said:

A man whom I trust informed me that Abu Bakr as-Siddiq used to say in his supplication: ‘(O Allah), I ask you for full favour in all matters and to be able to give thanks on it until you are pleased and after you are pleased. I also ask you for the best in all those matters in which the best is available in an easy way not the difficult way, O Generous One!’²

Al-Hasan said:

‘Allah did not bestow a favour on a person who praised Allah for it, but it will be that what He gave was more than He received.’³

Sufyan bin ‘Uyaynah commented on this statement by saying that it was wrong. Never can the act of a servant be better than the work of Allah. He added: ‘Some learned people said that the meaning of the statement was that when Allah does a favour to a man, he has a duty to praise Him; Allah makes him realize what He has done to him. The man gives thanks to Allah as it is due; and in this way, the praise of Allah becomes better.’⁴

I say:

Ibn ‘Uyaynah’s comment on the statement of Hasan is not proper because the praise of Allah by a person is a favour from Allah, and the grace for which he praised Allah is also from Him. Some of these bounties are greater than others. The favour of giving thanks is definitely better than the favour of getting money, rank, children, wife, etc. This does not necessarily mean that the work of the servant is better than the work of Allah. It may indicate that the act of giving thanks to Allah is better than some of the works of Allah; and the work of the servant is also from Allah, and surely some works of Allah are better than others.

Some people of knowledge said:

‘The favour of Allah in withholding the worldly wealth from us is better than what He gave us in this life. This is because Allah did not approve of the world for His Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). For me to be in a state which Allah chose and preferred for His Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is better than to be in a

1 Ibid (107), *al-Hilya* (3/233)

2 Ibid (109)

3 Ibid (110)

4 Ibid (133)

position which He did not like and did not choose for him.

Ibn Abi al-Dunya reported ¹some scholars as saying:

‘A learned man should praise Allah for keeping the desires of the world away from him as he has a duty of praising Him for what He gave him. What Allah has given him for which he will have to account cannot be compared with the favour of keeping him safe and away from testing him with worldly materials through engaging his heart and causing inconvenience to his body. He, therefore, is thankful to Allah for the comfort of his heart and his peace of mind.’

Fudayl bin ‘Iyad and Sufyan bin ‘Uyaynah sat one night engaged in discussion of the bounties of Allah. Sufyan said: ‘Allah’s favour on us is in this and that. His grace is here and there. He did to us this and that.’² The following statement of Allah (which means): **“We lead them on step by step from where they do not know”** (7/182), was commented on by Sufyan, saying: He covers them fully with His graces and prevents them from giving thanks.

Other people said that the meaning was that whenever they committed a sin He would do a new favour to them.³

Thabit al-Banani was asked about the meaning of “leading them step by step” and he said:

‘It is the scheme of Allah with those people who are lost.’

Yunus explained it by saying that when a person reached a good position with Allah and he is able to preserve and retain it by giving thanks, Allah Almighty would give him better than what he had received. However, if he neglects giving thanks, Allah would lead him step by step. His negligence of thanks giving is “leading him step by step.”⁴

Abu Hazim stated:

‘Allah’s favour in keeping the world away from me is greater than His favour of giving it to me. I have seen people who were given it and it led to their destruction. Any favour that does not draw a man closer to Allah is a tribulation. When you notice that Allah shows His favours to you regularly

1 Ibid (112)

2 Ibid (113)

3 Ibid (114)

4 Ibid (115)

while you are involved in committing sins, then beware of Him.¹

Imam Awza'i delivered a sermon to the people in which he said:

‘O people, use these favours you enjoy as a source for escaping the burning fire of Allah, which leaps up over your hearts. You are in a house where your stay is short. You are successors of the generations who enjoyed the best of the world and its benefits. They lived longer than you, had stronger bodies and left behind greater legacies. They passed through mountains, crossed rocks and travelled through the countries with great might and huge bodies. Soon after, the passage of days and nights folded up their might, erased their traces, ruined their dwellings and made them forgotten. You do not notice any of them and do not hear the slightest sound from them. They were involved in enjoyment and idle play, unaware of being attacked at night or caught in the morning in regret. Then now know what happened to them, when Allah’s punishment came to their towns at night and many of them fell in their dwellings to their knees. Those who survived were left to look at their traces that represented misfortune, disfavour and empty houses.

Their fate contained signs for those who fear the painful torment and a lesson for those who have fear. You came after them with shorter life spans and a straitened world. Yours is a period, the good of which has gone, and its comfort has come to an end. Now remains only a mire of evil, remainder of muddiness, horrible tales to take lessons, punishments of the past, hoards of trial, and a series of earthquakes and mean successors. Corruption has dominated the land and the sea because of these wicked people. Do not be like those who are deceived by hopes and misled by expectations of a long life and who live with extended aspirations. We pray to Allah to make us, and you, among those who comprehend His warning and perceive His good tidings and thus prepare themselves for the Hereafter.²

It is said that giving thanks is abandoning sins.³

Sufyan said:

1 ibid

2 Ibid (30)

3 Ibid (41)

‘He is not a learned man who does not consider misfortune a favour and affluence a calamity.’¹

Whenever Islam was mentioned to Marwan bin al-Hakam, he would say: ‘By the favour of my Lord, I attained it not by my will or my efforts. I surely was mistaken.

How many situations, in which if you were to die, would you be a lesson for your family? You were saved from misfortune and undesirable matters and achieved a big favour. How many favours of Allah do you pass through evening and morning, openly and secretly?’²

‘Uthman bin ‘Affan was called to a group of people who were involved in suspicious activities. He went to get them arrested, but they dispersed before he arrived. He freed a slave to thank Allah that he was not responsible for the disgrace of any Muslim.’³

Asbagh bin Yazid reported:

‘Whenever Nooh would exit the toilet he would say:

‘Praise be to Allah who made me taste delight of the food, deposited its benefit in my body and took away from me its filth.’ For this reason he was called a thankful servant.’⁴

‘A’ishah reported that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to say the above prayer whenever he exited the bathroom.’⁵

A man asked Abu Hazim:

‘Abu Hazim, How can we give thanks for our eyes?’ He replied: ‘When you see a good thing you speak of it and if you see an evil act you cover it up.’ ‘What are the thanks for ears?’ The man asked. ‘When you hear something good you remember it and if you hear something bad you repel it’, he said. The man further asked: ‘Then how can we give thanks for hands?’

‘Not to take what does not belong to you and not to hold back a right of Allah in them’, he replied. ‘Then what is the method of thanks for the stomach?’ the man continued. ‘That its lower part be full of food and the upper full of knowledge’. ‘How can one give thanks for the sexual organ?’

1 Ibid (80), *al-Hilya* &/55)

2 Ibid (118)

3 Ibid (121)

4 Ibid (115)

5 Ibid (124)

He replied: Allah, the Most High said (what means): **“And those who guard their private parts except with their spouses and their slave girls. In that case they are not to be blamed. If anyone seeks beyond that they are the transgressors.”** (23/5-7) ‘Then how can one fulfil the thanks for the legs?’ ‘If you come to know a dead person you appreciate his works, use them in following his footsteps, but if you dislike him, then keep away from his path, and be thankful to Allah.’ Abu Hazim replied and said: ‘If a person gives thanks with his tongue, and does not engage all his body in that, he is like a man who has a dress and holds its corner only without putting it on. How can that dress protect him from heat, cold, snow or rain?’¹

Abdullah bin al-Mubarak said:

‘Once Negus sent for Ja’far and his companions, and when they arrived, they found him in a house wearing shabby dress and sitting on the ground. Ja’far said: ‘When we saw him in that condition we felt sorry for him.’ When he noticed our expressions, he said: ‘I am going to tell you something which will make you happy. One of my scouts arrived from an area of your land and told me that Allah had given victory to His Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and destroyed his enemies. So and so have been made prisoners and so and so have been killed. The encounter took place at a valley called Badr full of *Arak* as though I see it. I used to graze the herd of my master – a man from Banu Damirah, in that place.’ Ja’far asked him: ‘Why are you sitting on the ground without a rug wearing these shabby clothes?’ He replied: ‘We find in what was revealed to Jesus that it was a duty of the servants of Allah that they show humility when Allah does a favour to them. Since Allah gave victory to His Prophet I did this to express my humbleness to Him.’²

Habib bin ‘Ubayd said:

Whenever Allah tests a person with a trial it is a favour to him that He saved him from a harsher trial.’³

Abd al-Malik bin Ishaq said:

‘There is no one but he is tried by wellbeing to see how he gives thanks or by a tribulation so that it can be seen how patient he was.’⁴

Sufyan al-Thawri said:

1 Ibid (126) *al-Hilya* (3/243)

2 Ibid (127)

3 Ibid (128)

4 Ibid (129), *al-Hilya* (5/85)

‘Allah has shown more favour to a person concerning his need than he expresses in his entreaty to Him.’¹

Ahmad reported that whenever the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) heard the news of a pleasing incident, he would fall down in prostration to express his thankfulness to Allah.’²

Abd al-Rahman bin ‘Awf narrated:

‘The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) came out to us and proceeded to the place where the charity rations was stored. When he entered the place, he faced the Ka’bah and fell down in prostration, and stayed for long time in that position. Later I asked him: ‘O Messenger of Allah, you stayed for such a long time in prostration that I thought that Allah had taken your soul to Him.’

He said:

‘Gabriel came to me and gave me the good tidings that Allah said: ‘Whoever sends blessing to you, I will bless him in return. Whoever sends greeting to you I will greet him in return.’ This made me fall in prostration to express my thanks to Allah.’³

Sa’d bin Abu Waqqas reported:

‘We left Makkah for Madinah in the company of the Prophet, peace be upon him. When we reached near ‘Azwar, the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) dismounted, raised his hands, prayed for some time, then fell down in prostration and stayed in this condition for a very long time. He then rose and raised his hands again in supplication and fell down in prostration. He did this three times and then said: ‘I entreated my Lord and interceded for my nation, He granted me one third of them, so I prostrated to Him to offer my thanks. Then I raised my head and pleaded again to my Lord for my nation; he gave me another third of my nation, and I prostrated my head to thank Him. I then raised my head and again asked my Lord, and He granted me the remaining third of them. I bowed down in prostration to my Lord in thanks.’ Abu Daawood reported.⁴

Muhammad bin Ishaq recorded in the book of victories that when the carrier of good news came to the Prophet (may peace and blessings of

1 Ibid (131)

2 Ahmad (5/45) see also Abu Daawood (2774), at-Tirmithi (1578), Ibn Majah (1394)

3 Ahmad (1/191), Ibn Abi al-Dunya (135) and al-Hakim (1/550)

4 Abu Daawood (2775)

Allah be upon him) with the news of Abu Jahl being killed in the battle of Badr, the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) made him swear three times by Allah, other than whom there is no god worthy of worship, to the effect that he had seen Abu Jahl slain. The man swore and the Messenger of Allah fell down in prostration.¹

Sa'id bin Mansur related that Abu Bakr al-Siddiq prostrated when the news of Musaylimah's killing reached him.²

Ahmad said that Ali prostrated when he found Dha al-Thudayyah among the slain Khawarij.³

Ka'b bin Malik bowed down in prostration when he was told that his repentance was accepted by Allah. The whole story is recorded in the both *Saheehs*.⁴

If it is said that Allah's favours are continuously coming to the people, then why does a particular new favour prompt giving thanks, when it may be that a previous favour was greater?

The answer to this question may be given in following ways: The newly arrived favour reminds one of the earlier bounties, and it is in the nature of a person that he pays more attention to the latest bounty. This new favour calls for a new devotion to Allah, and the easiest way for a person to show devotion to Allah is to bow down in prostration to Him.

The newly occurring favours have an intense impact on the mind, and the hearts are more attached to them. That is why people are congratulated when the new favours are received and consoled when they are lost. The coming of favours produces pleasure and happiness in the soul. This leads, in many cases, to a feeling of insolence and vanity. Bowing down to Allah is humbleness and an act of humility and surrender to Him. When a person receives Allah's favour with happiness and delight and pleasure of the soul together with humility to Allah, that favour may remain with him forever. But if he receives it with pleasure, which Allah does not appreciate, and with vanity and insolence, as the ignorant people do when they receive a bounty from Allah, that favour ends quickly and moves away from him in no time. It turns into distress and becomes a kind of trial. The Negus' story has been cited when he said: 'When Allah

1 See al-Bayhaqi, *Dala'il al-Nubuwwah* (3/89)

2 Ibn Abi Shaybah (12/295)

3 Ahmad (1/107-108, 147)

4 Al-Bukhaari (4418), Muslim (7016)

grants a servant a new favour, He loves to see a new act of humility from him.'

Al-Ala' bin al-Mughirah said:

'I passed the news of the death of al-Hajjaj to al-Hasan who was in hiding, and he fell down in prostration to Allah.'¹

One of the fine favours of Allah to the servant, which is rarely noticed, is that He closes his door, after which He sends someone to knock on his door and ask him for food, so that the servant may remember Allah's favour on him.

Sallam bin Muti' said:

I went to visit a sick person and found him moaning. I said to him: 'Remember those who are thrown on the road. Remember those who have no shelter and no one to wait on them.' After a while, I visited him again and heard him saying to himself: 'Remember those who are lying on the streets. Remember those who have no shelter and no attendant to care for them.'²

Abdullah bin Abu Nuh reported:

A man asked me at the seaside: 'How many times did you treat Allah, blessed be His Name, in ways He disliked and He treated you in a way you love?' 'So many times that I cannot count,' I replied. Then he asked me: 'Did it happen that you turned to Him in distress and He ignored you?' 'Never, by Allah', I said, 'but rather He favoured me and helped me.' He further asked: 'Did you ask Him for something and He did not give it to you?' 'Did He deny me something which I asked Him for?' I said: 'No, I never asked Him anything but He granted me that, and never asked Him for help but He helped me.' He went on: 'Tell me if a human being had done some of these things to you what would your response have been?' 'I would not have been able to repay him reward or compensation', I replied. He remarked: 'Your Lord is more entitled that you engage tirelessly in giving thanks to Him, as He is the one who has done good to you in the past and present. By Allah, thanking Him is much easier than compensating His servants. He, the Most High, appreciates praise from His servants in place of thanks.'³

1 *Al-Shukr* (134), *al-Hilya* (2/159)

2 *Ibid* (137) *al-Hilya* (6/189)

3 *Ibid* (138)

Sufyan al-Thawri stated:

‘It never happens that Allah does a favour to a man in this world and disgraces him in the Hereafter. It is appropriate for the Benefactor to do full favour to the one He chooses for it.’¹

Ibn Abu al-Hawari narrated:

I asked Abu Mu’awiyah: ‘What is the greatest bounty for us regarding *Tawhid*? We pray to Allah not to take it away from us.’ He replied: ‘It is befitting for the Benefactor to complete His benefits to the one He has chosen for His grace. Allah is greater than doing a favour without making it complete. He does not make a person do something but He accepts it from him.’²

Ibn Abu al-Hawari narrated:

A woman said to me: ‘I have a problem that keeps my mind busy.’ ‘What is that?’ I asked.

She replied: ‘I want to know the favours of Allah on me, even the twinkling of an eye, or to know my failing to give thanks for a favour done to me [by Him], even the twinkling of an eye.’ I said to her: ‘You are after something to which our reason has no access to.’³

Ibn Zayd said:

‘A man sitting in a gathering praises Allah, and because of his praise Allah fulfils the needs of all those who are there with him.’ He added: ‘In one of the scriptures revealed by Allah, the Exalted, He said: “Make My believing servant happy.” Afterwards nothing happened to him but he said: “Praise be to Allah as much as He wishes.” The Almighty then commanded: “Make my believing servant scared.” So, no undesirable matter was noticed by him but he said: “Praise be to Allah! Praise be to Allah!” Allah Almighty said: “My servant praises me when I frighten him and praises me when I make him happy. Let My servant enter the house of My honour as he praises Me in all conditions.”’⁴

Wahab said:

‘A man devoted himself in the worship of Allah for 50 years, so Allah favoured him: ‘I have forgiven you.’ The man said: ‘My Lord, what did you forgive? I never committed a sin.’ Allah caused a pain in his neck, as a

1 Ibid (139), *al-Hilya* (7/6)

2 Ibid (140) *al-Hilya* (8/272)

3 Ibid (142)

4 Ibid (143-144)

result of which he was unable to sleep or pray. Then it stopped, and he was able to sleep. After that an angel visited him and the man complained to him about the suffering he went through in the pain of his neck. The angel said: ‘Your Lord says:

“Your worship of 50 years is equal to the relief of the pain in your neck.”¹

Daawood (peace be upon him) said:

‘My Lord, tell me the smallest favour you have done to me.’ Allah revealed to him: ‘Daawood, take a breath.’ Daawood (peace be upon him) did so, and Allah said: ‘This is the smallest of my favours to you.’²

This clarifies the meaning of the *Hadeeth* reported by Abu Daawood³ on the authority of Zayd bin Thabit and Ibn Abbas which reads:

“If Allah were to punish the people of the heavens and the earth, He would not be unjust in doing so; if He decides to show mercy, surely His mercy would be superior to their deeds.”

It is also an illustration of the *Hadeeth* recorded in the two *Saheeh* collections which reads:

‘No one’s deeds can save him.’ ‘Even you, O Messenger of Allah?’ the Companions asked.

‘Even I’, he replied, ‘except that Allah covers me with His mercy and grace.’⁴

The deeds of a man cannot be equal to a single favour of Allah, the Almighty to him.

Some jurists say that if a person takes an oath to praise Allah with the best kind of praise, he will be able to fulfil it by saying:

‘Praise be to Allah, a praise that is equal to His favours and matches His additional bounties.’

However, this is not correct as it is not a *Hadeeth* related from the Messenger of Allah or any of his Companions. It is a narration from the Banu Israa’eel attributed to Adam. More authentic is the saying:

‘Praise be to Allah, who is not dispensable, deserted or ignored, our Lord.’

1 Ibid (145), *al-Hilya* (4/68)

2 Ibid (146)

3 See (4699), also reported by Ahmad (5/182, 185, 189), Ibn Majah ((77) and Ibn Hibban (727)

4 Al-Bukhaari (5673, 6463) Muslim (7111)

The praise and thanks of the servants can never fulfil the due for one of the favours of Allah, let alone fulfil the dues of all His favours. In the same way, the deeds and praise of the servant cannot be enough to match the additional benefits of the Lord Almighty. However, there is a way to explain this, and that is that Allah deserves a praise that is equal to His favours and can match His additional bounties, though the servants are unable to do it. It is like saying:

“Praise be to Allah, to the extent of the contents of the heavens, the earth, what lies between them and what You (O Allah) wish after that. Praise be to Him equivalent to the number of the grains of sand, dust, pebbles and drops, the number of the breaths of the creature and the number of that which Allah has created and which He is going to create.”

This explains the amount of the praise He deserves not what the servant is capable of doing.

Abu al-Malih said:

Moosa asked: ‘My Lord, what are the best thanks?’ Allah replied: “To thank me in every condition.”¹

Bakr bin Abdullah said:

‘I asked one of my brothers to give me advice, so he said: ‘I do not know what to say except that the servant should never feel exhausted of praising Allah and asking Him for forgiveness. This is because the son of Adam lives between grace and sin; the grace is not proper without praise and being thankful, and the sin is not reformed unless repentance is made and forgiveness is sought.’ He gave me more knowledge than I had wished for.²

Abd al-‘Aziz bin Abu Rawwad said:

I noticed a boil on the hand of Muhammad bin Wasi’. Realizing that I was grieved by it, he said: ‘Do you know what a great favour Allah has bestowed on me concerning this boil? He did not make it in my eye, on the side of my tongue, or on the corner of my private part.’ His answer made his boil easy for me.³

Mu’adh bin Jabal narrated:

The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) passed by a man who was saying: ‘O Allah, I ask you for a complete

1 Al-Shukr (147)

2 Ibid (148)

3 Ibid (149), *al-Hilya* (2/352)

favour.' The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) asked him: 'Son of Adam, do you understand what the complete favour is?' He replied: 'O Messenger of Allah, I said a prayer and hope to get the benefit from it.' 'The complete favour is to enter Paradise and to escape from Hell', the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) told him.¹

Tamim bin Salmah said:

'I was told that when a person mentions the Name of Allah at the start of his meal and praises Him at the end, he will not be questioned about that meal.'²

The superiority of being thankful over exercising patience is seen by the fact that Allah, the Exalted, loves to be asked for wellbeing. There is nothing preferable to Him than asking for wellbeing, as it is reported in the *Musnad* of Imam Ahmad³ on the authority of Abu Hurayrah who said that Abu Bakr stood on the pulpit and said: 'Ask Allah for wellbeing because a person is not given anything after faith better than that.'

In another *Hadeeth*: '*People have not been given anything better in this world than forgiveness and wellbeing; ask Allah for them.*'⁴

The Prophet said to his uncle al-Abbas:

'Uncle, ask frequently in your prayer for wellbeing.'⁵

According to a report in At-Tirmithi:

Al-Abbas said to the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him): 'O Messenger of Allah, teach me something which I might ask Allah Almighty for.' He said: 'Ask Him for wellbeing.' I waited for a few days then came back to him and repeated my question: 'Tell me something which I may ask Allah for.' He said: 'Abbas, O uncle of the Messenger of Allah, ask Allah for wellbeing in this world and in the

1 Ahmad (5/231) Al-Bukhaari in Adab (725), at-Tirmithi (3527) Ibn Abi al-Dunya (153)

2 Al-Shukr (156)

3 Ahmad (1/3, 5) Al-Bukhaari in Adab (724), An-Nasaa'i (6/220), Ibn Majah (3849) and al-Hakim (1/529)

4 An-Nasaa'i (6/221) Ibn Abi al-Dunya (151)

5 Ibn Abi al-Dunya (150) al-Tabarani (11/262) and al-Hakim (1/529)

Hereafter.’¹

In his supplication on being ill-treated in Ta’if the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

‘If You (my Lord) are not angry with me, then I have no care for anything. However, wellbeing granted by You is far more becoming for me.’

The Prophet took refuge in wellbeing granted by his Lord as he also asked for refuge in it in his prayer:

‘I seek refuge in your pleasure from your wrath and in your pardoning from your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You.’²

In another *Hadeeth* he taught us to:

‘Ask Allah for pardon, wellbeing and forgiveness.’³

This prayer includes pardon of what has passed, wellbeing at present, and forgiveness in the future, by making wellbeing permanent and lasting.

‘Abd al-A’la al-Taymi used to say:

‘Continue asking Allah for wellbeing. A person who is in affliction, no matter how severe it is, does not deserve to make prayer more than the person who is free from trouble, but is not safe from it. Those who are in trouble today are those who were safe yesterday; and those who will be in trouble after today will be those who are safe today. If trouble were to bring any good we would not be made to suffer from it. Many a distress causes discomfort in this world and disgrace in the Hereafter. A man who continues to commit sins for a long time cannot be safe in his life from being trapped in troubles, which may cause discomfort for him in the world and disgrace in the Hereafter.’

He went on:

‘Praise be to Allah whose bounties we cannot count, even if we try, and we cannot repay even if we work hard constantly, and however long we live we will not be able to wear them out.’⁴

The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) passed by a man who was asking Allah for patience and said to him: ‘You

1 At-Tirmithi (3514), Ahmad (1/209) Al-Bukhaari in Adab (726) Ibn Abi Shaybah (10/206)

2 Muslim (1090)

3 Ahmad (1/3), at-Tirmithi (3558),

4 Al-Shukr (154)

have asked for a tribulation, ask now for wellbeing.”¹

Muslim related that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) visited a man who had become emaciated and asked him:

‘Did you pray to Allah and ask Him for something?’ ‘Yes’, he replied, ‘I used to pray: O Allah, give me whatever punishment you are going to give me in the Hereafter in this world.’

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: ‘Glory be to Allah! You cannot stand it or sustain it. Why didn’t you say: O Allah, our Lord, give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter and save us from the torment of Fire.’ The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) then prayed for the man and he recovered.²

At-Tirmithi reported Abu Hurayrah as saying:

‘I learnt a prayer from the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and I will never forget it:

‘O Allah, make me thank You abundantly, remember You frequently, follow Your guidance and preserve Your commandments.’³

Shayban said:

When Hasan sat in a place, he would say:

‘(O Allah), for you is praise for Islam, for you is praise for the Qur’an, and for you is praise for family and wealth. You extended our provision, manifested our security, maintained fully our safety and granted us all that we asked from you. So, praise to you as plentiful as you do favour to us abundantly. You gave us much good and turned away much evil from us. To Your glorious everlasting face is praise.’⁴

One of the predecessors used to pray:

‘O Allah, whatever grace or wellbeing or honour in the religion or in the world we have, whether in the past or at the present, comes from You alone. You have no partner. To You is praise for that from us. To You belongs benevolence and to You belongs favour. To You belong the praises as many as the number of bounties You gave us and all other creatures. There is no god worthy of worship but You.’⁵

1 Ahmad (5/231)

2 Muslim(6835)

3 At-Tirmithi (3604), Ahmad (2/311, 477)

4 Al-Shukr (158)

5 Ibid (157)

Mujahid said:

When Ibn 'Umar took a journey he would say loudly at the appearance of the dawn: 'A hearer has heard the praise of Allah for His favour and grace to us.' He would say it three times then say: 'O Allah, give us company and bestow Your favour on us. I am taking refuge in Allah from the Fire. There is no power nor strength except with Allah.' He would say this three times as well.¹

Imam Ahmad related that Allah, the Exalted, inspired Moosa, son of Imran; 'Moosa, be alert, seek companions for yourself. Do not take any person who does not agree with you on pleasing Me as a friend. He is your enemy. He will harden your heart. Remember Me often so that you may deserve my appreciation and receive more.'²

Al-Hasan said:

When 'Allah created Adam, He drew the people of Paradise from his right side and the people of the Fire from his left side. They spread over the earth; among them were some who were blind, dumb and suffering. Adam protested: 'Why did you not make all my children the same?' Allah replied: 'Adam, I like to be thanked.'³

It is from the *Sunnah* that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"Whoever says in the morning: "O Allah, whatever favour came to me this morning or to any of Your creatures, then it was from You alone; there is no partner with You. To You belongs the praise and for-You is the thanks," he would have fulfilled the duty of giving thanks for that day. If he says it in the evening, he will have done his duty of giving thanks for that night."⁴

It is reported that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"The one who exercised patience when put to trial was thankful when he was granted bounty, forgave when treated unfairly and asked for forgiveness when he behaved unjustly; such are those for whom is safety and such are they who are guided."⁵

1 Ibid (160)

2 Ibid (161) Ahmad in *Az-Zuhd* (108) and Abu Nu'aym in *al-Hilya* (8/222)

3 Al-Shukr (162)

4 Abu Daawood (5073), An-Nasaa'i (6/5) and Ibn Hibban (861)

5 Al-Shukr (164). Also reported by al-Tabarani (6614) see *Majma'* (10/284)

It is also related that he (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) advised a man to do three things. He said:

‘Remember death frequently it will keep you busy from other matters, continue supplicating as you are not aware as to when your prayer will be answered, and give thanks regularly since giving thanks brings an increase.’¹

It is also reported that he said when eating his food:

‘Praise be to Allah who provided me with food and drink and guided me; with every favour He tried me. Praise be to Allah, the Provider, the Owner of power, the Mighty. O Allah, do not take away any good You have bestowed on us or any good You have provided us, and make us among those who are thankful to You.’²

He is also reported as having said when eating his meal:

‘Praise be to Allah who supplied food and drink and made us swallow it easily and made its exit for us.’³

When ‘Urwah bin az-Zubayr was served food, he kept it covered till he said the following words:

‘Praise be to Allah who guided us, provided us with food and drink and favoured us. Allah is the Greatest. O Allah, You have made us accustomed of your benefits, even though we maintained every evil; this has enabled us to be in a good state during the morning and the evening. We ask You to make it perfect and make us able to give thanks for it. There is no good but your good; there is no god worthy of worship except you, the God of the righteous and the Lord of the worlds. Praise be to Allah. There is no god worthy of worship but Allah. What Allah wills (comes to pass); there is no power but with Allah. O Allah, bless us by providing for us and by saving us from the torment of the Fire.’⁴

Wahab bin Munabbih said:

‘The principle bounties are three: The first is the bounty of Islam without which no bounty is complete; the second is the bounty of wellbeing without which life will not be delightful; and the third one is the bounty of wealth without which living is not comfortable.’⁵

1 Ibid (165), *al-Hilya* (7/305)

2 Ibid (167)

3 Ibid (168). It is also reported by Abu Daawood (3851) *An-Nasaa’i* (4/201, 6/79) Ibn Hibban (5220) *al-Tabarani* (4082)

4 *Al-Shukr* (166)

5 Ibid (169) *al-Hilya* (4/68)

Sa'id al-Jurayri returned from the pilgrimage and started saying: 'Allah did such and such favour to us on our journey.' He added: 'The mentioning of favours is a type of gratitude.'¹

Wahab passed by a man who was afflicted with blindness, leprosy, nakedness, and being crippled, yet he continued saying: 'Praise be to Allah for His favours.'

A man in the company of Wahab said:

'What favour has remained with you for which you are praising Allah?' He replied: 'Look around at the residents of the city and see how many they are. Shouldn't I give thanks to Allah that none of them knows Him except me?''²

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is reported to have said:

'When Allah does a favour to a man and he praises Allah for that, then he has fulfilled the duty of giving thanks for that.'³

Ali bin Abu Talib narrated:

Daniel was brought to Bukhtnash who ordered him to be thrown into a pit, and left two ferocious hungry lions with him. He opened the pit after five days and found him standing in prayer and the two lions were sitting in a corner; they did not touch him. The king asked him: 'What did you say when you were thrown into the pit?' He replied: 'I said: "Praise be to Allah who does not neglect a man who remembers Him. Praise be to Allah who does not cause disappointment to a man who places his hopes in Him. Praise be to Allah who does not surrender a man who puts his trust in Him to anyone else. Praise be to Allah who remains our source of support when all the other means fail. Praise be to Allah who is our hope when we have a poor opinion of our deeds. Praise be to Allah who removes our distress after suffering. Praise be to Allah who recompenses good work with good rewards. Praise be to Allah who rewards patience with deliverance."''⁴

It is reported that when the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) looked in the mirror, he would say:

'Praise be to Allah who made my shape and my character beautiful, and

1 Ibid (170) *al-Hilya* (6/200)

2 Ibid (171) *al-Hilya* (4/68)

3 Ibid (172)

4 Ibid (173)

made beautiful within me that which He made ugly in others.”¹

Ibn Sirin said:

Ibn ‘Umar would look frequently in the mirror and keep it with him on his journey. I asked him the reason for this and he replied: ‘I look and when I see something beautiful in my face which is ugly in other people’s faces. I praise Allah for that.’²

Abu Bakr bin Abu Maryam was asked:

‘What is the perfect favour?’ He replied: ‘That you put one foot on the bridge and another in Paradise.’³

Bakr bin Abdullah said: ‘O son of Adam, if you want to know the value of the favour of Allah on you, close your eyes.’⁴

Muqatil said while commenting on the words of Allah (which mean):

“And He completed His favour to you both outwardly and inwardly,”
(31/20)

‘The outward is Islam and the inward is His veiling of sins.’⁵

Abdullah bin Mas’ud said:

‘The people of Hell have a favour from Allah. For if He wished to punish them with something more severe than the Fire, He can do so.’⁶

Abu Sulayman al-Darani said:

Allah’s people on the Day of Judgement will be those who will have the following qualities: nobility, generosity, forbearance, kindness, mercy, thankfulness, piety and patience.’⁷

Abu Hurayrah said:

‘Whoever sees a person suffering and says:

‘Praise be to Allah who saved me from that which He affected you with, and preferred me greatly over you and the rest of His creation,’ has fulfilled the thanks that are due on that favour.’⁸

Abd al-Rahman bin Zayd said:

‘Thankfulness holds the root, the trunk and the branch of praise. A person

1 Ibid (174)

2 Ibid (175)

3 Ibid (177)

4 Ibid (178)

5 Ibid (179)

6 Ibid (180)

7 Ibid (182), *al-Hilya* (9/226)

8 Ibid (183). It is also reported by At-Tirmithi (3432) and al-Tabarani (4724)

looks at the favours of Allah with his body, his hearing, his sight, his hands, his legs, etc. None of these things are free from the favour of Allah. It is his duty to use Allah's favours, which have been bestowed on his body, in carrying out the commands of Allah. He enjoys another favour in his provisions, and he is required to use this favour in His obedience. Whoever does so, has grasped the root, the trunk and the branch of thankfulness.¹

Ka'b said:

'Allah did not bestow a favour on a person in this world for which he expressed gratitude to Him and showed humility, but that the Almighty would give him its benefit in this world and raise his status in the Hereafter. On the other hand any one to whom Allah bestowed a favour in this world and he did not show gratitude for it and did not show humility by it, then Allah would prevent its benefit from him in this world and open for him layers in the Fire. If He wills, He can punish him or forgive him.'²

Hasan said:

'Whoever does not acknowledge Allah's favour on him except for his food, drink and dress, then his knowledge is limited and his punishment is ready.'³

Hasan once said to Bakr al-Muzani:

'Abu Abdullah, let us pray for your brothers. He praised Allah and exalted Him and sent blessings on the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), then said:

'By Allah, I do not know which of the two favours is better for me and for you: the favour of passage [of food into the body] or the favour of outlet, i.e., when He brings it out from us?'

Hasan said: 'It is the favour of food.'⁴

'A'ishah said:

'No one drinks pure water which passes into his body without trouble, and he removes the filth out, but he has a duty of giving thanks [for it].'⁵

Hasan commented on it by saying:

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- 1 Al-Shukr (184)
 - 2 Ibid (185), *al-Hilya* (6/43)
 - 3 Ibid (186)
 - 4 Ibid (187)
 - 5 Ibid (188)

‘What a favour! Every joy comes in and goes out easily. One of the kings of this city used to see his servant go to a jar, drink from it then gargle while standing. The king would say: I wish I were like you. He would not drink until thirst cut off his neck; and when he did drink, he would face many difficulties during that drinking. What a favour it is!’¹

A wise man wrote to one of his brothers:

‘Allah has bestowed so many favours upon us that we are unable to count them despite being engaged in acts of His obedience. We do not know for which one we have thanked Him: the good He made available for us or the bad that He covered up.’²

Hasan was told about a man who did not join the people; so he went to him and asked him about it. The man said:

‘I pass my morning and evening between sin and favour. I realized that it was better for me to keep myself busy away from the people in seeking forgiveness for my sins and giving thanks to Allah for His favours.’

Hasan said to him:

‘You, O servant of Allah, are to me more learned than Hasan. Continue with that which you are doing.’³

Ali bin Abu Salih commented on the following saying of Allah (which means):

“If you give thanks I will give you an increase.” (14/7)

‘I will give you more of good deeds.’⁴

The truth is that Allah gives more of His grace and His obedience is the greatest grace.

Muharib bin Dithar used to say in the night while raising his voice some times:

‘I am that insignificant person whom You supported, so to You is praise. I am the weak person to whom You gave strength, so to You is praise. I am the poor person whom You enriched, so to You is praise. I am the destitute whom You made affluent, so praise is to You. I am the bachelor to whom You gave a wife, so praise is to You. I am the hungry man to whom You supplied food, so to You is praise. I am the naked person to whom You provided clothing, so praise is to You. I am the traveller to whom You gave

1 Ibid (189)

2 Ibid (190)

3 Ibid (192)

4 Ibid (194), it is also related by Ibn al-Mubarak in *Az-Zuhd* (320)

company, so praise is to You. I was the one who was lost and You brought him back, so praise is to You. I am the one who was on foot and You gave him conveyance, so praise is to You. I am the sick person whom You cured, so to You is the praise. I am the beggar to whom You gave, so praise is to You. I am the caller whom You answered to, so to You is praise. Our Lord, to You is praise, abundant praise.¹

Another speaker used to say in his sermon:

‘He designed the nose for you, and set it right and perfectly in its place. He made the pupil and covered it with eyelids. He moved you from one stage to another, and filled your parents’ heart with tenderness and love. The favours of Allah to you are blooming and His bounties are surrounding you.’²

A learned man used to say in the explanation of the following verse (what means):

“If you count the bounty of Allah, you will not be able to count it.” (14/34)

‘Glory belongs to the One who did not fix a limit to the knowledge of His favours more than the realization of being unable to know them. He did not put a limit to understand Him beyond the realization that He cannot be known. He made the knowledge of inability to know His favours as thankfulness. He appreciated the recognition of the people that they are unable to understand Him and made it belief. He knows that people cannot go beyond that.’³

Abdullah bin ‘Amr bin al-As’ said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) say:

“If two qualities are found in a person, Allah will enter his name in the category of the patient and thankful people, while a person who lacks them will not be considered as patient and thankful. First is that he looks in terms of his religious matters to someone who is above him and tries to follow him; secondly, he looks to a person who is below him in worldly matters and he praises Allah for making him superior to him. Such a person is recorded by Allah as patient and thankful. A man who looks to someone who is below him in religious practices, and looks to someone who is above him in worldly materials, regrets that he was deprived of those favours, and Allah will not enter his name among the patient thankful

1 Ibid (195)

2 Ibid (196)

3 Ibid (198)

people.¹

Abdullah stated:

‘Whoever has the following four qualities Allah will build for him a house in Paradise:

To seek protection in: “There is no god worthy of worship but Allah.”

To say: “We belong to Allah and to Him we are going to return,” when afflicted by a calamity.

To say: “Praise is to Allah” when given something.

To say: “I seek forgiveness of Allah” when a sin is committed.”²

Mujahid read the following verse (which means): “*He was a thankful servant.*” (17/3) and explained it saying that he never ate anything except that he praised Allah for it. He never took a drink but he praised Allah for it. He never walked, but he praised Allah for it. He never held anything, but he praised Allah for it. Allah appreciated his acts and praised him by saying that he was a thankful servant.³

Muhammad bin Ka’ said:

‘When Nooh ate, he would say: ‘Praise be to Allah’. When he took a drink, he would say: ‘Praise be to Allah’. When he put on clothes, he would say: ‘Praise be to Allah’. When he mounted [an animal], he would say: ‘Praise be to Allah’. Allah called him a thankful servant for these acts.’⁴

Ibn Abi Dunya said:

‘I learnt that a wise man used to say:

If Allah did not to punish for His disobedience, He should still not be disobeyed so as to show gratitude for His bounties.’⁵

Allah, the Most Blessed and Exalted, has two types of rights over His servants, which they have to fulfil:

The first is concerning His commands and prohibitions, which are His exclusive prerogatives.

The second is to acknowledge by giving thanks for His bounties, which He bestowed upon His creatures.

1 Ibid (200), also reported by Ibn al-Mubarak in *Az-Zuhd* ((180) and at-Tirmithi (2512)

2 Ibid (201), also Ibn al-Mubarak (182)

3 Ibid (202), and Ibn al-Mubarak (940)

4 Ibid (203) Ibn al-Mubarak (940)

5 Ibid (204)

He, Glory be to Him, demands that people give thanks for His bounties and to carry out His orders. The view of this obligation constantly reminds a person of his negligence and failing, and that he is in need of Allah's pardon and forgiveness. If He does not forgive him, then that person will perish. The more a person is aware of Allah's religion, the more perfect his view of his obligation will be, and he will be more capable of realizing his failings. The religion is not mere abandonment of clearly prohibited matters, but also the ability to carry out Allah's commands, which He loves. Most religious people do not care about them except to share their concept with the general public.

As far as *Jihad*, enjoining good, forbidding evil, being sincere to Allah, His Messenger, His religion and His Book are concerned, then they do not enter into their minds, let alone intending to carry them out or to perform them. The least committed to the religion among them and the most hateful to Allah is the one who ignores these obligations even though he may completely forsake the world. Rarely will you see among them a person whose face becomes red and changes its colour for the sake of Allah, or one who is ready to sacrifice his honour to support His religion. People involved in major sins are better than these people.

Abu 'Umar and other scholars have reported:¹

'Allah, the Almighty ordered an angel to destroy a town. The angel said: 'My Lord, among them is so and so, who is a very religious and devout person.'

Allah said: 'Start with him and let me hear his moans, as his face never showed any distress for my sake.'

AS for the vision of the favour, it does not let him notice any of his good deeds even though he may have done the deeds of the two created beings (humans and *Jinn*). Allah's bounties are more than his works; the lowest bounty from Allah will exhaust all the deeds of a person. It is, therefore, appropriate for a person to continuously look at the rights of Allah upon him.

Wahab said:

'I learnt that Moosa, the Prophet of Allah (peace be upon him) passed by a man who was calling upon Allah and imploring Him. He said:

"O Allah, have mercy on him because I feel pity for him."

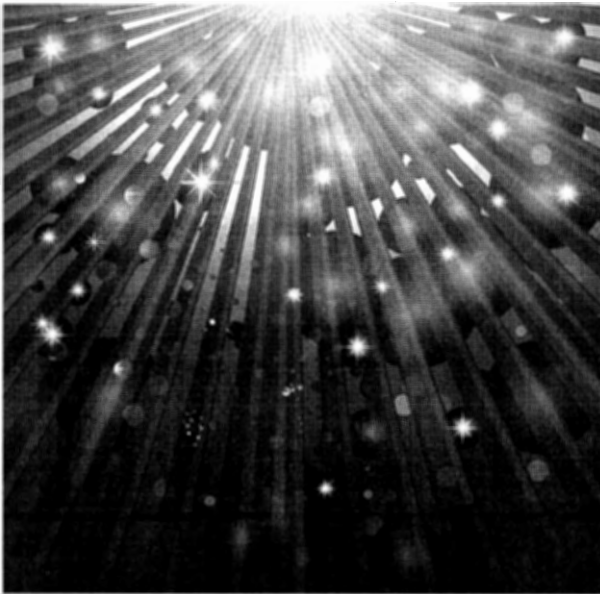
1 Al-Tabarani (7661) and al-Bayhaqi in *Shu'ab* (7595)

Allah revealed to Moosa:

“If he implores Me until his strength is exhausted, I will not answer his prayer until he realizes My right over him.”¹

The visions of Allah’s bounty and one’s obligations do not allow a person to notice his good deeds. He remains looking with contempt at himself, disparaging his soul. He is very close to receiving mercy if he gives these visions their due rights.

It is Allah whose help is sought.



1 Ahmad in *Az-Zuhd* (111)

Chapter Twenty- One

Judgement between the two groups and the determination of each case

We would like to state that comparing and assessing the two matters in order to decide which one is superior depends on the knowledge of each of them. We have already discussed the true essence of patience and its kinds and categories. Let us now speak about the true meaning of thankfulness and its categories.

According to *al-Sihah*, thankfulness means to praise a beneficent individual for rendering his favour to you. (In all its different usages, the word “*Shukr*” implies a sense of growth and development) ¹

The gratitude of a servant to Allah, the Most Beneficent, revolves around three basic elements, without which the duty of giving thanks will not be fulfilled:

1. Acknowledging the favour of Allah over him

¹ The author cites examples from Arabic dictionaries as evidence of this.

2. To praise Him for it
3. Using it as a means of pleasing Him

Scholars¹ have defined the word “*Shukr*” in the following terms:

According to some scholars, it is “the acknowledgement of the favour of a benefactor with humility.” Others said that it is “to praise the benefactor by speaking of his favour.” For a person to thank Allah the Almighty, he should praise Him by describing His favour to him. Another definition is that it is “to view the benevolence, safeguard the reverence and to take care of the devotion.”

According to others, expressing thanks for a favour is “to consider oneself an uninvited guest to it.”

In another statement, giving thanks is explained as the “realization of one’s inability to give thanks.”

It is said: ‘To give thanks for the ability to give thanks is more perfect than merely thanking someone. This means that you realize that your act of gratitude came with the assistance of Allah, and that this help is the biggest favour to you. In this respect, you thank Him for being able to thank; then you thank Him for enabling you to give thanks on thanking Him.

Some people say: ‘Giving thanks is to realize that you are not entitled to the favour done to you.’

Others have said: ‘Thankfulness means to exert oneself to the utmost in doing pious deeds.’

It is also said: ‘A grateful person is the one who gives thanks for what is available, and the most grateful is the person who gives thanks for that which is missing.’

In another statement, thankfulness is defined as: “to give thanks for a favour, and the most thankful is one who gives thanks when he is deprived.” The truly grateful are defined as those who thank when they receive some benefit and the most thankful is the one who gives thanks when he is rejected.

It is said that the thankful are those who give thanks for a favour and the most thankful are those who give thanks for an affliction.

Al-Junayd (may Allah have mercy upon him) said:

“I was playing in front of Al-Sariy when I was seven years old, and there

1 See these statements in *al-Risala al-Qushayriyyah* pp174-176.

were people among us who started discussing the issue of giving thanks. Al-Sariy asked me: 'What is expressing thanks, boy?' I replied: 'That you do not disobey Allah with His favour.' He remarked: 'It is likely that your favour from Allah is your tongue.' I still cry when I remember this remark which Al-Sariy made about me."

Al-Shibli (may Allah have mercy upon him) said:

'Thanking means to view the benefactor, not the benefit.'

This statement is not correct; perfect gratitude is to view the benefit coming from the benefactor.

Some people have defined thanking as: "preserving what is available and to search for what is missing."

Abu 'Uthman (may Allah have mercy upon him) said:

'Ordinary people give thanks for food and dress and the gratitude of the elite is for the [good] thoughts that come to their hearts.'

Once, a king put a man in prison, whereupon his colleague wrote and asked him to be thankful to Allah. Then he was beaten up; his friend again told him to thank Allah. Another prisoner, who was a Magian, and suffering from a gastric ailment was brought in and tied to him, leg to leg, with a chain. The Magian rose up many times at night to go to the toilet, and the man had to stand by him until he had finished. Still, his colleague wrote to him asking him to thank Allah.

He replied:

'How long will you ask me to thank Allah? Is there any suffering beyond this?'

His colleague wrote back:

'If the belt which is on his waist had been put on your waist, in the same way as the link is placed on his leg and your leg, what would you have done? So, continue thanking Allah.'

A man went to Sahl bin Abdullah and said:

'A thief broke into my house and took away my belongings.'

Sahl said to him:

'Give thanks to Allah! If the thief, that is Satan, had entered your heart and corrupted your belief in *Tawheed* (the Oneness of Allah), what would you have done?'

Thanking is also described as: "enjoying the act of praising Allah for a favour which a person does not deserve."

It is said that if your resources fail to suffice, then let your tongue engage

in giving thanks.

In another statement:

‘Four things do not produce any result: consultation with a deaf person; favour to a man who does not show gratitude; planting a seed in a salty swamp and showing a lamp to the sun.’

The heart, tongue and limbs give thanks. The heart’s gratitude is to acknowledge and love, the tongue’s gratitude is to praise and laud, and the gratitude of the limbs is to engage them in the service of Allah, who is thanked, and to prevent them from being involved in sinful deeds.

A poet says:

‘The favour done by you won you three things from me: my hand, my tongue and the hidden conscience.’

Giving thanks is closely connected with actions, while praise is related to words. The matters for which Allah the Almighty is praised are more than those for which He is thanked. He is praised for His Names, Attributes, acts, and bounties, but He is thanked for His favours only. The methods with which He is praised are more specific than those used in thanking Him: thanks are given by the heart, tongue and limbs while praise is done only by the heart and tongue.

When this is understood, then it becomes clear that both patience and gratitude are intermingled with the essence of each other and neither of them can be found without the other. The special name given to each is based on the most prominent and prevalent feature of each. Otherwise, the true concept of thankfulness is congruent with patience, intention and action, because thankfulness means to work according to the commands of Allah and avoid doing actions that He has disapproved. Patience is the very foundation of all this. Steadfastness when doing good deeds and refraining from committing forbidden acts is the perfect form of thankfulness. Patience is commanded by Allah, and to exercise it is gratitude.

Here arises a question: Your explanation implies that patience and gratitude are the same and that they are different names for the same object. How is this possible when according to reason, linguistics and tradition, Allah, glory be to Him, has distinguished one from another?

The answer is that they are indeed two different matters; we explained their connection together in such a way that neither of them can exist

without the other. When gratitude is detached from patience, it loses its essence and patience loses its entity as well. The first is clear, and the second condition occurs when patience is detached from gratitude so that it becomes ingratitude, which is more incompatible to patience than to discontent.

It could be said that there is a third category that includes a person who is neither ungrateful nor grateful but is steadfastly reluctant and unwilling. He does not fulfil the real duty of being grateful but does not relinquish patience entirely.

The answer to this is that we are discussing the patience that is commanded and therefore an act of obedience; we are not dealing with the patience that is similar to the endurance of animals. The patience of obedience comes only from grateful people, but since their gratitude is embodied in their patience, it is regarded as patience, as the patience of a grateful man is incorporated in his gratefulness, and thus, is considered as gratitude.

The ranks of belief are not lost because of the movement from one to the other, but develop gradually: the lower one being absorbed by the higher. This is how faith is inserted in sincerity and patience is included in the stages of contentment; it is never destroyed. Contentment is taken up by trust, and hope and fear by love -- none of them is lost.

Some decreed matters, pleasant or unpleasant, may be the objects of both patience and gratitude. Poverty, for instance, is clearly the object of patience because it is undesirable, but it is also connected with gratefulness because it has an element of favour. When the realization of a favour is predominant in a man, who feels comfortable with it, enjoys it and has peace of mind, he will see it as a favour and give thanks for it. However, if the dominant feeling in a person is that of tribulation, deprivation and urgency, he will regard it as a trial and try to be patient.

In the case of wealth, the opposite applies.

Allah, the Exalted, tests His servants with favours and afflictions. He regards both of them as a trial. He says (what means):

- *“And we try you with evil and good as a test.” (21/35)*
- *“As for man whenever his Lord tries him by honouring him and is gracious unto him, he says: ‘My Lord honoured me, but whenever He tries him by straitening his means in life, he says: ‘My Lord despised me.’ (89/5, 16)*
- *“We have placed all that on the earth as an ornament thereof*

that we may try them: which of them is best in conduct.” (18/7)

- *“Who has created life and death that He may try you which is best in conduct?” (67/2)*
- *“He it is who created the heavens and the earth in six days –and His throne was upon the water- that He may try you. Which of you is best in conduct?” (11/7)*

The Almighty tells us, in the above verses, that He created the upper and the lower worlds, determined the end of creation and created all that is on earth as a trial and test. This trial is meant to examine the patience of the people and their gratitude in good and evil, and in happiness and adversity. Being tried by the favour of easy access to wealth, health, rank, and power is the biggest trial for a person. Patience in carrying out the acts of obedience of Allah is the most difficult type of patience. It is borne out by the saying of the Companions:

“We were put to trial by adversity and we were patient, and when we were tried by prosperity we failed to control ourselves.”¹

Poverty, illness, straitening of worldly means and suffering caused by the people may be the biggest grace. To carry out the duty of expressing gratitude for them is more significant than giving thanks for their opposites. The Almighty Lord tests humankind by His favours as well as by His trials. However, showing patience and gratitude are two states that are inevitable for the servants, with regard to the command and prohibition, and the decree and judgement of the Lord Almighty. At no time can the servant dispense with them.

The question ‘which of the two is better’ is like the question ‘which one the following is better: the feeling or the action, food or drink, the fear of the servant or his hope’?

No obligatory duty is performed without patience and gratitude, nor can a prohibited matter be avoided without them. As for the misfortunes that are decreed for a person, if he shows patience with them, his gratefulness is absorbed in his patience in the same way as the patience of a thankful person is included in his thankfulness.

This is illustrated further by the fact that Allah, the Almighty tests the servant with his desires and lusts, and He has made struggling against them obligatory upon him. As a result, he is engaged all times in combating his soul in order to fulfil the duty of giving thanks, and controlling himself

¹ It was said by Abd al-Rahman bin ‘Awf as reported by at-Tirmithi (2464), see also *az-Zuhd* of Ibn al-Mubarak (182) and *az-Zuhd* of Hannad b. Al-Sariyy (773)

against the passion that obstructs him from doing good deeds. A man is, therefore, always engaged in these two types of struggle, whether he is rich or poor, healthy or ailing.

The question arises, which one is better: a rich person who is grateful or a poor man who is patient?

There are three views expressed by scholars on this matter, which Abu al-Faraj Ibn al-Jawzi and others have reported (may Allah have mercy upon them), concerning the question of the superiority of patience or thankfulness in general, and each group argued in support of its view and presented their evidences and proofs.

The reality is that the better of the two is the one who is more conscious of Allah, the Exalted. If it is assumed that both are on the same level of consciousness of Allah, then they will be equal in merit. Allah, the Almighty does not give preference on the basis of poverty or wealth, nor does He base the merit of a person on wellbeing or affliction. He distinguishes among the people on the basis of *Taqwa*, consciousness of Allah alone.

He, the Almighty, announced (what means):

“The most honourable of you to Allah is the most conscious of you.”
(49/13)

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) declared: “No Arab is superior to a non-Arab, nor is a non-Arab superior to an Arab except by piety (*Taqwa*). All people are from Adam and Adam was created from dust.”¹

Taqwa or consciousness of Allah has two foundations: patience and gratitude. The rich and poor alike must have them, and the one who excels in patience and gratitude is the best.

A question may be asked here: If it so happens that the patience of the poor is perfect and the gratefulness of the rich is also perfect, then which one will be better?

The answer is that the best will be the one who is more conscious of his task and his condition. There is no other way to determine their excellence. The rich man may be more conscious of Allah in his thankfulness than the poor one in his patience; and it may be that the poor man is more conscious in his patience than the rich in his gratitude. In this case, it is not correct to

1 Ahmad (5/411)

say that the rich is better because of his wealth or the poor is better because of his poverty. It would not be right to say that the rich person is better because of his thankfulness, than the poor person who is patient either, and vice versa. Gratitude and patience are essential components of faith. It is more appropriate to say that the best person is the one who is more dedicated towards fulfilling the obligatory and recommended duties. The determination of superiority must be based on these two aspects. Allah, the Almighty said in a Sacred narration (*Hadeeth Qudsi*):

“My servant does not approach me by an act that is dearer to Me than that which I have made obligatory for him. However, my servant continues to strive to seek My pleasure by supererogatory works until I love him.”¹

It shows that the person who performs his obligatory duties with greater perfection and does more supererogatory works is the best.

The following raises another question: The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said in an authentic report: *“The poor people of my community will enter Paradise half a day earlier than the wealthy ones; half a day being 500 years.”*²

This does not mean that the poor are superior to the rich in rank and status, although they will enter Paradise before the rich. A rich person or a just ruler may enter Paradise later due to his longer reckoning, but in his position and rank he will be higher, just like the poor man who goes through a pass first and the man with luggage comes after him.

Again, some say that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said to the poor people who complained to him about the additional good deeds of the rich through charity and freeing slaves:

“Shouldn’t I tell you something which, if you do it, you will catch up with those who have gone ahead of you?”

He then told them to engage in glorifying, praising and extolling Allah after every prayer. When the rich people came to know about this they started doing it as well. The poor people informed the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) about it and he said: *“This is the grace of Allah; He gives it to whoever He wills.”* (62/4)³

1 Al-Bukhaari (6502)

2 Ahmad (2/296, 343, 451), at-Tirmithi (2353, 2354), an-Nasaa’i (11348), Ibn Majah (4123), Ibn Abi Shaybah (13/246) and Ibn Hibban (676)

3 Al-Bukhaari (843, 6329), Muslim (1347)

The above statement clearly indicates that the case for the grateful rich is higher.

21 However, it supports what we said earlier, that the better of the two groups is the one who does more voluntary acts of obedience. If they are equal in that, they will be the same in merit. In the above case, the rich were equal to the poor in performing obligatory and supererogatory deeds, but the rich excelled by doing additional voluntary deeds by giving charity and freeing slaves. This was a bonus point for them; otherwise, they were on the same level with the poor, in their patience, in *Jihad*, suffering in the cause of Allah and enduring what Allah has decreed. They added expression to their gratitude by spending their money. If the poor had the opportunity of doing similar additional deeds, by their patience they would surely have surpassed the rich.

It has been said that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was offered the keys of the treasures of the world, but he declined to take them and said:

*"I would rather eat one day and remain hungry the other day."*¹

'Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) reported that before the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) departed from this world, he was not able to satisfy his appetite with refined wheat bread.²

He passed away while his coat of mail was kept by a Jew as mortgage for food he had acquired for his family.³

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) prayed to Allah:

*"O Allah, make the provision of the family of Muhammad barely sufficient."*⁴

'Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) narrated: 'A woman of the *Ansaar* (Helpers) called on me. She noticed that the bed of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was a folded cloak. She went back to her home and sent a mattress with wool stuffing.

When the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) came home, he asked: "What is this?"

1 See p.

2 Muslim (7447), Ahmad in *az-Zuhd* (10)

3 Al-Bukhaari (2916, 4467)

4 Ahmad (2/446), also reported by Muslim (2427). See also Al-Bukhaari (6460) and Muslim (7440)

I replied: A lady from the *Ansaar* called on me and noticed your bed, so she sent this.’

He told me to return it to her. I did not do so, for I liked to have it in my house. He asked me three times, and then said:“‘Aa’ishah, return it! By Allah, if I wished, Allah would have provided me with mountains of gold and silver.”

Then I returned it to her.¹

Allah, the Exalted would not have chosen for His Messenger except what was the best for him. If he were given the whole world, he would have spent it all in the ways of Allah’s pleasure, and his thankfulness would have superceded the thankfulness of the whole world.

Each group, the supporters of the superiority of patience and the advocates of the excellence of gratefulness, argue by citing the example of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

Actually, Allah, the Most High, granted His Messenger (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) both positions in the most perfect manner. He was the master of the grateful rich and the chief of the patient poor. He attained the highest degree of patience in his poverty such as no one else could reach, and achieved the pinnacle of gratefulness in his affluence which no other person has ever achieved. Whoever looks carefully at his life will recognise the truth of what we have said. He was at the highest level of patience in situations that demanded it and at the highest level of gratefulness when conditions required it. His Lord Almighty granted him the highest rank of perfection and placed him above the grateful rich people and the patient poor ones. Allah says (what means):

“He found you in need and enriched you.” (93/8)²

The point is that Allah, the Almighty made His Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) grateful and rich after he was patient and poor. If one group tries to support its case by his example, the other group will also be able to use it as an evidence for its case.

Some more points that support the superiority of the grateful rich over the poor are:

Abd al-Rahman bin ‘Awf (may Allah be pleased with him) was one of

1 Ahmad in *az-Zuhd*(20)

2 Here the author engages in giving different interpretation for the word “*ta’ulu*” (4/3), which is a linguistic discussion, so I dropped it. It is about half of the page

those people who were among the ranks of the grateful. Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that while 'Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) was in her apartment, she heard a noise in the city. She asked: 'What is that?'

The people said:

'A caravan belonging to Abd al-Rahman bin 'Awf has arrived from Syria carrying all kind of commodities.'

Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) said: 'The caravan consisted of 700 camels, which caused a stir in the city by its noise.'

'Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said:

'I heard the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) say:

"I saw Abd al-Rahman bin 'Awf crawling to Paradise."

The news reached Abd al-Rahman bin 'Awf (may Allah be pleased with him) and he said:

'If I can, I will enter it walking.'

Then he donated all the camels with their loads in the cause of Allah.¹

Imam Ahmad (may Allah have mercy upon him) criticised this narration and said it was objectionable and a lie as Umarah, one of the narrators in the chain, has related abominable statements. Abu Hatim al-Razi declared him as unreliable.

Abu 'al-Faraj Ibn al-Jawzi (may Allah have mercy upon him) related from Abd al-Rahman bin 'Awf (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said to him:

"O Ibn 'Awf, you are rich and you will not enter Paradise except crawling. Give a loan to your Lord, He will set your feet free!"²

Abu Abd al-Rahman an-Nasaa'i (may Allah have mercy upon him) declared this report as fabricated, and said that al-Jarrah, one of the reporters, was rejected.

Yahya said: 'Al-Jarrah's report is baseless.'

Ibn al-Madini said: 'His *Hadeeth* is not worth recording.'

Ibn Hibban said that he was a liar. Al-Darqutni said: 'He is rejected.'

Al-Bayhaqi³ (may Allah have mercy upon him) narrated Abd al-Rahman bin 'Awf (may Allah be pleased with him) as saying that the Messenger of

1 Ahmad (6/115)

2 Ibn al-Jawzi in *al-Mawdu'at* (2/13)

3 *Su'ab al-Iman* (3064), see also Ibn Sa'd (3/131) and al-Hakim (3/311)

Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), said to him: "O Ibn 'Awf, you are rich and you will not enter Paradise except crawling... Give a loan to Allah, He will set your feet free!" "What am I supposed to give in loan, O Messenger of Allah?" Abd al-Rahman (may Allah be pleased with him) asked. "Come out of what you owned yesterday," the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said. "All of it?" he asked. "Yes," the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) replied. Abd al-Rahman (may Allah be pleased with him) left in a worried state. Later, Jibreel (Angel Gabriel) called on the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and said: "Tell Ibn 'Awf to honour the guest, feed the needy, start with those who are dependent on him and give to beggars. When he does so, it will cleanse what he owns."

This report is also invalid and not established from the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Many scholars have criticised Khalid bin Yazid bin Abu Malik, one of its reporters, and considered him a liar.

Abu Umamah narrated the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as saying:

"I visited Paradise and heard the sound of steps before me. I asked: 'Who is that?'"

I was told that it was Bilal.

I went ahead and noticed that most people in Paradise were the poor *Muhaajiroon* (Emigrants) and the children of the Muslims. I saw very few rich men or women there. I was told the rich people were at the gate being questioned and being asked to give their account. As for women, they were busy in the world in two red things: gold and silk.

Then we went out through one of the eight gates of Paradise. When I was at the gate, a scale was brought and I was placed on it and my Nation was placed on the other side and I was heavier than my Nation. Then Abu Bakr was brought and was put on the scale and the rest of my Nation on the other side of the scale, and Abu Bakr's side was heavier. Then 'Umar was brought and placed on a scale and the rest of the Nation on the other side and 'Umar weighed heavier.

My Nation was paraded one by one before me. They passed, but I had to wait a long time for Abd al-Rahman bin 'Awf. He turned up after I had almost lost the hope.

I said: 'Abd al-Rahman?'

He replied: 'May my father and mother be ransomed for you, O Messenger of Allah!' By the One who sent you with the truth, I did not get to you until I thought I would not be able to reach you except after my hair turned grey.

'Why?' I asked.

He replied: 'I was called to account and scrutinized because of the huge amount of my wealth.'¹

This report is fabricated as well. Ibn al-Jawzi (may Allah have mercy upon him) included it and the one before it in his collection of fabricated narrations. He remarked that some devoted people cling to such false narrations and believe that money is a barrier in acquiring rewards. They claim that it is enough to condemn the wealth that made Abd al-Rahman bin 'Awf enter Paradise crawling. However, these reports are not authentic. Allah forbid that Abd al-Rahman bin 'Awf (may Allah be pleased with him), who was given the glad tidings of Paradise be banned from going ahead because of his money! Accumulating wealth is permissible; what is condemned is to earn by illegal means and to refrain from giving its *Zakah* (obligatory due). Abd al-Rahman bin 'Awf (may Allah be pleased with him) is free from both acts.

Talhah (may Allah be pleased with him) left behind 300 camel-loads of gold. Az-Zubayr (may Allah be pleased with him) and some other Companions also left great wealth. Had they known that it was not good to do so, they would have spent all of it. There are preachers who use these reports to encourage poverty and condemn riches. The credit goes to the scholars who sort out the authentic narrations from the forged reports and have knowledge of the principles of authentication.

I say: Ibn al-Jawzi (may Allah have mercy upon him) went to extremes in refutation of the above reports and crossed the line by including them among the false traditions that are forged about the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). It seems that he considered it reprehensible that Abd al-Rahman bin 'Awf (may Allah be pleased with him) should be delayed from entering Paradise in the beginning and that he would only

1 Ahmad (5/259), and al-Tabarani (7923)

be allowed to crawl into it, when he is one of the earliest Muslims and certified to enter it. He regarded the reports as incompatible with the status of the Companion that Allah has prepared for him in Paradise. This is an erroneous conclusion by him.

If a person finds fault with the above two reports, will he be able to do the same in the *Hadeeth* reported by Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), said:

“The poor Muslims will enter Paradise half a day (that is 500 years) before the rich ones”?

At-Tirmithi declared it as *Hasan*, authentic.¹

Or in the *Hadeeth* narrated by Abdullah bin ‘Amr recorded by Muslim in his *Saheeh*² that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“The poor Emigrants will go ahead of the rich people by 40 years on the Day of Judgement”?

Similarly, in the report recorded in the *Musnad*³ of Imam Ahmad that the Prophet, (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“Do you know who will enter Paradise first?”

The Companions replied:

‘Allah and His Messenger know best.’

He said:

“It will be the poor members of the Emigrants, by whose presence calamities are avoided. One of them dies while his need remains in his heart, and he finds no means to fulfil it.”

Or in the report of Jabir related by At-Tirmithi that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“The poor members of my Nation will enter Paradise 40 years ahead of the rich people”⁴?

This *Hadeeth* and others listed above are authentic narrations and declare unequivocally that the poor Companions of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) will enter Paradise ahead of the rich ones. They will be on different levels in this. Some will go ahead of the rich by

1 At-Tirmithi (220)

2 See (7463)

3 See (2/168), also reported by Abd b. Humayd (352), al-Bazzar (2665), Ibn Hibban (7421) and al-Hakim (2/71-72)

4 At-Tirmithi (2355), Ahmad also reported it (3/324)

500 years, others by 40 years. The delay will not affect the rank of those who enter later. They may very well be higher in rank than those who went ahead of them while they were delayed for accounting. A just ruler will be held for reckoning and the one who never assumed any responsibility of the affairs of the Muslims will go ahead of him. When the just ruler enters Paradise after him, the ruler's position will be much higher than that of the poor one. The ruler will be closer to Allah Almighty. This is attested by the report of Abdullah bin 'Amr, recorded in *Saheeh Muslim*¹ that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), said:

"Those who deal fairly with the people will be with Allah on the Day of Judgement on platforms of light placed at the right hand of Allah, the Beneficent – and both hands of Allah are right. They are the people who act with justice in their judgement of those who fall under their authority and their families."

At-Tirmithi related on the authority of Abu Sa'id al-Khudri (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

*"The most beloved person to Allah and the one seated closest to Him on the Day of Judgement will be a just ruler, and the most hateful to Allah, and the one who will receive the severest torment on that day, will be an unjust ruler."*²

The just ruler and the rich person may enter Paradise late due to their lengthy reckoning, but they will be placed in a higher position than the poor ones who were admitted before them. The detention of Abd al-Rahman bin 'Awf (may Allah be pleased with him), for a reckoning of his great wealth, will not lower his position or reduce his status. He will join the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and the rest of his Companions somewhat later. It is not in contradiction with his position of being the foremost in Islam and having received the news of those destined for Paradise.

The report speaking about his entrance in Paradise crawling is not true and is a clear lie, as Imam Ahmad (may Allah have mercy upon him) declared. An-Nasaa'i also considered it as forged.

Abd al-Rahman's actions, his *Jihad*, the magnitude of his spending in the cause of Allah and his charitable contributions, will make him enter

1 (4721)

2 At-Tirmithi (1329)

Paradise with those who will pass like lightning or the twinkling of an eye or a fast horse. His services will not allow that he goes to Paradise crawling.

Just as Allah, the Exalted is the Creator of the creation, He is also the Creator of the means of wealth and poverty of the people. He created wealth and poverty to test His servants and to see who is the best in their deeds. He made these two conditions as the causes of good and bad deeds, and as reward and punishment. He says (what means): ***“And we try you with evil and good, for ordeal, and to us you will return.”*** (21/35)

Ibn Abbas’ (may Allah be pleased with him) interpretation of the above verse is that the trial of Allah is by hardship, comfort, health, illness, wealth, need and lawful and prohibited matters; all these are means of trial.¹

Ibn Zayd said:

‘We test you with what you like and that which you do not, so that we see how your patience and gratitude is concerning what you love and what you hate.’

Al-Kalbi said:

‘Evil is poverty and affliction, while good is wealth and children.

In short, Allah has made it clear that poverty and wealth are the means of trial and test.

Allah, the Most High also says (what means):

“As for man, whenever his Lord tries him by honouring him and is gracious to him, he says: My Lord honoured me; but whenever He tries him by straitening his means of life, he says: My Lord despised me. Nay!” (89/15, 16)

Here, Allah, the Almighty tells us that He tries His servant, both by honouring and being gracious to him, and by enlarging his provision and narrowing it for him. Each of these acts is a trial and test of the people by Him.

He rejected the claim of those who thought that the expansion and enlargement of provisions is an honour by Allah to the servants, and straitening the means of survival was humiliation for them. He said: “Nay!” It is not what a man says that matters, but that he bears his affliction with

1 See Tafseer at-Tabari (24585-24588)

grace and honour. If you pay attention to the words of the verse, you will realize that this is obvious.

Allah, the Almighty also says (what means):

“It is He who has placed you as viceroy of the earth and has exalted some of you in rank above others, that He may try you by (the test of) that which He has given you.” (6/165)

He also says (what means):

“We have placed all that is on the earth as an ornament for it, that we may try them, which of them is best in conduct.” (18/7)

He is telling us in the above verse that He adorned the earth with money and other materials, for use in the trial and tests of humankind. He declared that He created life and death for the same purpose, and originated the heavens and the earth for this trial. There are three places in the Qur’an where Allah, the Almighty declares that He created the upper and lower spheres and all that lies between them, and fixed the duration of the world and its people, as well as their means of survival, which He made as ornaments for the earth, such as gold, silver, houses, dresses, mounts, plants, fruits, cattle, women, children, etc.

He created all these for the trial and test of humanity, and to see which of His creatures is more obedient and more willing to follow His commands. He who surrenders himself to His orders is the best in conduct.

This is the truth for which He created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them and the end will appear in the form of reward or punishment. To neglect this truth and disregard it is a vain act from which He declared Himself free. Allah, the Almighty announced that He is above such pointless things. His just kingdom and His sole entitlement to be the object of worship and Creator of everything, rejects false assumptions and invalid calculations. He says (what means):

“Do you deem that we have created you in vain and that you would not be returned to us? So, Allah be exalted, the true king. There is no god except Him, the Lord of the honourable Throne.” (23/115, 116)

Allah, the Exalted cleared Himself from such a fruitless act, as He declared Himself to be above having a partner, a child, a spouse and all other faults and defects such as slumber, sleep, exhaustion, need, indifference. He, the Almighty, is devoted to the care of the heavens and the earth. He holds full authority and no one can intercede for another person without His permission. However, there are those who ascribe partners to Him and

claim that He has no knowledge of the details of the affairs of the world. This is a claim that is incompatible and incongruous with His Divine perfect nature, His beautiful comprehensive Names and Attributes. He created everything for a purpose. It is absurd to say that He created the people in vain and left them without purpose, and did not tell them what to do and what not to do. It is equally preposterous to claim that He would not bring them back to Him in order to judge among them, and reward those who were righteous and punish those who did not follow His commands. He will gather all the people on the appointed Day, when the followers of falsehood will realize that their claims were untrue. He will reveal to them that His Messengers and their followers were right and they deserved to be accepted and listened to. Anyone who denies these basics denies His being worthy of worship, being the Creator and having full sovereignty. This is the real denial of, and disbelief in Him. In the discussion between two companions mentioned in the Qur'an (Ch.18), the believing companion said to his fellow who denied life after death (what means):

“Do you disbelieve in Him who created you from dust, then of a drop (of seed), then fashioned you a man?” (18/17)

He told his companion that his denial of the life to come is disbelief in Allah, the Exalted Himself.

Allah, the Almighty says (what means):

“If you wonder then wondrous is their saying: when we are dust, are we then forsooth (to be raised) in a new creation? Such are they who disbelieve in their Lord.” (13/5)

This is because the denial of the life to come is the denial of the power, the knowledge, the wisdom, the true sovereignty, the divinity and the Lordship of Allah, the Almighty. The manner in which His Messengers were refuted and the rejection of their messages also implies this. Whoever rejects His Messengers and denies the life after death, has indeed denied the Lordship of Allah the Most High and has dismissed the concept of Him being the Lord of the universe.

The main point here is that Allah, the Almighty created wealth and poverty as a means of trial and testing for the people. He did not send down wealth for mere enjoyment. According to a report in the *Musnad*¹ of Imam Ahmad, the Prophet, (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“Allah says: We have sent down wealth for the purpose of establishing

1 See (5/219), see also Al-Bukhaari (6436) and Muslim (2418)

prayer and the paying of zakat. Were the son of Adam to have a valley full of gold, he would desire a second one; and if he had two, he would desire a third; only dust can fill the belly of the son of Adam.”

In the above *Hadeeth*, Allah, the Almighty announced that He provided wealth to be used as a means to fulfil His right by performing prayer, and the right of His servants by paying *Zakat*. Wealth is not given to people to enjoy and relish like animals.

If there is an excess of wealth and it is not used to achieve these two objectives, the aim and the wisdom for which it was sent down are lost, and therefore dust is better than it. Wealth, together with the belly which is filled with it, will ultimately turn into dust from which man was created. The purpose of his creation is to know his Lord and Creator, to have faith in Him, to love Him and to engage in His remembrance. Wealth is given to him to use as the means for that purpose. However, man, being ignorant of Allah, His commands, His unity, His Names and Attributes, keeps his belly empty from that for which it was created, and fills it with the love of vanishing wealth, which may depart from him or he will leave it. He dedicates himself to collecting and gathering more and more money. Even then, he is not satisfied and his poverty and greed increase until his belly is filled with the dust from which he was created. Thus, he returns to his origins, i.e. dust from which he and his wealth were created. He fails to achieve perfection by acquiring knowledge and belief, which were the sources of attaining excellence, success, and acquiring felicity in his life here and in the Hereafter.

Money, if it does not bring benefit to its owner, would certainly cause him harm.

The same applies to knowledge, authority and power; if they do not bring benefit, they will cause harm. All these things are means to achieve particular objectives – good or bad. If they are not used for good and praiseworthy objectives, they will be used for bad ones. The person who has gained the most advantage is the one who makes use of them to reach Allah and the Hereafter; he will reap benefits from them in this life and in the Hereafter. The biggest loser is the one who uses them to fulfil his desires, satisfy his lusts and attain his immediate worldly goals. The result will be that he will lose this world and the Hereafter. This man did not set the means as his goals; instead, he used them as the means of reaching the opposite of what they were created for. He is like a man who uses pleasure to attain the greatest pain and sickness.

Man falls into one of the following four categories:

1. A person who ignores the means and pays no attention to them
2. The person who is dedicated to them [worldly means], and engages in collecting and preserving them
3. The one who uses these means for that which causes harm and gains no benefit in this world or the Hereafter
4. The one who uses them to achieve what is beneficial to him in his life and in the Hereafter. He is the most successful person.

Allah The Exalted says (what means):

“Whoever desires the life of the world and its pomp, we shall repay them their deeds in this world, and in it they will not be wronged. Those are they for who there is nothing in the hereafter except the fire. All that they contrive here is vain and all that they are wont to do is fruitless.”
(11/15, 16)

The meaning of this verse has posed a problem for many people. They took the warning to be directed only at those people who had a desire for this world and its pomp. However, many other interpretations arose. One group including Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) held that it was about those who were interested in this immediate world and did not believe in resurrection and reward and punishment. According to Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) the verse applies exclusively to the unbelievers.

However, Qatadah said: ‘Whoever makes this world his concern and the object of interest, intention and pursuit, Allah will recompense him for his good deeds in this world, but in the Hereafter no good deed will remain for him to be recompensed. The believer on the other hand will receive recompense for his good deeds in this world as well as in the Hereafter.’

These scholars said that the verse pertains to the unbelievers because it goes on to say (what means):

“They are those for whom there is nothing in the hereafter except the fire. All that they do here is vain and all that they are doing is fruitless.”
(11/16)

They added:

‘The believer seeks the world and the Hereafter and so, a man whose intention is directed exclusively to seek the world is not a believer.’

According to the narration of Abu Salih, Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) said that the verse was revealed about the people of the *Qiblah*

(i.e. the Muslims).

In Mujahid's opinion, it is about the people who show off.

Ad-Dahhak said:

'The meaning of the verse is that whoever from among the believers does a good deed without being mindful of Allah, the reward of his deed will be given to him in this world.'

Al-Farra' preferred this view and said: 'Any member of the community of the *Qiblah* (i.e. Muslims) who seeks recompense for his deeds in this world will be paid quickly and his reward will not be reduced.'

This last view is the most preferable. The meaning of the verse in this case will be:

'Whoever intends by his deeds to gain worldly goods and adornments will receive them here. Such a person is absolutely NOT a believer. For the sinful and disobedient, no matter how far they have gone in their transgressions, their faith will prompt them to do pious deeds for the sake of Allah. They, therefore, seek the pleasure of Allah by their good deeds, although they are involved in committing acts of sin. However, he who does not intend to please Allah by his deeds and instead thinks only of the world and its beauty, is not included among the group of believers. This is what Muaa'wiyah understood from the verse, and this is supported by the report of Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) in *Saheeh Muslim*¹ concerning the three people by whom the Hellfire will be kindled in the beginning: the reciter of the Qur'an who recited in order to be known as a good reader; the rich man who gave his money in charity to gain popularity; and the warrior who was killed in *Jihad* for the sake of being remembered as a brave fighter.

Just as the best of the creation of Allah are the Prophets, the truthful men (*as-Siddeeqoon*), martyrs and righteous people, the worst people are those who try to be like them but do not follow their example. A person, who imitates the people of truth and sincerity in order to show off, is like the one who falsely copies the Prophets.

Ibn Abu al-Dunya² related Anas bin Malik (may Allah be pleased with him) saying that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"On the Day of Judgement my community will be divided in three groups: Those that worshipped Allah for the sake of worldly gains; those who

1 Muslim (4923), see also Tafseer at-Tabari (18042)

2 See *Dhamm al-dunya*

worshipped Him for outward show and popularity and those who worshipped Allah for His sake, and to achieve success in the Hereafter.”

Allah will ask those who worshipped Him for the sake of worldly gains:
‘By My honour, My majesty and My status, what did you intend to achieve by My worship?’

They will reply:

‘By Your honour, Your majesty and Your status, we were looking for worldly benefits.’

He will say:

‘I do not accept any of your worship. Take them to Hell!’

Then the Almighty will ask those who worshipped Him for the purpose of showing off and gaining popularity:

‘By My honour, My majesty and My status, what did you have in mind by worshipping Me?’

They will reply:

‘By Your honour, Your majesty and Your status, it was to show off and gain fame.’

He will say:

‘I do not accept any of your worship. Take them to the Hellfire!’

Then the Almighty will turn to those who worshipped Him to please Him and to have a place in His Paradise and ask them:

‘By My honour, My glory and My status, what did you intend to get by your worship?’

They will reply:

‘By Your honour, Your glory and Your status we were looking for Your pleasure and Your Paradise.’

He will say:

‘You have spoken truthfully. Take them to Paradise.’

The above *Hadeeth* does not need investigation to establish its authenticity. It is supported by the Qur’an and the Prophetic *Sunnah*. The statement of Allah (which means): **“We will give them the reward of their deeds in full in it (this world)”** in the verse quoted above also testifies to it. The verse is related to the people who perform deeds to gain the benefits of this world and who do not intend to gain the pleasure of Allah, the Almighty. Allah will give them full recompense for their work in this world without reduction, but they will proceed to the Hereafter without having any deed worthy of reward. This cannot happen to a person who has faith in the Hereafter, even though he may commit major sins, but, soon realizing his

mistakes, turns to Allah in repentance and returns to the shelter of Allah.

Ibn al-Anbari said:

‘According to this view, the verse in question concerns some Muslims who do good deeds, in order to make their worldly life better, without thinking of the life after death and what will follow there. These people will be given the recompense of their good work quickly in this world but when they go to the Hereafter, they will face the torment of the Fire simply because they did not have the pleasure of Allah in their minds and never thought of attaining His reward by their work.

Then the people who held this view posed a question:

‘The second verse, according to this view, will mean that a believer who intends to achieve worldly benefit by his actions will abide forever in Hellfire.’

They attempted to answer this by saying that the verse apparently indicates that if a man intends to show off by his actions and does not seek reward in the life to come and keeps the thought of worldly benefits in his mind, Allah will destroy his faith when he meets Him. Consequently, he will be left without belief. This is supported by the Divine saying (which means): ***“What they did in this world would be destroyed and all that they used to do will be in vain.”*** (11/16)

Another group said in answer to the above question that the verse does not mean that those people would remain forever in Hell, but indicates that what they deserve is Hellfire. They did not send forward any good deed that could rescue them. If any one of them has the pillar of *Tawheed*, he would be set free from the Hellfire along with the believers who commit grave sins. This is the explanation of Ibn al-Anbari and some other scholars.

The verse, as a matter of fact, contains no ambiguity, and all praise is for Allah. Allah, the Almighty describes the recompense of the one who seeks the worldly life and its beauty by his actions. He tells us that such a man’s actions will be annulled and rendered fruitless. Once the source of his deliverance is destroyed and that which could have rescued him is made null and void, he would be left without anything that could help him. However, if he has sincere faith in Allah, the Almighty which he uses to achieve these material gains, and seeks the pleasure of Allah and the reward of the Hereafter, this faith would remain intact and would not be destroyed with other acts, and it would rescue him from eternal torment in Hell. Even if he were to be cast in Hell because of the annulment of his good deeds, he would be taken out of it.

Belief has two levels: one that prevents a believer from going to Hell; this is the level that induces man to make all his actions for the sake of Allah and to seek His pleasure. The second level of faith is that which prevents man from remaining forever in Hell. If a person who is doing an action in order to show off has this level of faith, he will escape eternal torment, otherwise he is destined to abide therein forever. The above verses are to be taken in line with similar verses of the Qur'an in which warnings have been given. Some of them are cited below (which mean):

- ***“Whoso desires the harvest of the hereafter, we give him increase in its harvest; and whoso desires the harvest of the world, we give him of it, and he has no portion in the hereafter.” (42/20)***
- ***“Whoso desires that life which hastens away, we hasten for him in it what we will for whom we please; and afterward we have appointed for him Hell: he will endure its heat condemned, rejected. And whoso desires the hereafter and strives for it with the efforts necessary, being a believer; for such their effort finds favour (with their Lord)” (17/18, 19)***

These are three places in the Qur'an that have similar statements that closely resemble one another and affirm each other's message, which is: whoever aims to achieve the benefits of this world and directs all his efforts towards that will not have a share in the Hereafter. On the other hand, whoever makes the bounties of the Hereafter his goal and strives for them, he will get what he strives for.

Now, the question remains: what will happen to the one who bears in mind both this world and the Hereafter? To which category does he belong?

This is a problematic issue, causing some commentators of the Qur'an to say that the verse concerns unbelievers because an unbeliever looks for material gain in this world without paying attention to the Hereafter. This is not true however, because there are unbelievers who think of the Hereafter, just as there are believers whose minds are focused on this world alone. Allah, the Exalted, has attached happiness and success to the desire for the Hereafter, and misfortune and distress to the intention of the world. When man's intention while carrying out his work is directed to one side only, i.e. this world or the Hereafter, the inevitable result and outcome will follow it. However, if the intention is to achieve success in both worlds then the case will be like the case of a man who has done some good and bad deeds, has elements of piety as well as those of debauchery, and combines both belief and disbelief. Allah, the Most High, spoke of the best of the people

after the Messengers (i.e. the Companions of the Prophet) in the following terms (which mean):

“Among you are those who desire the world and those who desire the hereafter.” (3/152)

21 The people addressed here are those who took part in the battle of Uhud with the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), and there was no hypocrite among them. This is what made Abdullah bin Mas’ood (may Allah be pleased with him) say:

‘I never realized that any of the Companions of the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) thought about worldly materials until the battle of Uhud took place and the above verse was revealed.’¹

The people referred to in this verse are those sincere and noble Companions, who abandoned their positions which the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), had ordered them to guard. An accidental thought made them leave their posts and rush to take booty, thinking that the battle was over. It was not like the intention of those who seek by their works the material goods of this world and its immediate benefits.

There is an issue here that requires attention:

It is impossible to seek the world and its immediate benefits and disregard the Hereafter by good deeds while having faith in Allah and His Messenger and being sure of meeting Him. Belief in Allah and the Hereafter requires that the servant hopes to achieve by his acts the mercy of Allah and the bounties of the Hereafter. Being mindful only of worldly pleasure does not conform to belief. It conforms to acknowledgement [of the truth] and knowledge. Belief is above that. Knowledge and acknowledgement are available to a person whom Allah has declared to be an unbeliever. Pharaoh, the Thamud and the Jews met the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and knew him as they knew their own children, but they were the biggest deniers and unbelievers. To strive towards achieving the world and its immediate benefits may conform to this kind of knowledge and recognition, but true belief, which transcends this knowledge, must enable the person who possesses it to work for the sake of Allah and the life to come.

And Allah’s help is sought.

1 See *Tafseer at-Tabari*(8031), Ahmad also reported it (1/463)

The point here is that Allah, the Almighty has placed wealth and poverty as a test and trial for gratitude and patience, truthfulness and falsehood, sincerity and idol worship. Allah, the Exalted, says (what means):

"..in order to test you." (6/165)

He also says (what means):

"Alif, Lam, Mim. Do men imagine that they will be left (at ease) because they say: we believe; and they will not be tested with affliction? We have certainly tested those who were before them. Thus Allah knows those who are sincere and those who are false." (29/1-3)

He further says (what means):

"Your wealth and your children are only temptation, whereas Allah with Him is immense reward." (64/15)

Here, Allah has declared the world as an immediate target and a source of deception and made the Hereafter the place of recompense and reward. He filled the world with desires and attractions as He says (what means):

"Beautiful for mankind is love of joys (that come) from women and sons, and stored-up heaps of gold and silver, and horses branded (with the marks) and cattle and land. This is comfort of the life of this world. And with Allah is a more excellent abode." (3/14)

The Almighty informs us in this verse that the pleasure and desires with which He adorned the world, which the lovers of the world and those who aspire to achieve it prefer over the Hereafter, consist of seven objects:

1. Women, who are the greatest of the adornment and the objects of desire of the world and its biggest temptation.
2. Sons, who are [considered] the source of a man's excellence, pride, honour and glory.
- 3 - 4. Gold and silver, primary sources for all kinds of desires and lust.
5. Marked horses, which are a source of glory and pride for their owners, who use them as a means to subdue their opponents in pursuit and capture [during battles].
6. Cattle, which provide conveyance, food, dress, furnishings, household materials and other sources of benefit.
7. Land, which is the source of sustenance for them and for their cattle. They get their supply of fruits and medicines, etc. from it.

All these, as the Almighty states, are objects of delight of the worldly life, but He encourages His servants to aspire for comfort in the Hereafter and tells them that the latter is better and more lasting than

the former. Therefore, He added (what means):

“Say: Shall I inform you of something better than that? For those who keep away from evil, with their Lord, are gardens underneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide; and pure companions, and contentment from Allah. Allah is Seer of His bondmen.”(3/15)

Who are the people who will be honoured with this comfort and pleasure? Allah, the Almighty described them in the following verses (which mean):

“Those who say: Our Lord! We believe, so forgive us our sins and guard us from the punishment of Fire; the steadfast, the truthful, the obedient, those who spend, those who pray for pardon in the watches of the night.” (3/16, 17)

In the above verses, Allah, the Most High, has declared that the pleasure of the Hereafter, which He has prepared for His pious and devoted friends, is better than the pleasure of this world. This comfort and pleasure, which the pious people will enjoy, is composed of two elements:

Rewards they will enjoy, and more than that; Allah’s contentment with them.

The Almighty says:

“Know that the life of the world is only play, and idle talk, and pageantry, and boasting among you and rivalry in respect of wealth and children, as the likeness of vegetation after rain, whereof growth is pleasing to the husbandman, but afterward it dries up and you see it turning yellow, then it becomes straw.” (57/20)

In this verse, the Almighty reveals the true nature of the world, which is open to people of discernment. It is no more than play and amusement that engage and involve the souls and bodies. Play and amusement are not serious matters; they are a means of keeping people busy and wasting their time. Foolish people become involved in them and pass their lives in them, gaining nothing at the end. Allah, the Exalted, further stated that these things were made attractive to the soul and eyes. If the heart were aware of their true nature, their outcome and end, they [people] would have hated them and would have given the Hereafter preference over them, and would have not paid attention to short-lived pleasures to the detriment of the permanent and everlasting comfort of the life to come.

Imam Ahmad (may Allah have mercy upon him) related on the authority of Abdullah bin Mas’ood (may Allah be pleased with him)

that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: *“What I have to do with the world? The likeness of me and the world is like a traveller who rests on a hot day under the shadow of a tree for a while, then leaves it and goes away.”*¹

Sahl bin Sa’d reported the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as saying: *“Had the world been equal in weight to the wing of a gnat with Allah, the Almighty, He would have not supplied an unbeliever a drink of water from it.”*²

Muslim³ recorded the report of al-Mustawrid bin Shaddad that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: *“The world in relation to the Hereafter is no more than the similitude of one of you who dips his finger in water; let him see what it returns with.”*

The Messenger (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) pointed to his index finger.

At-Tirmithi reported that the above Companion said:

‘I was in the company of the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) with some other people and we came across a dead goat. The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) asked:

“Do you think it was so worthless to its owner that he threw it away like that?”

“Yes, O Messenger of Allah,” the Companions replied, “and that is why they threw it away.”

The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) then remarked:

*“The world is more valueless to Allah than this goat to its owners.”*⁴

At-Tirmithi reported, on the authority of Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“The world is cursed and that which it contains is cursed except the

1 Ahmad (1/441,391), at-Tirmithi (2377), Ibn Majah (4109) and al-Hakim (4/310)

2 At-Tirmithi (2320)

3 Muslim (7197)

4 At-Tirmithi (2321), also reported by Ahmad (4/229), and Ibn Majah (4111)

remembrance of Allah and what He loves, and a learned person or a seeker of knowledge.”¹

Imam Ahmad (may Allah have mercy upon him) reported² Abdullah bin Dinar al-Bahrani as saying:

‘Eesa (Jesus) (peace be upon him) said to the disciples: “I rightly say to you: The sweetness of the world is the bitterness of the Hereafter; and the bitterness of the world is the sweetness of the Hereafter. Allah’s devoted servants are not those who live in luxury. I also tell you the truth that the worst of you in deeds is a learned man who loves the world and gives it preference over the Hereafter. If he was given power, he would make all the people emulate him.”

Makhul narrated:

‘Eesa (Jesus, the son of Mary, peace be upon him), asked the disciples: “O company of disciples, who among you is able to build a house on the waves of the sea?”

They replied: “O Spirit of Allah! Who can do that?”

He said: “Then keep away from the world and do not make it a resting place.”³

Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal (may Allah have mercy upon him) recorded in *Kitab az-Zuhd*⁴ that ‘Eesa, the son of Mary (peace be upon him), used to say:

‘I rightly say to you that eating bread, drinking cold water and sleeping on dunghills with dogs, are enough for someone who wishes to inherit Paradise.’

In the *Musnad*⁵ of Ahmad the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is reported to have said:

“Allah the Exalted, has set the food of the son of Adam as equivalent with the world. Look what it turns to, no matter how much he embellishes it with spices and salt.”

1 At-Tirmithi (2322), and Ibn Majah (2112)

2 *Az-Zuhd*(119)

3 Ibid (118)

4 See p.76)

5 (5/136), also reported by Ibn Hibban (702), al-Tabarani (531)

Allah, glory unto Him, told us that we boast among ourselves with regard to the world. One of us endeavours to acquire it in order to boast of it to others. This is the case with everyone who tries to acquire something for the sake of glory: be it money, rank, power, knowledge or righteousness. Boasting could be of two kinds: good or bad.

Blameworthy boasting is that which people are engaged in regarding the world and its goods.

Good and praiseworthy boasting is that which concerns the Hereafter, and is required of the believers. It means that a person who has excelled others in some areas feels jealous if someone else achieves the same. He would prefer to preserve his achievements exclusively for himself. The Qur'an encourages people to compete in this matter, which means that each man should try to get ahead of the others.

Allah, the Almighty also said that the world is a cause of rivalry over wealth and children. Every individual would like to have more than others. He is delighted when he realizes that he possesses more wealth and has more children than others, and he loves to be known for that. This is the biggest source of distraction from Allah and the Hereafter. Allah, the Almighty points out that in the following verse (which means):

“Striving for more distracts you until you visit the graves. No indeed! You will come to know. Then no indeed! You will come to know.” (102/1-3)

Striving for more encompasses every aspect of life. Anyone who is involved in striving for more of anything is distracted from Allah and the Hereafter; and the verse exhorts him. There are people who are distracted by striving for more money; others are engaged in acquiring more honour or more knowledge. A person desires to acquire more and more knowledge in order to boast and feel proud. Such a man's case is worse than those who strive for greater wealth or higher rank, because the former uses the means of the Hereafter to gain worldly goods, while the latter uses the means of the world for obtaining more of it.

The Almighty, glory be to Him, then described the end and the true nature of the world. He said it was similar to the plants that spring up after rain and whose growth fascinates the unbelievers. The correct interpretation, if Allah wills, of the word '*kuffar*' is 'unbelievers who do not believe in Allah'. This is the meaning that applies to this word wherever

21

it is written in the Qur'an. The word does not mean 'the farmers'. If it were so, the Qur'an would have mentioned them using the name they are commonly known by, i.e. *Zurraa'a*, as it does in 48/29. In the above verse (57/20), unbelievers are specifically mentioned because they are attracted by the world more as it is their abode for which they work and strive. They are more fascinated by its wealth and adornment than are the believers.

Then, Allah, the Most Powerful, described the end of such plants: they dry up and turn yellow. This is also how the world will end and describes its ultimate fate. Even if a man were to possess it from the beginning to the end, he would ultimately lose it. When the end of the world comes, worldly acts will turn into severe torment or the forgiveness of Allah and His good recompense. This is how Ali bin Abu Talib (may Allah be pleased with him) described the world, when he said:

'The world is an abode of truth for the man who is truthful in it; a place of safety for those who learn from it; and a quest of success for him who is at peace with it. There are mosques of the Prophets of Allah, the places of His revelation, the praying places of His angels and the trading stores for His pious servants. They receive mercy in it and gain security. Who can condemn it when it has warned its people and announced its end and the end of its people? It afflicts some people with misfortune and arouses the desire for happiness by its joyful events. It warns, frightens and induces people in various ways. On the eve of regret, some people will blame it and others will praise it because it reminded them and they paid attention, and admonished them and they took it seriously. Now how can you, the man who is deceived by it, blame it? What did it do to deserve this blame? When and how did it deceive you? Was it by the resting places of your fathers under the ground, or by the beds of your mothers in a state of decay? How many people have you seen inheriting their deceased ones? How many ailing people have you hoped to survive? How many patients have you served by your hands expecting them to recover, and asking doctors to prescribe drugs for them? But your mediation did not work with them nor did your quest help. On the day of his death, the world showed you your death and your end.'

Then Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) turned to the graves and said: 'O lonely people, those who are in the ground! Your homes have been occupied, your wealth has been distributed and your spouses have been

married off. This is the news of our world; now tell us what is going on with you.’

Then he turned to us and went on:

‘If they were allowed, they would have told you that the best provision is the consciousness of Allah.’¹

In fact, it is not the world that is to be blamed, but what a person does in it. The world is no more than a bridge or a crossing path to Paradise or Hell. However, since it is surrounded by desires and material riches, it engenders negligence and distraction from Allah and thoughts of the Hereafter; its people are engaged in these matters and it is associated with these elements. This is the reason why it is blamed; otherwise it is the foundation and sowing ground for the Hereafter. The provision of the life to come is acquired in it. It is in this world that souls acquire faith and the knowledge of the love of Allah, the Almighty. They remember Him in order to win His favour. The most comfortable life that people will have in Paradise will be the result of what they did in this life. It is sufficient as proof of its superiority and greatness that it has provisions for cooling the eyes of the lovers of Allah. It gives them happiness of the heart, delight of the soul, peace of mind and incomparable joy by the remembrance, knowledge, love and worship of Allah. It is here that the devoted servants of Allah express their confidence in Him, turn to Him, feel peace of mind and happiness by a sense of being close to Him, enjoy whispering to Him in secret, turn to Him in full devotion and engage with Him disregarding everything else. This world contains His speech, His revelation, His guidance, His spirit which He sent down by His command and His chosen servants.

For these reasons, Ibn Aqil and other learned scholars gave preference to this world over the pleasure of the Hereafter. They argued that the world contains the right of Allah upon His servants, and what is there in the Hereafter is their share and their pleasure; and surely the right of Allah is better than the right of humankind.

They also said that faith and dedication were better than their recompense. In fact, any comparison between the two matters in two different abodes is not correct. Only if the two were together in one place would it have been possible to compare them.

Faith and commitment are the best things in this world, while going to Paradise and seeing the Face of Allah, blessed be He, listening to His speech and attaining His pleasure, are the best things in the Hereafter. The former is the best of what this world has to offer and the latter is the most

1 Ibn Abi ‘l-Dunya in *Dhamm al-Dunya* (147)

excellent of what is available in the life to come. It is not proper to ask which one is better. The world provides the most appropriate means and the Hereafter contains the noblest goals.

And Allah's help is sought.

21 **When** Allah, glory be to Him, described the true nature of the world and exposed its objectives and its end, and how it turns in the end to either severe torment or the forgiveness and favour of Allah, He commanded His servants to race and take the initiative to gain what is better and more lasting, and give it preference over that which is ephemeral and transitory and is mixed with adversities and disturbances. He declared that it was His grace; He gives it to whomever He wishes, and Allah is of infinite bounty. He, blessed be He, said (what means):

"And coin for them the similitude of the life of the world as water which we send down from the sky, and the vegetation of the earth mingles with it and then becomes dry twigs that the winds scatter. Allah is able to do all things." (18/45)

He added that wealth and children are an adornment to a life in this world and that good deeds that remain forever, are the best of what a person should aspire to and for which they can expect a reward.

The Almighty also states (what means):

"The similitude of the life of the world is only as water which We send down from the sky, then the earth's growth of that which men and cattle eat mingles with it till, when the earth has taken on her ornaments and is embellished and her people deem that they are masters of her, Our commandment come by night or by day and We make it as reaped corn as if it had not flourished yesterday. Thus do we expound the revelations for the people who reflect." (10/24)

After telling His servants about the calamities of this world, Allah, the Almighty invited them to the abode of peace that is safe from changes, alterations, expiration and extinction. He called all His servants to it in fairness and chose whomever He willed for His guidance as a matter of grace.

He also stated that wealth and children do not bring people close to Him. It is *Taqwa* – consciousness of Allah – and good behaviour that make a person attain His pleasure. He cautioned people not to be distracted by their wealth and children from the remembrance of Allah; and warned that those who do are the real losers, not those who have little wealth and

fewer children in this world. He prohibited His Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) from turning his eyes to the means of enjoyment that He has provided to the people of the world as a trial and test for them. Allah's provision which He has prepared for him (i.e. the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)) is better and more lasting than that which these people have been given. He also told His Messenger (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) that He gave him seven oft-repeated verses and the glorious Qur'an, which was much better and superior to what other people had been given. These favours of Allah were sufficient to prevent him from turning his eyes to the possessions of the worldly people. The great gifts which Allah has given him in this world and the immense rewards He has in store for him in the Hereafter are far better than all that He has granted others in this world. He, therefore, should never direct his glance to these means of enjoyment.

When it becomes clear that affluence and poverty, tribulation and well-being are the means of trials and tests of men by Allah, the Exalted, who wants to test the patience and gratefulness of His servants, it also becomes clear that the two qualities of patience and gratitude are effective tools that complete one's faith. Every believer must possess them, and each of them is good in its place. Patience where needed is best, just as gratefulness in its place is best. Can they be separate from one another? If patience is an essential component of the concept of gratitude, and gratefulness is a complementary part of the meaning of patience, then each of them becomes a compound entity composed of two things together as illustrated earlier. In this case, one cannot make a comparison between them. That will be possible only when they are separated from one another; and this is an intellectual supposition that exists only in the mind. However, there is one way in which it is feasible to compare between them: that is when sometimes a person's patience overwhelms his quality of gratitude, which is over and above mere patience, in open and secret words and deeds. In such circumstances, he is unable to do more than restrain himself in the situation he finds himself, because the cause is powerful and space is constrained. Consequently, he directs all his strength to controlling the soul and in restraining it for the sake of Allah. In another case, a man's gratitude, expressed in open and secret words and acts, overpowers his ability to control his soul and harness it for the sake of Allah, and his power of will and action becomes stronger than the power of restraint and refraining.

It can be explained in the cases of two persons: one of them is in full control of himself; he is capable of restraining himself from desires and rarely complains about misfortune. This is the maximum extent of what he does. The other has the tendency towards giving and does all types of good, small and big deeds; he is generous and ready to do what is beneficial, but is weak in respect of controlling himself.

The soul has two powers: the power of patience, control and restraint and the power of benevolence, doing good and undertaking works that bring perfection to the soul. The perfection of the soul is achieved by the combination of these two powers.

People, in this respect, can be divided into four categories: The highest is he who possesses both powers, and the lowest is he who does not have either of them. Then there is the one whose power of patience and restraint is stronger than his power of work and sacrifice, and the last is the person in whom these characteristics are reversed.

Now, if gratitude is to be given preference over patience, it will be by giving priority to one quality over the other, or by separating one of them from the other and looking at one without considering the other.

This issue will be explained in full by elucidating the case of the grateful rich and the patient poor. This requires a separate chapter to discuss and arrive at the right judgement between the two.

Chapter Twenty-Two

The argument between scholars as to who is better: the grateful rich or the patient poor and the exposition of the correct view in this respect

This is an issue which has been extensively debated, with both sides trying to support their case in irrefutable ways on the basis of the Qur'an, the Prophetic Traditions, the statements of the early scholars and analogical deduction.

Both parties appear to be able to defend their views with irrefutable evidence. However, the truth cannot be contradictory, and one has to follow what has been established by evidence. A great deal has been said and written by both sides. The jurists, the poor, the rich, the Sufis and scholars of *Tafseer* and *Hadeeth* have all contributed to the debate because it is a general issue and a comprehensive matter that concerns everyone. Abu 'l-Husayn has quoted two statements of Imam Ahmad (may Allah have

mercy upon him) in this respect. One of them declares the case for the patient poor to be better than that for the grateful rich, and is regarded as the more genuine report from the Imam; the second is that the case for grateful rich is better. The latter view is accepted by a number of scholars including Ibn Qutaybah, while the former is held by Abu Ishaq bin Shaqila.

The latter argued on the basis of the following saying of Allah, the Exalted (which means):

“They will be rewarded with highest apartment in Heaven because they exercised patience.” (25/75)

Muhammad bin Ali bin al-Husayn interpreted the verse by saying that “apartment” meant ‘Paradise’ and “exercised patience” refers to their patience on poverty in the world.

They also quoted the report of Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) who said that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) prayed:

“O Allah, keep me alive poor, cause me to die poor and raise me on the Day of Judgement with the group of the poor.”

‘Aa’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) enquired about the reason for this prayer and he replied:

*“They will enter Heaven forty years before the rich. ‘Aa’ishah, do not turn away a poor person. Help him even with a piece of a date. ‘Aa’ishah, love the poor, keep them close to you, Allah will bring you closer to Him on the Day of Judgement.”*¹

I say: neither of these statements proves the case.

The verse of the Qur’an includes the patience of the grateful on being firm in His obedience and in restraint from sinful acts, as it includes the patience of he who is afflicted by poverty and other misfortunes on his steadfastness. Even if the verse indicated the superiority of patience on poverty alone, it would not imply that patience was better than gratitude, because the Qur’an couples the reward for patience with the reward for being grateful. Allah says (what means):

- ***“We shall recompense the grateful.”*** (3/145)
- ***“Allah will reward the grateful.”*** (3/144)

As a matter of fact, He declared that His contentment rests on gratitude, and His contentment is greater than His recompense by the Heaven and that which it contains. If Allah is going to reward the people of patience

1 At-Tirmithi (2352)

by granting them an apartment for their deeds, it does not mean that he will not recompense the grateful people as well with an apartment for their deeds and for being thankful.

As for the *Hadeeth* quoted above, it does not prove either point for the following two reasons:

First, it is not authentic; it is reported by Muhammad bin Thabit al-Kufi from al-Harith bin an-Nu'man, and al-Harith is not regarded as reliable by the authors of the *Saheeh* collections. Al-Bukhaari (may Allah have mercy upon him) declared him as *Munkar al-Hadeeth*. This caused At-Tirmithi (may Allah have mercy upon him) to declare this report as not authentic or good, and that it was weak.

Secondly, even if the *Hadeeth* were authentic it does not support their claim. The poverty that Allah loves to see in His servants is not the lack of wealth, but a humbleness of the heart, demonstrated by submissiveness, humility, devotion and dedication to Allah. This humbleness is not opposed to riches nor is it conditioned to poverty. The submission of the heart to Allah Almighty and its humbleness to His greatness, glory, majesty and His Names and Attributes, is better and more excellent than the humility caused by the lack of wealth. In the same way, the patience of a resourceful person in keeping away from a sin by his own choice and free will, coupled with the fear of Allah and love for Him, is much higher than the resistance of a destitute man who does possess the same capability. Allah, the Almighty granted a number of His Prophets and Messengers wealth and power, and it did not prevent them from humbling themselves to Him.

Imam Ahmad (may Allah have mercy upon him) related Abu al-Salil as saying:

'Prophet Daawood (David) (peace be upon him) whenever he entered a mosque, would look for the circle of the lowliest group of the children of Israel and join it, and say: 'A poor man among the poor people.'¹

He did this despite the abundant power and wealth that Allah, the Almighty had granted him in addition to appointing him as a Prophet.

Abu Barzah al-Asalami reported that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"The poor Muslim will go to Paradise about forty years before the rich ones. Noticing this, the rich Muslims would wish on the Day of Judgement

1 *Az-Zuhd*(92)

that they were poor in the world.”¹

I say: This statement of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), is established by the narration of a number of the Companions including Abu Hurayrah, Abdullah bin ‘Amr, Jabir bin Abdullah, Abu Sa’id and Anas bin Malik (may Allah be pleased with them all). However, it does not indicate that the poor Muslims’ status will be higher than the rich ones when they are admitted in Paradise, but only shows that they will go ahead because they will have little to account for. Undoubtedly, the just ruler’s admission into Heaven will be delayed due to their accounting, and the same is true of the rich grateful person. Nevertheless, their late arrival does not mean that their position in Paradise will be lower than that of the poor people. The wish of rich people to have been poor in the world does not indicate their low status either. It is like the just judge, who, noticing the horrible condition of the Day of Reckoning, will wish on certain occasions that he had not judged between two persons concerning even a date. Poverty and obscurity is the station of safety, whereas richness and authority is the position of loss or gain.

Abu al-Husayn also said that Ibn ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) once asked his Companions:

“Which man is good?”

Some replied: “The rich man, who pays his dues and those due on his wealth.”

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: *“He is good but not excellent. The best person is a poor believer who gives despite his meagre resources.”*

I say that the author did not cite the chain of the report so that we can judge it, and where the quality of a report is not clear it cannot be accepted as a proof. Even supposing it is authentic, it does not prove the case. It shows the merit of a poor man who gives in charity despite his straitened circumstances, thus combining in himself the patience of the poor and the gratefulness of the rich. He acquires the cause and the source of superiority. No doubt, it is the best of the three categories. His single *Dirham* is better than 100,000 Dirhams from those who are rich. It is attested by the following statement of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him): *“A single Dirham surpasses 100,000 Dirhams.”*

1 See *Kanz al-Ummal* (6/475)

The Companions asked: ‘How can a single *Dirham* be better than 100,000 *Dirhams*, O Messenger of Allah?’

He replied: “A poor man had only two *Dirhams* and he gave one of them in charity. On the other hand a rich man had plenty of money and took only 100,000 out of it and spent in charity.”

This *Hadeeth* is reported by an-Nasaa’i on the authority of Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him).¹

Al-Bayhaqi² narrated that Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

‘Three people went to the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and one of them said: ‘I had 100 ounces of silver and gave out 10 ounce in charity. The second person said: I had 100 *Dinars* and gave out 10 *Dinars* in charity. The last person said: I had 10 *Dinars* and gave out one of it in charity.’

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said to them: “All of you will receive an equal reward because everyone gave one tenth of his money in charity.”

Al-Hasan (may Allah have mercy upon him) said:

‘A man said to ‘Uthman bin Affan (may Allah be pleased with him): ‘You wealthy people have taken all the good because you give out in charity, free slaves, perform pilgrimage and spend in good causes.’

‘Uthman (may Allah be pleased with him) replied:

‘You envy us and we envy you. By Allah, a single *Dirham* earned by efforts that one spends is better than 10,000 *Dirhams* of a rich person, which are like drops from the sea.’³

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that he asked the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him):

‘Which charity is the best?’

He replied:

“That which is the utmost effort for a destitute. Start with those for whom you are responsible.”⁴

It is recorded in the *Musnad* and *Saheeh* of Ibn Hibban that Abu Dharr

1 An-Nasaa’i (2529), also reported by Ibn Khuzaymah (2443), Ibn Hibban (3347) and al-Hakim (1/416)

2 See al-Sunan (4/182), also reported by Ahmad (1/96, 114) and al-Bazzar (841)

3 Al-Bayhaqi in *Shu’ab* (3182), Ibn al-Mubarak in *az-Zuhd* (770)

4 Abu Daawood (1677), also reported by Ahmad (2/358), Ibn Khuzaymah (2444, 2451), Ibn Hibban (3346) and al-Hakim (1/414)

(may Allah be pleased with him) said:

I asked the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him):

‘Which charity is the best?’

He replied: “The utmost effort from a destitute.”¹

Abdullah bin Ubshi narrated that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“Which act is the best?”

He replied:

“Belief that is free from doubt, *Jihad* that is free from dishonesty and pilgrimage that is accepted.”

‘Then which prayer is best?’ the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was asked.

He replied: “The one with long standing.”

He was further questioned: ‘Which charity is the best?’

He replied: “The utmost effort of a destitute.”

The next question was: ‘Which emigration is the best?’

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) replied: “The act of the one who abandons all that Allah has prohibited.”

‘Which *Jihad* is the best?’ he was asked.

He replied: “The *Jihad* of the one whose blood is shed and whose horse is slaughtered.”²

All these reports show that the charity given by the destitute person who exerts his utmost effort, is better than the charity given by a wealthy man, who gives out some of his money which is not going to affect his wealth, even if it is a large amount, to spend in the cause of Allah. All actions are graded by Allah on the basis of what is in the heart and not by their quantity. It is the power of the intention, the truthfulness and sincerity of the person and his intention to put the cause of Allah over his personal interests, which gives merit to the charity. Where does the charity of a person who places Allah above his soul, and gives out the bread that is his sole provision, stand in comparison to the charity of a man who gives out 100,000 *Dirhams* from his enormous wealth, which is just like a drop in the ocean? The bread of the former is heavier on the scales of Allah than the 100,000 *Dirhams* of the latter.

And Allah’s help is sought.

1 Ahmad (5/178) Ibn Hibban (361)

2 An-Nasaa’i (2527), Ahmad (3/411) and Abu Daawood (1449)

The advocates of the superiority of poverty also argue their case by quoting the report of Abu Sa'id al-Khudri (may Allah be pleased with him) that he heard the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) saying:

*“O Allah, let me die poor and don't cause me to die as a rich man.”*¹

This report is not authentic because one of its narrators in the chain, namely Khalid bin Yazid al-Dimashqi, is unanimously declared as weak and his narration as unacceptable.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah (may Allah have mercy upon him) was asked about this question of the superiority of the grateful rich or patient poor and he said:

“Many later scholars have disputed the case to decide which one is better: the grateful rich or the steadfast poor? Some of the scholars favoured the poor and the others the rich. Two views are reported from Imam Ahmad (may Allah have mercy upon him). There is no statement reported from the Companions or their followers concerning this issue.”

A third group held the opinion that no group is better than the other except by their quality of piety. The one who is stronger in faith and greater in piety is superior. If they are on an equal footing in these qualities, they will be considered to be on the same level. Ibn Taymiyyah (may Allah have mercy upon him) then remarked that this was the most appropriate view, because both the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* are unequivocal in that any difference among the people is based on their level of faith and consciousness of Allah, the Almighty. Allah says (what means):

“If he is rich or poor, Allah is more suitable to them.” (4/135)

Among the previous Prophets and earlier generations there were rich people who were above many poor ones; and there were the poor who were far better than many rich people. The perfect people are those who stood out in both instances. They demonstrated full gratitude and persevered in complete patience, as was the case with our Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and Abu Bakr and 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with them).

However, poverty may be more useful to some people and wealth for others, just as illness is good for some individuals and health for others. It is supported by the *Hadeeth* which the Prophet (may peace and blessings

1 Ibn Adi in *al-Kamil* (3/884), al-Tabarani in *Kitab ad-du'a* (1426) and al-Hakim (4/322)

of Allah be upon him) narrated from Allah, blessed and exalted be He, who said:

“There are people among my servants for whom wealth is appropriate, if I make them poor it will damage them; and there are those who are good with poverty; if I grant them wealth they will be corrupted. There are people among my servants who are right with health, if they suffer from illness it will ruin them; and there are others who are right with illness, if I give them health they will be spoiled. I alone manage the affairs of My servants, for surely I am aware and watchful over them.”¹

It is established that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“The poor Muslims will enter Paradise before the rich.”²

According to another report, when the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) taught the poor Companions certain words to say after the prayer, the rich among them heard about it and they started saying them as well. The poor Companions reported this to the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and he said (what means): ***“This is the grace of Allah, He grants it to whoever He wishes.”*** (62/4)

The poor certainly will be ahead of the rich in entering Paradise because their reckoning will be easier, whereas the rich will be delayed by a lengthy reckoning. After one of them is cleared, if his good deeds are greater than those of the poor man, he will be placed above him even though he came in after him. This is like the seventy thousand who will enter Heaven without reckoning – among them will be the Companion Ukasha bin Mihsan (may Allah be pleased with him) –it may be that someone will go to Paradise after reckoning and be placed in a higher position than theirs. The only advantage they will have is that they are saved from the hardship of reckoning.

This entire discussion is about the poverty referred to in the Qur’an and the Prophet’s *Sunnah* and it is opposite to the riches that allow a man to take *Zakat* or which does not make *Zakat* obligatory on him.

Poverty has now become, in the minds of many people, equivalent to asceticism, devotion and good behaviour. A person having these qualities is called poor, though he may be very wealthy. The one who does not possess these characteristics is not regarded as poor even though he is

1 Ibn Abi al-Dunya in *al-Awliya* (1), Abu Nu’aym in *al-Hilya* (8/318) and al-Bayhaqi in *al-Asma’ wa al-Sifat* (121)

2 Ahmad and at-Tirmithi

penniless. This idea is also known as *Tasawwuf*.

Some scholars distinguish between the meaning of the poor and the Sufis; and some place the poor above the Sufis in grade and others do the opposite.

Strictly speaking, one should not pay attention to the newly introduced words, but to the words and meanings which have been cited in the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*. Allah, the Most High, described the characteristics of His chosen servants to be faith and consciousness of Allah. Whoever acquires the greatest share of these will have the higher status, regardless of whether they are poor or rich.

And Allah knows best.

Chapter

Twenty-Three

The case for the poor as explained in the Qur'an, the Sunnah, the sayings of the early scholars and by analogical deduction

The poor people argued for their merit that Allah, glory be to Him, did not refer to riches or wealth except in one of the following ways:

1. **First**, to condemn it, as He says (what means):
 - *“Nay, but man transgresses all bounds when he thinks himself as self-sufficient.” (96/6, 7)*
 - *“If Allah were to enlarge the provision for His servants, they would indeed transgress beyond all bounds through the earth.” (42/27)*
 - *“Were it not all men might become of one (evil) way of life, We would provide for everyone who disbelieves in the Merciful silver roofs for their houses and (silver) stairways on which they ascend, and (silver) doors to their houses and couches they recline on, and golden ornaments. All these are mere enjoyments of this life, while the hereafter with your Lord is for those who are conscientious of Him.” (43/33-35)*

- ***“Do not let their wealth or their children impress you; in reality Allah’s plan is to punish them through them in this world and their souls may perish in their denial of Allah.” (9/55)***
- ***“Wealth and children are the attractions of this worldly life.” (18/46)***
- ***“The love of desirable things is made alluring for men – women, children, gold and silver treasures piled up high.” (3/14)***

There are many other similar verses.

2. Secondly, to declare that wealth is a source of a trial and test as He says (what means):
 - ***“Your wealth and your children are only a test for you.” (64/15)***
 - ***“Do they reckon that, by giving them wealth and sons, We race to give them good things? They do not understand.” (23/55, 56)***

Allah tells us that He tests people with wealth as He tests with poverty. He says (what means):

- ***“As for man when his Lord tries him by giving him honour and blessings, he says: My Lord has honoured me.” (89/15)***
- ***“We test you by evil and by good and to Us you will return.” (21/35)***

3. Thirdly, to confirm that wealth and children are not a means of coming closer to Allah; while faith and good deeds are. He says (what means):

“Neither your wealth nor your children will bring you nearer to Us, but those who believe and do good deeds will have multiple rewards for what they have done, and will live safely in the lofty dwellings of Paradise.” (34/37)

4. Fourthly, to tell people that Allah has made this world, and its riches and wealth, a source of delight for those who will have no share in the enjoyment of the Hereafter, which is exclusively for the people with God consciousness. He says (what means):

- ***“Do not gaze longingly at what we have given some of them to enjoy, the finery of this present life: We test them through this, but the provision of your Lord is better and more lasting.” (20/131)***
- ***“On the day when those who deny the truth are brought before the Fire, it will be said to them: You squandered the good things you were given in your earthly life, you took your fill of pleasure there.” (46/20)***

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), referred to this when he said to Umar (may Allah be pleased with him):

“Are you not satisfied that they have the world and we have the Hereafter?”

This report will be cited later.

5. Fifthly, Allah, exalted be He, did not mention the people who have an abundance of wealth and luxuries except to condemn them. He says (what means):

- ***“Before, they overindulged in luxury.”*** (56/45)
- ***“When we decide to destroy a town, we command those corrupted by wealth (to reform), but they (persisted in their) disobedience.”*** (17/16)
- ***“Do not try to escape. Return to your homes and the pleasure you revelled in: that you may be questioned.”*** (21/13)

6. Sixthly, Allah, the Most High, has condemned the lovers of money as He says (what means):

- ***“You consume inheritance greedily, and you love wealth with a passion.”*** (89/19, 20)

Here Allah condemned and reproached them for the love of wealth.

7. Seventhly, He reproached those who desire the world and its wealth and affluence, and praised those who disapproved of their actions and rebuked them. He spoke of the wealthiest man of the period (i. e. Qarun) (which means):

“He went out among his people in all his pomp, and those whose aim was the life of this world said: ‘If only we had been given something like what Qarun has been given. He really is very fortunate man, but those who were given knowledge said: Alas for you! Allah’s reward is better for those who believe and do good deeds: only those who are steadfast will attain it.’” (28/ 79)

They told their people that what Allah has in store for those who have faith and do good deeds is far better than worldly wealth. This advice was given by the men of knowledge and Paradise, as indicated by His saying (what means): ***“The reward of Allah is best”***, and the path of faith and good deeds is the portion of the men who remain patient in their poverty and resist worldly allure and the desire for the luxuries of the rich people. Allah described them as the people of knowledge, but not those who desired the world and its enjoyments.

8. Eighthly, Allah, the Almighty disapproved the claim of those who thought that superiority is based on wealth which is needed to establish their rule.

“Their prophet said to them: Allah has now appointed Talut to be your king,’ but they said: How can he be king over us when we have a greater

right to rule than he? He does not even have great wealth. He said: Allah has chosen him over you, and has given him great knowledge and stature.” (2/247)

Allah rejected these people’s claims and told them that superiority and a high status was not attained by riches, as they thought, but was achieved by knowledge.

Allah says (what means):

“Say: In Allah’s grace and mercy let them rejoice: these are better than what they accumulate.” (10/58)

His grace and mercy are knowledge, faith and the Qur’an, and what they accumulate is wealth and its means. Similar statements are in (43/32)

9. Ninthly, Allah, the Most High, told His servants that striving to gather wealth and other materials distracted people and turned them away from striving and preparing for the Hereafter. He warned them saying (what means):

“Striving for more distracts you until you go into your graves. Nay indeed! You will come to know. Nay indeed! In the end you will come to know.” (102/1-4)

He, the Exalted, stated that seeking abundant wealth engaged the people of the world and turned them away from remembering Allah and thinking about the Hereafter until death overtook them and they went to their graves. They failed to learn a lesson from those before them who followed this path. Allah, the Almighty spoke of ‘visited the graves’ to indicate they were not going to reside and settle in the grave; they were like visitors, staying there for a while and then leaving. It was the same as their stay in the world. They remained in it like visitors, not as settlers. The permanent and everlasting abode is Heaven or Hell. It is to be noted that Allah did not specify the provision that the people strive to gather, because it is an act of greed and struggle that is condemned, not the provision for which it is made. It is like the saying ‘play and amusement kept you busy’ without mentioning the type of play and amusement. Perhaps He, the Almighty, left it without specification to include everything a man strives to accumulate in this world, which may be money, status, possession of slaves, property, farms or knowledge, not meant for the sake of Allah or acts that do not bring him closer to Allah. All these are the provisions that a man strives to get more and more of, but which turn him away from remembrance of Allah and thoughts of the Hereafter.

Abdullah bin al-Shikhkhir narrated, as recorded in *Saheeh Muslim*, saying: 'I reached the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and he was reading [the Qur'anic verse which means]: **'Striving has distracted you'**.

He said:

"The son of Adam says: 'my money, my money'. Do you have money except what you give in charity and send ahead, or eat and consume or put on and wear down?"

Then Allah, the Almighty gives a stern warning to the person who is engaged in striving for more, that he would find his wealth destroyed like scattered dust. He would realize then that the world, in which he spent all his energy and time to amass abundant wealth, was no more than a deception and illusion. He would find out that his actions were harmful to him. He would discover that he had wasted all his efforts to amass more, as others like him would also find out. He would face from Allah what he never foresaw. His greed for more, which kept him away from Allah and the Hereafter, would become the biggest cause for his torment. He was punished by his greed in this world, then he would face torment in the *Barzakh* and finally on the Day of Judgement. He would be the most unfortunate person, as his efforts in getting more brought him ruin –not greater benefit and safety [as he expected]–and resulted in him being among those who were unlucky. His high status in the world will not avail him except that he will be placed among those who are disgraced. Therefore, a striving for more is reduced to little and causes a great calamity! The affluence he strove for in fact produced poverty and what he thought to be good turned out to be evil. When the veil is removed, he will cry out (what means):

"Would that I had provided for this life to come!" (89/24)

He would say (what means):

"Would that I had worked for the obedience of Allah before my death!"
"O my Lord, send me back perchance I may do good deed in the world I have left. No, indeed, it is only a word that he is saying." (23/99, 100)

However, his words will not be trusted and his request to return will not be answered.

Pay attention to his saying: 'my Lord'; first, he pleads with his Lord, then turns to the angels who are responsible for bringing him before his Lord and says: 'take me back.' Then he states his reason for asking to be sent back and that is to do good deeds with his wealth, rank, power, authority and the means he has left behind. However, he would be told: 'No, never!

You have no way to return. You were given a span of life which was enough as an admonition.’

Since the way of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Benevolent, is to listen to one who asks for help and to give him respite to regain what he has missed, the Almighty discloses that the request of this neglectful person for going to the world is just a senseless plea. His nature and character show that he will not do good deeds if he is given a chance to return. This is only what he says with his tongue. If he were to be sent back, he would surely repeat his previous acts and do what he was ordered to avoid. Certainly, he is a liar. The wisdom of the Wisest Ruler, with His might, knowledge and greatness, rejects his request, because it would be in vain. If he were to be sent back, his behaviour in this second term would be the same as in the first one. This has been described by Allah in the following verse (which means):

“If you could but see when they are made to stand before the Fire and will say:

“If only we could be sent back, we would not reject the revelation of our Lord, but be among the believers.” No, the truth they used to hide will become all too clear to them. Even if they were brought back, they would only return to the very thing that was forbidden to them –they are such liars!” (6/27, 28)

Many commentators have tried to explain the meaning of the above verse. If you examine what they have said, you will find that their interpretations are not satisfactory or convincing. The meaning of the verse is greater and more sublime than what they have said. They failed to understand the use of preposition ‘*bal*’, or the meaning that was exposed to them, which they concealed. These commentators thought that what was exposed to them was the punishment. However, when they noticed that it did not fit in with the following phrase ‘what they used to hide’, they claimed that there was an omission, meaning that they were hiding the news of what they used to hide.

Then another question arose which they could not answer, which was that these people did not hide their disbelief and polytheism; rather they proclaimed them, called others to them and fought for them. When the commentators realized that they would face this question, they said that those people, in certain situations on the Day of Judgement, would hide their disbelief and deny it and say (what means):

“By Allah, our Lord, we were not polytheists.” (6/23)

Later, when they were brought before Hell, the requital for what they had concealed became manifest to them.

Al-Wahidi said that in his view of the commentators:

“The scholars holding the above view did not offer a plausible explanation. The context, the use of *bal* and the information that if they were to be returned back, they would continue doing those works which they were ordered to avoid, as well as their claim that they were not polytheists – all this does not fit together with what they said.”

Another group including al-Zajjaj gave the following explanation:

‘Now the reality of resurrection becomes evident to the followers, which their leaders kept secret from them.’ This explanation needs further examination and obviously, this is unsatisfactory.

The meaning which al-Mubarrad cited is better, as he said:

‘As if their disbelief was hidden from them because they were not aware of its outcome.’

He wanted to say that since the evil consequence and the harm of their unbelief were not evident to them, it was as though their unbelief was hidden from them, and they were not aware of its real nature. When they witnessed the torment, its evil consequences and its real nature became exposed to them.

He further illustrated saying: “It is as if you say to someone whom you have told earlier about something: ‘Now you see what I had told you’, though it was known to him before.”

It is not easy to speak about the disbelief and polytheism which they were openly involved in and were calling every city-dweller and nomad towards, or to say that they were hiding it because its evil consequences were not obvious to them. It is not said about a person who is openly engaged in wrongdoing, corruption, killing and striving to spread corruption in the land that he kept his acts secret because he did not realize the evil consequences of his activities, which were hidden from him.

Thus, the meaning of the verse is – and Allah knows best what He wanted to convey by His words -- that when the polytheists would stand before the Fire, watch it, and realise that they were going to be cast into it, they would wish that they could be sent back to the world, where they would believe in Allah and His signs and would not reject His Messengers. Allah, the Exalted, exposed them and declared that this was not possible. Belief was not in their nature; in fact, it was disbelief, association of others with Allah and rejection of His Signs and Messengers, which are deeply rooted in their nature. If they were to be returned, they would behave in the same

way they did earlier. They are liars in their claims that they would believe and accept the message.

Once the aim and sense of the verse become clear, the meaning of 'bal' becomes obvious and what they were concealing, which became evident to them, becomes known as well. It also becomes clear why they wished to be returned. These people realized that what they were doing in their worldly life was wrong, and that the Messengers of Allah told them the truth; they were convinced and reassured of it, yet they kept it secret, did not reveal it, and conspired to hide the truth. The cause of their wish to be returned and to believe was not the realization of the truth of the Messengers, of which they claimed they were not aware, but that they knew it but concealed it. That they were wrong and the Messengers were right will become evident on the Day of Judgement, when they will recognise it after keeping it secret throughout their life on earth. Now, even if they were to be sent back, their souls would not let them believe and they would return to disbelief and denial. Their wish to return is not because they realize on that day that the call of the Messengers was true, and association of others with Allah was false; they wish it when they witness the torment that they will be unable to bear.

It is like a man who hides the love and affection for a person, and knows that his love is false and it is in his interest to desist from it. It is said to him: 'Beware! If this person's guardian happens to know of your infatuation, he would punish you.'

He himself knows it but stubbornly insists and claims that his affection for his beloved is right. However, when the guardian catches him and intends to punish him, and he becomes certain of the punishment, he disavows everything and says that he would never ever meet him again; but the love in his heart and the strong affection would make him return to his behaviour. He would do this even after he has seen the punishment and suffered from it. It is at the time of punishment that his mistake and the advice of the person who tried to stop him become evident to him, even though he knew it all along. If he were to be left, he would go back to his love.

Consider the agreement of *Idrab* with this meaning. It is the denial of the claim that if we were sent back we would believe and accept the Messenger (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) because it has become clear to us that what the Messengers said was right. They will be told: This is not true. You knew it but tried to hide it. There is nothing new that you

were not aware of. You cannot be excused, because you knew everything, and you conspired to hide and conceal it.

And Allah knows best.

You should consider this parenthetical section in the middle of the discussion of the issue as it may prove to be significant and useful.

And Allah's help is sought.

Now let us go back to complete our discussion about the evil of getting involved in greed in acquiring more and more worldly wealth.

After the statement of Allah, the Exalted (which means): "**Nay, if only you knew for certain.**" (102:5) any answer is omitted. However, the nature of a response is indicated by what has been said before i.e. when striving for more distracts you – because you missed the perfect and certain knowledge and understanding that takes man to the level of certainty which cannot be doubted or contested -- if such knowledge does happen to reach the heart, it will not allow it to be distracted. Merely the knowledge of an action being reprehensible and its evil consequences may not be enough to stop a person from doing it. When a person acquires that 'certain' knowledge and understanding it will strongly urge him to keep away. If that knowledge reaches the stage of visualization then rarely will he be distracted. This sense has been conveyed by Hassan bin Thabit in his poetry about the people of Badr:

"We marched and they marched to Badr to their death; had they known with certainty they wouldn't have marched."

Allah says (what means):

"Nay, you will come to know soon. Nay you will come to know soon." (102)

It is said that the repetition of the sentence is to emphasize the acquisition of the knowledge like His statement:

"Nay, they are going to know. Then they are going to know." (78/4,5)

It is also said that it is not for the emphasis but the first knowledge will be at the time of the death and the second one in the grave.

This is the view of al-Hasan and Muqatil; and Ata' reported it from Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him).

This view is supported by the following reasons:

1. To give new information and new benefit is the original character of the language. Here it is available, and moreover, it makes the sense magnificent and significant without disturbing the eloquence.

2. Two sentences are divided by 'Thumma' (meaning 'then'), which gives the sense of the gap between the two stages in terms of time and importance.
3. This meaning is in agreement with the real situation. A dying man comes to know who he really is, then in the grave, and after that, he comes to know more fully than he had known before.
4. Ali bin Abu Talib (may Allah be pleased with him) and other early scholars took the verse to refer to the torment of the grave. At-Tirmithi narrated that Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

'We remained in doubt concerning the punishment of the grave until "striving for more" (Ch.102) was revealed.'¹

Al-Wahidi remarked that Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) meant to say that "Nay you will know soon" spoke about the grave.

5. It is in line with what follows this verse, i. e. "*You will certainly see Hell, then you will see it with absolute certainty.*" (102/6, 7) This second vision is different from the first one in two ways: the first is unqualified whereas the second one is qualified with absolute certainty. They are cited in sequence, the second one after the first.

The chapter ends with a forceful declaration stressed by the preposition of swearing (*Waw*), *Laam* of emphasis and double *Noon* that people are going to be questioned about this felicity. Everybody is going to be asked about the pleasure he enjoyed in this world whether or not he acquired it by lawful means. When he has been asked this question, he will be asked: Did he give thanks to Allah for it and use it to do good deeds?

The first question will be about the methods of obtaining it and the second one about how it was spent.

At-Tirmithi reported on the authority of Ibn Mas'ood (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

*"The feet of the son of Adam will not move on the Day of Judgement from their place until he answers five questions: How did he pass his life? How and where did he exhaust his youth? Where did he acquire his wealth from, and where did he spend it? What did he do with the knowledge that he acquired?"*²

¹ At-Tirmithi (3355)

² At-Tirmithi (2416)

Abu Barzah reported that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

*"The feet of a person will not move on the Day of Judgement until he is asked about his life - how he passed it, his knowledge - how did he put it in practice, his wealth - how did he gain it, and where did he spend it, and his body - how did he exhaust it."*¹

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"The first thing a man is going to be asked on the Day of Judgement will be about his bounty. He will be asked:

*'Did we not give your body health? Did we not supply you cold water?'"*²

Az-Zubayr bin al-Awwam (may Allah be pleased with him) related that when *"then you will certainly be asked about bounty"*, was revealed he asked the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) :

"O Messenger of Allah, which amenity are we going to be asked about? It is only two black things: dates and water."

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) replied:

*"That will certainly happen."*³

In a narration by Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) it appears like this:

'It is only two black substances, and the enemy is in front of us and our swords are on our shoulders.

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

*"It will happen."*⁴

This statement of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) that *"it is going to happen"*, may refer to the comfort and amenities that will come and you will enjoy. It may also be a reference to the reckoning, in that the question about this is going to be asked, even if it is only about dates and water, because they are also the bounty of Allah.

This is supported by the narration which says that the Companions ate with the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) dates and meat and drank cold water and then the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

1 Ibid (2417)

2 Ibid (2358). It is also reported by Ibn Hibban (7364) and al-Hakim (4/138)

3 At-Tirmithi (3356), see also Ibn Majah (4158 and Ahmad (1/164)

4 At-Tirmithi (3357)

“It is a bounty about which you are going to be asked on the Day of Judgement.”¹

The question will be about giving thanks for it and fulfilling its due.

At-Tirmithi ²reported from Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“A man will be brought on the Day of Judgement as though he is a lamb, and will be made to stand before Allah, the Exalted, Who will ask him: ‘I gave you and conferred on you plenty and blessed you with my grace. What did you do with them?’

He will reply: ‘My Lord! I amassed them, invested, and left more. Let me go and bring them to you. This man had not brought any good deeds, and hence will be driven to Hell,’

Abu Sa’id and Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with them) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“A man will be brought on the Day of Judgement and Allah will ask him: ‘Didn’t I grant you hearing, sight, wealth and children, and make serviceable to you the livestock and farm, and let you be in charge of them and enjoy them? Did you ever think that you were going to see this day? He will reply: ‘No.’

Then Allah will say to him:

‘Today I will forget you as you had forgotten me.’”³

A group of commentators on the Qur’an maintained that it is the unbelievers who are addressed in the verse and it is they who will be questioned about the bounties. This has been reported from al-Hasan and Muqatil, and al-Wahidi preferred it and supported it by the *Hadeeth* of Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) who said:

‘When this verse was sent down I asked the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him):

“Tell me that barley bread, meat and the dates I ate, and the sweet water I drank with you in the house of Abu al-Hatham bin al-Tayhan, are these among those bounties about which we are going to be questioned?

The Messenger (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) replied: “It is the unbelievers who are going to be asked.” Then he recited (what

1 Muslim (5313) and at-Tirmithi (2369)

2 See (2427)

3 Ibid (2428)

means):

“We will recompense only the unbelievers.” (34/17)

Al-Wahidi (may Allah have mercy upon him) added:

‘The outward meaning supports this view because the whole chapter addresses the unbelievers and warns them. The meaning also confirms this. The unbelievers deserve to be questioned about the bounties of Allah because they did not fulfil the dues of those bounties. Instead, they associated other beings with Him and worshipped them. Therefore, they will be asked as a rebuke: Did they fulfil their duties concerning those favours or neglect them? Then they will face torment for not giving thanks by acknowledging the Oneness of the Nourisher.

He said that this was the meaning of al-Hasan and Muqatil’s saying that it was only the unbelievers who would be questioned about these bounties.

I say: There is no indication in the Qur’anic words, or in any authentic *Hadeeth*, or even in the evidences of reason, that the address is directed exclusively at the unbelievers. On the contrary, the apparent structure, the obvious *Sunnah* and analogy, all indicate that the address is directed at anyone who is distracted by becoming engaged in striving for more. Therefore, there is no reason to say that any particular group is intended. It is also supported by the report that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said when he read the chapter:

“The son of Adam says: My money, my money. You have no money except what you ate and consumed, or put on and wear down.”

It is reported by Muslim.¹

The person speaking about money may be a Muslim or an unbeliever. The traditions cited above also imply the same. The query of the Companions also suggests the general sense because they asked the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him): ‘Which bounty are we going to be asked about? It is only about the two black substances.’ If the unbelievers were addressed specifically, he would have clarified it and said:

‘Why are you concerned? It is about the unbelievers.’

It is clear that the Companions understood the general sense; and the traditions clearly point to it. The man to whom the Qur’an was revealed (i.e. the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) also confirmed their understanding of the general application. As for the report of Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) cited above, it is not

1 (2958)

authentic.

The authentic report of the incident testifies the falsity of the above version. Here is the report as cited in the *Saheeh* of Muslim¹ on the authority of Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) who said:

“The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) came out of his house one day or one night, and he found Abu Bakr and ‘Umar. “What brings you two out of your houses at this time?” he asked.

‘Hunger, O Messenger of Allah,’ they replied.

“By the One in Whose hand is my soul, that is the very reason for me to come out of my home! Let’s go,” the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said.

They walked with the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and went to the house of one of the *Ansaar* (Helpers). He was not at home, but when his wife saw the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), she welcomed him. The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) asked:

“Where is so and so?”

She replied: ‘He has gone to fetch drinking water for us.’

Soon after the Ansaari arrived and seeing the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and his two Companions he said:

‘Praise be to Allah! Nobody has more honourable guests than I have today.’ Then he brought a bunch of ripe dry dates and unripe dates and asked them to eat. Afterward he took a knife and went to slaughter a goat. The Messenger (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said to him: “Don’t slaughter a goat which gives milk.”

He slaughtered a goat and offered its meat to them. They ate the meat and the dates and drank until they were satisfied. The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said to Abu Bakr and Umar (may Allah be pleased with them):

“By Allah, in Whose hand is my soul! You are going to be questioned about this bounty on the Day of Judgement. You came out of your homes because of hunger and returned having enjoyed this bounty.”

This authentic report leaves no room to doubt that the Qur’anic statement is general and not specifically directed towards unbelievers.

In addition, the factual evidence also bears witness that the text does not exclusively concern the unbelievers. Many Muslims are distracted by

1 (5313)

striving for more; as a matter of fact, most of them are affected by it. The discourse of the Qur'an is directed to everyone who reads it, although the Companions of the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) were the first people to be addressed by it; nevertheless the people who came after them were also included. It is a simple religious fact, even though some scholars of the late period contest it. Their view is not worth considering. We, in the present, the people who passed before us, and those who will come after us, are all included in the following Divine commandment (which means):

"O believers, fasting is prescribed for you" (2/123) and other commandments; just as the Companions were included in it. In the same way, Almighty's statement (which means): ***"Striving for more has distracted you"***, is a direct address to all those who fall under this description of being distracted and involved in amassing wealth, and all are involved in different degrees regarding this behaviour.

Saying that the true believers are not distracted by greed in amassing more and hence they are not included in the warning to those who were distracted, has led some people to believe that the warning is reserved for the unbelievers. They could not take it as a general warning and felt that unbelievers deserved it more.

The answer to this question is that here the discourse is directed at the whole of humankind. This is the style of the Qur'an in condemnation as it is evident from the following verses (which mean):

- *"Mankind is ever hasty."* (17/11)
- *"Man is miserly."* (17/100)
- *"Surely mankind is ungrateful to his Lord."* (100/6)
- *"And mankind took it, surely he is unjust, ignorant."* (33/72)
- *"Indeed man is ungrateful."* (22/66)

There are many other examples.

Humankind as such is devoid of any good quality such as useful knowledge and good deeds. It is Allah, the Exalted Who grants these merits and makes him reach perfection. Man by himself is unable to achieve them. He has in himself the quality of ignorance, which is the opposite of knowledge and the character of injustice that is the opposite of justice. Any knowledge and fairness he may have comes from his Lord and is not acquired by him. In this way, the distraction of striving for more is in his inherent nature and characteristics, which he cannot remove unless Allah purifies him and turns him toward the Hereafter, and He helps him against getting involved

in the desire for possessions. Unless Allah helps him to turn away from the world, he will become totally engaged by his search of the world and for its provisions.

As for the argument that the discourse is especially for the unbelievers on the basis that the message includes a warning, which is more suitable to unbelievers, this is not valid. The warning that they will come to know when they see is common for both the believers and unbelievers. All those who did not come to know it in this world would find out there. The phrase “soon you will know” does not indicate that they will be cast into Hell, let alone remain there forever. Similarly, seeing Hell does not necessarily mean that anyone who sees it will go to it. All the people at the gathering of the Last Day will see it openly. The Lord Almighty has asserted that all peoples, believer and unbeliever, righteous or sinful, are necessarily going to see Hell. This chapter does not indicate in any way that the discourse is not general.

The statement of al-Hasan that only the people of Hell will be asked about bounty is definitely wrong. It is either forged or he made a mistake. The clear authentic traditions refute it, And we seek Allah’s help.

Thus, it is obvious that such a chapter, which is magnificent and contains such a strong warning and caution to those who are distracted, and which is applicable to most people, cannot be taken to appertain only to unbelievers. Consideration of the Prophetic narrations cited above is sufficient proof of that.

And Allah knows best.

Pay attention to the painful reprimand given to those who continue to be distracted by striving for more and more throughout their life until go to their graves, and they are never roused from their sleep, and the greed for more makes their hearts completely unmindful of their mistakes. They do not wake up until they reached death. Consider it, and look at the condition of most people, and you will come to the conclusion that the message is for all humankind.

Also, pay attention to the fact that Allah, the Almighty attached condemnation and rebuke to the mere act of striving for more without mentioning the object of this striving, in order to include all kinds of substances in the world.

Again the word used is *Takathur*, which is form six and which indicates

the attempt of all those who are engaged in amassing worldly provisions to place themselves ahead of others and think that the one who has more is more honourable, as quoted in the following line:

“You are not more than them in number, and honour belongs to those who are more.”

23

If a person has plenty, without competition and greed, it is not harmful to him. Some Companions were wealthy, but their position was not affected because they did not boast of it or compete with others. Anyone who is involved in competition with another person for his worldly possessions or status will be prevented from striving for the Hereafter. The noble people of high ambitions struggle to amass the things for which the benefit is everlasting and which leads to the purification of their souls and results in their success. They do not like others to race ahead of them in these things. This kind of struggle is the most blissful for a person; and the opposite of it is the struggle of people to have more of the worldly provisions, which causes them to be unmindful of Allah and the Hereafter and results in loss. The end of this struggle is scarcity, poverty and dispossession.

Struggle to attain the means of happiness in the Hereafter and keep reminding a person of Allah and meeting with Him. Its outcome is permanent abundance, which never ceases or ends. A man engaged in this struggle does not like seeing another man better than him in speech, ahead of him in deeds and more advanced in knowledge. If he notices someone better than him in a good quality that he has failed to acquire, he tries to attain another quality of which he is confident. This kind of competition is not harmful nor does it damage a person's sincerity. It is in fact the essence of the struggle and striving for good acts. This was the condition of Aws and Khazraj with the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Each of these two tribes tried to outdo the other in achieving the pleasure of the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) by giving him help and support.¹ This was also the situation of 'Umar vis-à-vis Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with them); but when the former realized that the latter surpassed him he said: 'By Allah, I will never engage in competition with you in anything.'²

1 See Abd al-Razzaq (9747)

2 Abu Daawood (1678)

Whoever considers the effective use of 'Kalla' (nay) in this place will realize the beauty of its use here. This word indicates rebuke and reprimand for striving for more and more and the denial of their belief that the struggle to amass more of worldly materials is going to bring them benefit and increase their honour and superiority. This word includes prohibition and denial; and Allah, the Exalted, reminded those who are involved in this activity that they must realize again and again the result of their rivalry, and think time and again of the home for the people who struggle to acquire more worldly goods but who are distracted from thinking about the Hereafter. They must remember that the Lord Almighty will ask them about the goods which they struggled to accumulate: where did they get them from and how did they expend them. What a great chapter it is! How useful it is; and how strong it is in giving warning and how powerful in encouraging people to turn to the Hereafter by disregarding the world! It is all of this, despite being concise, and yet with a strong expression and a beautiful style. Blessed is He who spoke of it truly, and His Messenger, who conveyed His message through revelation.

Consider also how Allah, the Almighty described them after reaching the final destination where every living person will go as visitors not as residents. This is how it is. They will stay for a short period in their graves then move to their permanent abode. If they are considered to be visitors after being buried, what is their position when they are in the world? At this stage, they are like travellers arriving at a destination only to move on to their final abode.

There are three matters covered here: travelling through this world, reaching the destination which is the grave, and then finally moving to the everlasting home.

Now let us go back to the argument of the advocates of the superiority of poverty over affluence. They said: Allah, the Most High, protected His devoted servants from this world by exhorting them to avoid it, in order to honour them, preserve them from its filth and raise them above its baseness. He condemned it and informed His devotees of its insignificance and low status with Him. He made them aware that its expansion is sedition and a source of transgression and corruption on earth. To become involved in

its pursuits turns people away from working towards the Hereafter. It is a means of deception. The Almighty condemned its lovers and those who give it priority over the Hereafter.

The Lord Creator also declared that a man who desires it and its pomp and splendour has no share in the Hereafter. Its diverse enjoyments are a trial and test; it is not honour or a sign of love. Its enlargement for people is not designed to quickly bring good to them. It is not a means of bringing people nearer or drawing them closer to Him. Were it not that the people would hurry to disbelief, Allah would have given unbelievers more than they desired and expanded it for them to such an extent that He would have made the roofs, the doors and the stairs of their houses and their cushions out of silver. Allah, the Almighty has made the world beautiful for His enemies and for those who lack any power of understanding; they will have no share in the Hereafter. He asked His Messenger not to turn his eyes to it and to what He has given to its people. He reproaches those who waste its pure things and use them for enjoyment in this world. He advised His Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) with the words (which mean):

“Leave them eat and enjoy and be distracted by desires. Very soon will they realize!” (15/3)

This verse contains consolation for His devotees as He prevented them from getting involved in its pleasure and in eating excessively therein. It also includes an admonishment to those who have plenty, not to go beyond the limits in satisfying their desires and engaging in enjoyment.

Allah, the Exalted, condemned those who fall in love with the world, are proud of its provisions and try to get more and more, thinking that to have abundance is a sign of honour and privilege. Allah, the Almighty declared that this is not as they think or imagine. He compared the world with such things that no reasonable man would like to possess and indulge in or have confidence in. He portrayed the real image of the world by presenting the example of water, which He sends down from the sky and which makes the plants of the earth grow. When the land is adorned with a variety of plants, the command of Allah, the Almighty arrives and that adornment is destroyed and turns into dry stalks blown by the wind as though it never existed.

Allah, the Almighty explains the transient nature of the world. It will appear so fleeting that when man comes to the Hereafter, he will feel as though he lived in it for a day or part of a day. The people should, therefore, never be deceived by it.

He also directed the attention of His servants to the fact that the world was no more than a pastime, play, amusement, vainglory, rivalry among the people for getting more, and a source of deception on the road to the Hereafter. It is a transient commodity that is not permanent. Allah, the Almighty never mentioned the seekers of this world in good terms; on the contrary He condemned them whenever He referred to them. He declared that such a person's intentions and work contradict what Allah loves. Allah likes one thing, but such a person seeks another. By his mere desire, he is violating the command of Allah. This attitude on his part is sufficient in keeping him away from Allah. Allah, the Almighty added that the reason for the people to go to Hell was that they were deceived by the world and attached false hopes to it.

It has been said that all these statements from Allah were to discourage people from getting attached to the world and to encourage them to take as little from it as possible. He offered the world and the keys to its treasure to the most beloved, the most honourable person and the master of the Messengers, Muhammad (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), but he rejected the offer and did not accept it. Had he done so, he would have given thanks to Allah for that favour and spent all of it in the way of Allah to attain His pleasure, but he chose to have little of it and remain steadfast in the hardships of his life.

Imam Ahmad ¹reported 'Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) as saying:

'A woman from among the Helpers called on me. She saw the bed of the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) which was a folded simple mat. She went to her house and sent a mattress filled with wool. When the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) came home, he asked:

"What is this?"

I replied:

'So and so Ansaari woman visited me and noticed your bed, so she sent it.'

"Send it back to her," he said.

However, I did not return it because I wanted to keep it in my home, until he told me three times then he said:

"'Aa'ishah, return it. By Allah, if I wished, Allah would have provided me with mountains of gold and silver."

¹ *Az-Zuhd*(20)

Allah offered him the keys of the treasures of the world but he did not accept them and said:

“I would rather remain hungry one day and eat the next day. When I am hungry I will entreat you and remember you, when I am full I will praise you and thank you.”

He asked his Lord to make the provision for his family to be enough to barely sustain them as is recorded in the two *Saheehs*¹, wherein Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as saying:

“O Allah, make the provision of the family of Muhammad just sufficient sustenance.”

He also reported:

“By Allah in Whose hand is the soul of Abu Hurayrah, the Prophet of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and his family never ate their fill for three days in succession from bread made of wheat until he departed from the world.”²

Al-Bukhaari reported on the authority of Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) who said:

‘I do not know that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) ever saw fine bread or roasted goat until he joined his Lord.’³

He also said:

‘The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) departed from this world and he never ate his fill of barley bread.’⁴

‘Aa’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said as recorded in the two *Saheehs*⁵:

‘Since he arrived in Madinah until he passed away, the family of Muhammad (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did not eat their fill of wheat bread three days consecutively.’

‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) said as reported by Muslim:

‘I saw the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) hungry throughout the day not having even a bad date to fill his belly.’⁶

1 Al-Bukhaari (6460) Muslim (7440)

2 Al-Bukhaari (5374), Muslim (7458)

3 Al-Bukhaari (5385, 5421, 6457)

4 Ibid (5414)

5 Al-Bukhaari (5416, 6454), Muslim (7443)

6 Muslim (7461)

Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated saying:

‘The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) passed night after night hungry, and his family as well did not get supper. Most of their bread was of barley’¹

Abu Umamah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported:

‘The household of the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did not get enough of barley bread.’²

‘Aa’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said:

‘By the One who sent Muhammad with the truth, the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did not see a sieve nor did he eat sifted bread since Allah appointed him as the Messenger till he passed away.’

Urwah, who reported this asked ‘Aa’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her):

‘How did you eat barley then?’

She replied:

‘We used to say ‘Uff’, to blow on it; what was to fly away [chaff] would fly, and the rest we kneaded.’³

Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) deposited his coat of mail as security to buy some barley. I heard him say:

“There is not even a *Sa*’ [a measure of weight] for the family of Muhammad.” There were nine apartments.⁴

Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) related:

Fatimah (may Allah be pleased with her) brought a piece of bread to the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). He asked:

“What is this piece, Fatimah?”

She replied:

‘I made bread and did not feel happy to eat it alone, so I brought this piece to you.’

He said:

“This is the first food to enter the mouth of your father in three days.”⁵

Jabir (may Allah be pleased with him) reported:

‘When the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was digging the ditch, the Companions suffered from great hardship

1 Ahmad (1/255), at-Tirmithi (2360), Ibn Majah (3347)

2 At-Tirmithi (2359)

3 Ahmad (6/71), see also Al-Bukhaari (5413)

4 Al-Bukhaari (2069, 2508)

5 See al-Bayhaqi in Shu’ab (10430)

to the extent that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) himself had to tie a stone to his belly because of hunger.¹

Abu Hatim Ibn Hibban went too far in rejecting this report saying that Al-Mustafa (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was more respected in the eyes of his Lord to be like that.

This is a misconception of Ibn Hibban. There is nothing in this report to indicate that the honour of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was lowered in the eyes of his Lord; rather it is an increase in honour and an elevation of his position. It provides a lesson for the kings and the caliphs who came after him. It appears that Ibn Hibban did not pay attention to the reports about the lifestyle of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). This incident is one of the biggest proofs of his truthfulness. Had he been a king looking for worldly power and wealth, as his enemies and the enemies of his Lord claim, he would have passed his life like kings and tried to emulate them. However, when he passed away his coat of mail was deposited with a Jew from whom he had obtained some food for his family. Allah opened for him the lands of the Arabs, and vast quantities of wealth was brought to him, but he left this world without leaving a *Dirham* or a *Dinar* or a goat or a camel or a slave, male or female.

‘Urwa narrated that he heard ‘Aa’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) saying:

‘Month after month used to pass and a fire was not lit in any of the houses of the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).’

‘On what did you live, aunt?’ Urwa asked.

‘On the two black substances: dates and water’, she replied.²

Abu Hurayrah’s report concerning the story of Abu al-Haytham bin al-Tayhan, has already been cited, which says that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) came out of his house and saw Abu Bakr and Umar (may Allah be pleased with them). He asked them:

‘What has brought you out of your homes?’

‘Hunger’, they replied.

‘By the One in Whose hand is my soul, I too came out for the same reason which forced you to come out.’

1 Ahmad (3/301), see also Al-Bukhaari (4101)

2 Ahmad (6/71), see also Al-Bukhaari (6459) and Muslim (7452)

Masruq reported:

I visited 'Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) and she offered me food. She said: 'I do not eat and wish to cry but I do not do so.'

'Why?' I asked.

She replied:

'I recall the condition in which the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) departed from the world. By Allah, he did not eat his fill of wheat bread two days consecutively till he passed away.'

She also said:

'The family of the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did not eat their fill of barley bread for two consecutive days till he passed away.'

She further said:

'The family of Muhammad (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did not get enough of bread and curry for three days till he joined Allah, the Exalted.'¹

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) was reported as saying:

'The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and his family did not have wheat bread three days in succession till he left this world.'²

Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated:

'The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) passed night after night without food and his family did not have anything to eat for supper. Most of their bread was made of barley.'

Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"I have been persecuted in the cause of Allah and wish no one is persecuted like me. I was tortured in the cause of Allah and wish that none will have the same experience. Once, thirty days passed and I and Bilal had nothing to eat except the little that was hidden under the armpit of Bilal."³

Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated Abu Talhah (may Allah be pleased with him) as saying:

'We complained of hunger to the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and uncovered our bellies having stones

1 *Az-Zuhd*(205) see also at-Tirmithi (2356)

2 Al-Bukhaari (5416, 6454), Muslim (7444)

3 At-Tirmithi (2472), see also Ahmad (3/120, 286), Ibn Majah (151) and Ibn Hibban (6560)

one for each of us. The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) revealed his belly and he had two stones.’¹

Abdullah bin Mas’ood related:

‘The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) lay down on a mat. When he got up, the marks of the mat were seen on his body.

We said:

‘O Messenger of Allah, could we make a mattress for you?’

He replied:

‘What I have got to do with this world? In this world I am no more than a traveller who sits under the shadow of a tree for a while, then walks away leaving it behind.’²

Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) gave the following account:

‘I left the house of the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) on a cold day having a stinking [animal] skin on me. I wrapped it around me, passed it around my neck and tied it to my waist with some palm leaves. I was extremely hungry. Had there been any food in the house of the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) I would surely have eaten from it. I walked looking for something. Then I came across a Jew among his camels. He was giving water to a young camel. I peeped from a hole in the wall. He asked me:

‘What is the matter, Bedouin?’ Would you like to work? For every bucket of water you take out you will receive a date.’

‘Yes’, I replied. ‘Open the gate for me to enter.’

He opened the gate and I went in. He gave me a bucket and I started. When I drew out a bucket he gave me a date. When my hand was full, I left his bucket and said it was enough. I ate the dates and poured some water and drank it. Then I went to the mosque and found the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) there.’³

Sa’d bin Abi Waqqas (may Allah be pleased with him) reported:

‘I remember we were on an expedition in the company of the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and we had nothing to eat except *al-Hublah* (fruit of a thorny shrub) and this *Samur*.⁴

1 At-Tirmithi (2371)

2 Ibid (2377)

3 Ibid (2473)

4 Al-Bukhaari (6453), Muslim (7433)

The Messenger (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to pray in the night sometimes having a wool wrapper, part of which would be on him and another part on 'Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her).¹ Al-Hasan said that the wrapper was worth six or seven *Dirhams*.

Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

'The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) provided Fatimah at her wedding with a piece of velvet, a water skin and a leather pillow filled with palm fibres.'²

Abu Burdah narrated:

'I called on 'Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) and she showed me a thick wrapper of the type made in Yemen and a garment of the type you call *Mulabbadah*, and she said:

'The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) passed away in these two pieces of the cloth.'³

The defenders of the case for the poor say:

If wealth with gratitude were better than poverty with patience, the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) would certainly have chosen it when the world with all its treasures was offered to him. In that case, Allah would have commanded His beloved Messenger to ask for it, as he commanded him to pray for an increase in knowledge. The Messenger (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was not in a position to choose anything other than what Allah had chosen for him; and Allah would not choose for His best and most perfect creation other than what was best for him.

In addition, they go on to say that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) declared that the best provision was that which was sufficient for a person, which is not so meagre that he suffers and not so plentiful that makes him exceed the limits and be distracted.

Imam Ahmad reported on the authority of Abu Darda' (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

'Every day at sunrise two angels are sent on its sides to make an announcement that is heard by all the inhabitants of the earth except man and *Jinn*. They say:

1 Muslim (1147), an-Nasaa'i (769), Abu Daawood (631) and Ibn Majah (652)

2 Ahmad (1/93), an-Nasaa'i(3386)

3 Ahmad (6/131) see also Al-Bukhaari (5818) and Muslim (5442)

‘People, come to your Lord! Little but sufficient is better than plenty that is distracting.’

When the sun sets, two other angels are sent beside it who announce and their message is heard by all creatures except humankind and the *Jinn*:

‘O Allah, grant the spender a substitute and give the hoarders a loss!’¹

Sa’d bin Malik reported that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“The best provision is that which is sufficient and the best remembrance is the secret one.”²

Consider the combination of the heart and the body in the above *Hadeeth*, which represents the provisions of this world and the Hereafter. The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) told us that the best provision was the one that does not exceed the limit and it is sufficient to keep the remembrance secret. If it goes beyond that then there is the fear of outward show and haughtiness toward the heedless people. If the provision for the body exceeds its need, then there is the danger of falling into excess and greed.

They said that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) envied the man who had little of the world in a manner in which he did not envy the wealthy.

Abu Umamah related the Messenger (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) saying:

“The most fortunate friend of mine is a believer who passes a simple life, has a good share of prayer, sincerely devotes himself to the worship of his Lord and is unknown to the people without being remarkable. His death comes to him quickly, his estate is scant and the women crying over his death are few.”³

They said that Allah’s protection of His believing servant from the world is due to His love and his high status with Him.

Imam Ahmad related on the authority of Mahmud bin Labib that Allah’s Messenger (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“Allah, the Exalted, protects His believing servant from the world while He loves him, as you keep your sick people away from food and drink because of fear for them.”⁴

1 Ahmad ((5/197), see also Ibn Hibban (3329), and al-Hakim (4/444)

2 Ahmad ((1/172)

3 Ahmad (5/252, 255), at-Tirmithi (2347), al-Tabarani (8/205, 213) and al-Hakim (4/123)

4 Ahmad (5/427), at-Tirmithi (2037)

They argued that rarely does it happen that Allah gives extensive resources of the world to a man, unless He wants to lure him into destruction, not because He loves him and wishes to treat him with honour.

Uqbah bin 'Amir said that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"If you notice Allah granting worldly goods to a person despite his sinful actions then you can be sure that it is to give respite to him. The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) read the following verse in support of it (which means):

"When they forgot what they were warned about, we opened for them gates of everything."¹(6/44)

Besides, they contend:

Since the world appears very base to Allah, the Almighty, He does not confer it on most of His devoted and beloved servants. Imam Ahmad reported on the authority of Salim bin Abu al-Ja'd that Allah's Messenger (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"There are people in my Nation who, if one of them goes to the door of a person begging for a *Dinar*, he would not receive it, even if he asks for a paltry amount he would not get it. This man is so dear to Allah that if he asks Him for Paradise, He will surely grant him that; but if he asked Him to give him the world, He would not give it to him. He is a person clad in two worn sheets. People ignore him, but his status with Allah is so great that if he swears by Allah for something, Allah will fulfil it."²

This report clearly demonstrates that Allah does not give the world to His beloved servants because of its insignificance to Him and not because of the insignificance of those people to Him. He gives them that which is far better in excellence than the world. The Almighty gives the world to those whom He loves and those whom He does not like, but gives the reward of the Hereafter only to those whom He loves.

They further argued that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) told his Companions that the person who would be seated closest to him in the Hereafter was the one who had little in this world and was not involved in the search for more.

Abu Dharr (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

'I will be seated closer to the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) on the Day of Judgement than any of you because I

1 Ahmad (4/145), al-Tabarani (17/283) al-Tabari in his *Tafseer* (13272)

2 *Az-Zuhd*(18), al-Tabarani (7538), see *Majma'* (10/264)

heard the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) saying:

“The nearest of you to me in sitting on the Day of Judgement will be a person who departs from this world in the same condition I left it.”

By Allah, every one of you except me has clung to something of this world!¹

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) envied the person who had just sufficient means of living and declared that such a man was successful. Fudalah bin Ubayd said that he heard the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) saying:

“Blessed is he who is guided to Islam and has just sufficient means of living and Allah makes him content with what he is given.”²

Abdullah bin ‘Amr reported that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“He who embraces Islam and is given just sufficient means of living and is satisfied with what Allah provides him is a successful man.”³

If there were nothing more to having few worldly goods than an easy reckoning on the Day of Judgement, it would still be sufficient to demonstrate its superiority over wealth.

Al-Hasan reported that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“There are three things which a person will not be asked to account for: a roof which provides shade for him, a piece of bread which keeps him alive and a cloth which covers his body.”⁴

Abu Uthman said:

‘When the Muslims captured Juji they went walking around in the city, and noticed piles of food like mountains. A man walking with Salman Al-Farisi (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

‘Abu Abdullah, don’t you realize what Allah has opened to us, don’t you notice what He has granted us?’

Salman (may Allah be pleased with him) replied:

‘What makes you so pleased by what you see? With every grain there is reckoning.’⁵

1 Ahmad (5/165)

2 Ahmad (6/9), see also at-Tirmithi (2349), Ibn Hibban (705), Ibn al-Mubarak in *az-Zuhd*(553), al-Tabarani (18/256) and al-Hakim (1/35; 4/122)

3 Ahmad (2/168; 172) see also Muslim (2426)

4 *az-Zuhd*(18), al-Bayhaqi in *Shu’ab* (7/296)

5 Al-Bayhaqi (10654)

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) declared to his Companions that they were, in their condition of poverty and indigence, in a better state than the time when they would have plenty of wealth and the world would be opened to them.

Al-Hasan narrated that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) once asked the people of Suffah: "How are you?"

'We are fine,' they replied.

"Are you better today or on the day when a dish will be brought to you in the morning and another in the evening? One of you will wear a dress in the morning and another in the evening. You will decorate your houses with curtains as the Ka'bah is covered."

They said:

'O Messenger of Allah, we will be better in that period. Allah, the Exalted and the Blessed, will give us plenty and we will thank Him.'

"No, you are better today," the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said.¹

This *Hadeeth* clearly indicates that the people living in poverty with patience are better than those having much and being thankful.

Talhah al-Nasri related:

'I arrived in Madinah and I had no one whom I knew there. We used to get a *Mudd* of dates for two people. One day the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) led us in a prayer after which a man from the congregation shouted:

'O Messenger of Allah, the date has burnt our stomach and our dress has worn down.'

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) stood up, praised and glorified Allah and said:

"By Allah, if I had the means of obtaining bread and meat, I would surely have provided you with them. However, a time will come when bowls will be served to one of you in the morning and in the evening, and you will cover your houses with curtains like the Ka'bah."

They asked:

'Are we better off today or will we be better off then?'

"You are better today than in those days." He replied. "In those days people will kill one another."²

1 *Az-Zuhd*(48)

2 Ahmad (3/487), al-Bazzar (3673), Ibn Hibban (6684) al-Tabarani (8/310), and al-Hakim (4/548)

If there were nothing more to wealth and money than their being a means of trial from which the people can hardly escape and be free from their impact on their religion, it would be sufficient to show their evil aspects. Allah, the Almighty has declared (what means):

“Your wealth and your children are but trials.” (8/28)

Ka’b bin Iyad reported:

‘I heard the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) saying:

“Every nation has a source of trial and my Nation’s trial is by wealth.”¹

Wealth leads to Hell and poverty takes one to Paradise.

Sa’id bin Ayman, the freed slave of Ka’b bin Sawr related:

‘One day while the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was speaking to his Companions, a poor man came in and sat next to a rich man. The latter apparently drew his cloth from him. The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) noticed it and asked:

“Were you scared that your wealth would pass to that poor man or his poverty would cross over to you?”

‘O Messenger of Allah, do you mean the evil of wealth?’ the man asked.

“Yes,” the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) replied. “Your wealth drags you to Hell and his poverty leads him to Paradise.”

‘What can rescue me from it?’ the man asked.

“Showing sympathy to him”, the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) replied.

‘I will do it,’ the man said.

‘I do not need it,’ the poor man said.

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“Then ask Allah for forgiveness for your brother and pray for him.”²

The responsibility of being wealthy is so great that a person is unable to do justice in giving thanks for it.

Uthman bin Affan (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“The son of Adam has no right except in the following: a house to live, a

1 At-Tirmithi (2336), see also Ahmad (4/160), Ibn Hibban (3223) and al-Hakim (4/318)

2 *Az-Zuhd* (49)

dress to cover his body and simple bread and water.”¹

Abu Umamah reported that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“O son of Adam, to give out the surplus is good for you and holding it back is bad for you. You are not to be blamed for having sufficient provision. Start giving to those for whom you are responsible. The upper hand is better than the lower one.”²

Abu Sa’id (may Allah be pleased with him) reported:

‘We were on a journey with the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and a man came on a camel and started looking left and right. The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“Whoever has an extra mount should give it to someone who does not have one. He who has extra food, let him give it to the one who has none.

He mentioned so many categories of belongings that we thought we had no right to having anything extra.”³

This is one point of view regarding the merit of a grateful rich man who spends all that is in excess to his requirements. How can a rich man who enjoys all the extra provisions and gives thanks only by doing what is obligatory and some of what is recommended, be superior to a poor man who is happy with Allah despite being in need?

The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) assured his Companions who were the leaders of grateful people that he was not concerned with poverty for them; his fear was of wealth.

The two *Saheehs*⁴ have the following report from ‘Amr bin Awf (may Allah be pleased with him), a Companion who attended the battle of Badr: ‘The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) commissioned Abu ‘Ubaydah bin al-Jarrah to go to Bahrain and bring its tax. Earlier, the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) had concluded a treaty of peace with the people of Bahrain and appointed Ala’ bin al-Hadrami as its governor. Abu ‘Ubaydah returned with the money. The Helpers got the news of his arrival and joined the congregation with the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in the Morning Prayer. When the Messenger of Allah (may peace and

1 At-Tirmithi (2341), Ahmad (1/62), al-Bazzar (2/70) al-Hakim (4/312)

2 Muslim (2388)

3 Ibid (4517)

4 Al-Bukhaari (6425), Muslim (7425)

blessings of Allah be upon him) completed the prayer and wanted to leave, they faced him. The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) smiled when he noticed them and said:

“I think you have heard that Abu Ubaydah has come back from Bahrain with some money from there.”

‘Yes,’ they replied.

“Rejoice,” he said, “and hope for what is pleasing to you! By Allah, it is not poverty that I am afraid of for you, but my fear is that the world would be opened for you as it was opened for those before you, and you would compete with one another over it as they did. In the end this would lead to your destruction as it destroyed those before you.”

Al-Hasan reported:

Abu Tha’labah al-Khushani was asked:

‘Where is your world and the things you used to count, O Companions of Muhammad?’

He said:

‘Let the latter speak of the world that has started consuming our faith – by Allah besides whom there is no god worthy of being worshipped – as the fire consumes wood.’

Al-Hasan said:

“By Allah, there is no one whom Allah has given plenty in this world and he is not afraid that it may be a trial by Him, except that he lacks knowledge and is deprived of reasoning. On the other hand, any one from whom Allah has kept the world away and he does not believe that this is what Allah has chosen for him, is also lacking in understanding and is unable to see clearly.”¹

Al-Bukhaari recorded in his *Saheeh* on the authority of Sahl bin Sa’d that a man passed by the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and he asked his Companions:

“What do you say about this man?”

‘He is worthy of getting married if he proposes, his words will be honoured if he speaks in favour of someone, and he is listened to if he speaks,’ they replied.

After a while, a poor Muslim passed by and the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) asked:

“What do you say about this one?”

They replied:

1 *Az-Zuhd* (48)

‘He is not worthy of getting married if he seeks the hand of a woman, his recommendation is not accepted in favour of any one, and if he speaks his words are not heeded.’

The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) remarked:

“This latter is better than the whole earth full of the former one!”¹

The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) gave glad tidings to the poor who are patient, which he did not pass on to the rich people. Fudalah bin Ubayd reported that sometimes when the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) led the people in prayer some of them fell down due to feebleness. They belonged to the people of Suffah. The Bedouins thought they were afflicted by insanity. When the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) finished the prayer he would turn to them and say:

“If only you knew what good reward Allah has in store for you, you would like to be more in need and indigence.”

Fudalah (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

‘I was there with the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) that day.’²

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) informed the poor that they would be ahead of the rich in going to Paradise. The narrations differ in mentioning the length of the period. In a report in *Saheeh Muslim*, Abdullah bin ‘Amr said:

‘Three people called on him and said:

‘O Abu Muhammad, we have nothing, no money, no mount and no means.’

He said to them:

‘We will do as you wish. If you wish to make a request, we will give you what Allah has made available to us. If you like, we will make an appeal to the *Sultan* about your case. However, if you wish to be patient it will be good because I heard the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) say:

“*The poor Emigrants will enter Heaven forty years before the rich.*”

Upon hearing this, they said: ‘We will exercise patience and will not ask for anything.’³

1 Al-Bukhaari (5091, 6447)

2 At-Tirmithi (2368), see also Ahmad (6/18), Ibn Hibban (724) and al-Tabarani (18/260)

3 Muslim (7463)

In a report of Ahmad and At-Tirmithi, Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) related that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“The poor Muslims will go to Paradise half a day –which is 500 years – before the rich ones.”¹

In another report Abu Sa’id said the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“The poor Emigrants will enter Paradise 500 years before the rich ones.”²

Jabir reported that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“The poor people of my community will enter Paradise forty years before their rich counterparts.”³

This last report is in agreement with the earlier report of Abdullah bin ‘Amr and also with the report of Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) recorded in the collection of At-Tirmithi which says that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“The needy people will go to Paradise forty years before the rich.”

Therefore, three Companions, namely Jabir, Anas and Abdullah bin Amr mentioned the period to be 40 years while Abu Hurayrah and Abu Sa’id fixed it to be 500 years, may Allah be pleased with them all. There is no contradiction between these narrations, because being ahead or behind will depend on the degree of the poverty and affluence. Some will enter 40 years ahead and others 500 years before. These periods are not final; it may vary according to the situation.

Abu Daawood related in his *Sunan*⁴ on the authority of Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“The first person to enter Heaven from this community will be Abu Bakr as-Siddeeq.”

It is clear that the period between his entrance and the entrance of the poor Emigrants will not be long; and it will be the longest between his entrance and the admission of the last man to enter Paradise.

Abdullah bin ‘Amr reported that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

1 Ahmad (2/243) and at-Tirmithi (2353)

2 At-Tirmithi (2351), see also Abu Daawood (3666) and Ahmad (3/63)

3 ibid

4 (4652)

“Do you know who will be the first person to enter Paradise?”

‘Allah and His Messenger know best,’ they replied.

He said:

“They will be the poor Emigrants who are the sources of protection against misfortune. One of them dies and his desires remain in his heart; he has no means to realize them. The angels say:

‘Our Lord, we are your angels, your treasurers and the inhabitants of your heavens do not let them enter Paradise before us.’

Allah will reply:

‘These are my servants. They do not ascribe any partner to me. They are the sources of averting adversities. One of them dies and his desires remain in his heart; he does not find any means of fulfilling them.’

At this point, the angels will call on them from every door saying (what means): **“Peace be upon you because of your patience. How good is the final abode!”** (13/24)¹

Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) related that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“Two believers meet at the gates of Heaven; in the worldly life one of them was rich and the other was poor. The poor man was admitted to Heaven and the rich was held back for as long as Allah willed; then too he was admitted. The poor man met him and asked him:

“What held you up, my brother?” By Allah, you took so long that I was scared.”

He replied:

“Brother, after you I was detained in such a terrible and unpleasant way. I was unable to reach you till I sweated so profusely that if a thousand camels were to drink from it after eating something sour, they would have been satisfied.”²

Al-Tabarani related on the authority of Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“The poor believers will enter Paradise half a day – that is 500 years — before the rich.”

A man asked: ‘Am I one of them, O Messenger of Allah?’

“Are you in such a condition that if you take lunch, you have something for supper and when you have your supper something is left for tomorrow’s

1 Ahmad (2/168)

2 Ibid (1/304)

lunch?" the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) asked. 'Yes', he replied.

"Then you are not among them," the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) replied.

Another person rose up and asked: 'Am I one of them, O Messenger of Allah?'

"Did you hear what I said to the first person?"

'Yes', he said, 'but I am not in that position.'

The Messenger (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) asked him:

"Do you have another dress to cover your body in addition to what you are wearing?"

He replied: 'Yes.'

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) told him that then he was not among them.

A third person rose and asked whether he was included among those fortunate ones.

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) asked him:

"Did you hear what I had said to the two persons before you?"

'Yes', he replied.

The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) asked him:

"Do you obtain a loan any time you want to borrow?"

He said: 'Yes.'

"Then you are not one of them either."

A fourth person spoke and asked the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him): 'Am I among them, O Messenger of Allah?'

He asked him: "Did you hear what I told those people?"

He said: 'Yes.'

"Are you capable of earning?" the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) asked.

'Yes.'

"Then you are not among them."

A fifth person came forward and asked the same question whether he was one of those people.

"Did you hear what I told those who asked this before you?"

'Yes,' the man replied.

"Are you content with your Lord in the morning and evening?"

'Yes.'

“Then you are one of them,” the Messenger (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said.

Then the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) added: “The leaders of the believers in the Heaven will be those who when they have lunch, they do not have anything for supper; and when they have supper, they have nothing for lunch of the following day. If they seek a loan, they do not find anyone to lend to them. They do not have any extra clothes apart from that which covers their bodies. They have no means of earning to live a comfortable life, yet they are pleased with Allah in the morning and evening.

‘They will be with those whom Allah has shown His grace: the prophets, siddiqs (the truthful), martyrs and pious people, and they are good companions.’ (4/69)

Al-Tabarani declared this report as weak.¹

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated:

‘The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: The first three persons to enter Paradise were shown to me, as were the first three to enter Hell. The first three to enter Paradise were: the martyr, a slave whose slavery in the world did not prevent him from working for the pleasure of his Lord, and a modest poor man who had many children. The first group of three to enter Hell included a tyrant ruler, a man of abundant wealth who did not pay the due to Allah, and an arrogant poor man.’²

It was sufficient to prove the supremacy of the poor in that the majority of those who enter Paradise would be poor, and the majority of the inhabitants of Hell would be rich. Abdullah bin ‘Amr related that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“I looked in Paradise and noticed that majority of the people in it were the poor ones, and I looked in Hell and found that most of its people were the rich and women.”³

Abu Raja’ reported:

Imran bin Husayn came back to his family after visiting the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). His wife asked him to tell her what he had heard from the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

1 See *Majma’*

2 Ahmad (2/425, 479) Ibn Khuzaymah (2249) and al-Hakim (1/387)

3 Ahmad (2/173)

He said: 'This is not the time for narrating *Hadeeth*.'

Nevertheless, she insisted and made him angry. He then said:

'I heard the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) say:

"I looked in Heaven and saw that the most of its people were the poor, and I looked in Hell and noticed that most people there were women."¹

Usamah bin Zayd (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated:

'The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"I stood at the gate of Paradise and noticed that the general body of its inhabitants were poor, and I stood at the gate of Hell and noticed that most of its inhabitants were women."²

Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) looked in Hell and found most of its inhabitants were women, and he looked in Paradise and found most of its inhabitants were poor people.³

It is enough for poverty to be considered superior that every wealthy person would wish on the Day of Judgement to have been poor in the world.

Anas bin Malik (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Every person, wealthy and poor, will wish on the Day of Judgement that he had only what was sufficient for his survival in the world."⁴

In many other statements the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) asserted the superiority of the poor; one of them being the report of Sahl bin Sa'd, which has been cited earlier.

Abu Dharr (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said to him:

"Abu Dharr, raise your eyes and see the highest ranking man in the mosque."

Abu Dharr says: 'I looked around and saw a man sitting wearing a robe. I pointed to him and said: 'That one.'

Then the Messenger (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Now raise your eyes and look for the lowliest person in the mosque."

I looked and noticed a feeble man wearing a worn out cloth. I pointed out

1 Al-Bukhaari (3241, 5198, 6449, 6546), see also Ahmad (4/437)

2 Al-Bukhaari (5196, 6547), Muslim (6937)

3 Muslim (6938)

4 Ahmad (3/117, 167), and Ibn Majah (4140)

at him and said: 'That one.'

The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"By the One in whose hand is my soul, the latter is better than the earth full of the former one."

Imam Ahmad¹ has cited this *Hadeeth* of Abu Dharr (may Allah be pleased with him) through different chains.

The supporters of the case for the superiority of poverty further argue that the deciding factor which can satisfy the people is that poverty raises the reward and rank of the poor person with Allah. On the other hand, the wealth of a rich man, even though he obtains it by permissible means, gives thanks for it and the comfort he gets in this world, will be counted as part of his reward on the Day of Judgement. A little extra in the world is negligible compared the plenty of the Hereafter.

Muslim reported on the authority of Abdullah bin 'Amr that Allah's Messenger (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"No contingent goes to war in the cause of Allah and acquires booty except that they have taken two-third of their rewards of the Hereafter. Only one third is left for them. If they do not take any booty, their reward is preserved in full."²

Khabbab bin al-Aratt (may Allah be pleased with him) gave the following account:

'We migrated with the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) having in mind the pleasure of Allah, the Almighty. Our reward was established with Allah. Some of us passed away without enjoying this reward, among them Mus'ab bin 'Umayr who was killed in the battle of Uhud and was left only a garment. When we covered his head with it his feet remained uncovered and when we covered his feet his head remained bare. The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) ordered us to cover his head and put some grass of *Idhkhir* on his feet. There are those among us who have obtained their spoils and they are enjoying them.'³

Qays bin Abu Hazim said:

1 See *al-Musnad* (5/170, 157), see also Ibn Abi Shaybah (13/22) and Hannad in *az-Zuhd* (815)

2 Muslim (4925)

3 Al-Bukhaari (1276, 3897, 3914, 4047, 4082, 6448) and Muslim (2177)

‘We went to visit Khabbab who was cauterized in seven parts of his body; he said:

‘Our predecessors went ahead and the world did not reduce their reward.’ Then he cited the rest of the above tradition.¹

Sa’id bin Mansur reported Ibn Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) as saying:

‘No one was given something in this world except that his status with Allah was reduced even though he was honourable to Allah.’²

Ibrahim the son of Abd al-Rahman bin ‘Awf narrated, as recorded in the *Saheeh* of Al-Bukhaari, that Abd al-Rahman was served a meal and he was fasting. He said:

‘Mus’ab bin ‘Umayr was better than me; yet, when he was killed, he was shrouded in a short garment such that when his face was covered his feet were exposed, and when his feet were covered his face remained exposed. Hamzah was killed and he was better than me and no shroud was available to wrap his body except a garment. Then afterwards the world was opened up for us (or he said, ‘We were given the worldly provisions’) without limits. I am afraid that our rewards may have been given to us in advance in this world.’

At this point, he started crying and did not eat.³

Abu Sa’id al-A’rabi said:

‘It was not only Abd al-Rahman bin ‘Awf and Khabbab who spoke in this way; many senior Companions of the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) spoke in a similar manner. They disliked the expansion of the world for them and were apprehensive of it. They knew for sure that what Allah chose for His Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was the best and what came to them later was less so. Among those who expressed their fear were Abu Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthman, ‘Ali, Abu ‘Ubaydah, ‘Ammar bin Yasir, Salman, Abdullah bin Mas’ood, ‘Aa’ishah the Mother of the Believers, Abu Hashim bin ‘Utbah and many others whom we have not mentioned for the sake of brevity, may Allah be pleased with them all.

The case of Abu Bakr is reported by Zayd bin Arqam (may Allah be pleased with them both) who said:

1 See Al-Bukhaari (5672, 6430) and Muslim (6817)

2 Ahmad

3 Al-Bukhaari (1274, 1275, 4045)

'We were with Abu Bakr as-Siddeeq when he asked for a drink. He was served with water and honey. When he lifted it to his mouth, he started crying and cried so much that he made the people around him cry as well. Later they stopped but he did not. He continued crying to the extent that they thought they would not be able to ask him about the reason for crying. However, he stopped and wiped his eyes and the people asked him:

'The Caliph of the Messenger of Allah, what made you cry in that way?'
He replied:

'Once I was with the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and I noticed that he was pushing something away from him. I did not see any one there, so I asked:

'O Messenger of Allah, what were you repelling from yourself?'

He replied:

'It was the world that was presented to me, so I told it to keep away from me. It returned and said: 'If you run away from me, those who will come after you will not be able to escape from me.'¹

Abd al-Rahman bin 'Awf (may Allah be pleased with him) reported:

'Abu Bakr said during his last illness after which he passed away:

'I was appointed as your ruler but I was not the best among you. All of you were longing for this position. I see that the world and its pomp will come in abundance and it will not stop until you take cushions of silk and curtains of silk brocade and one of you will experience pain by lying down on wool just as one feels pain by lying on thorns. You are the first people who will mislead the people to go right and left. By Allah, it is better for one of you to be brought and killed without having committed any crime than indulging in the luxuries of this world.'²

Muhammad bin Ata' bin Khabbab said:

'I was sitting with Abu Bakr; he saw a bird and said:

'Blessed are you O bird! You eat from this tree then digest, and then there is nothing. You are not going to face any reckoning. I wish I were in your place!'

I said to him:

'You are saying this when you are the most truthful friend of the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)!'³

- 1 Ibn Abi al-Dunya in Dhamm (11), al-Bazzar (1/106), al-Hakim (4/309) and Abu Nu'aym (1/30, 164)
- 2 Al-Tabarani (43) and Abu Nu'aym (1/34)
- 3 *Az-Zuhd* (143)

As regards ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with him), when the treasures of Kisra were brought to him, he cried. Abd al-Rahman bin ‘Awf (may Allah be pleased with him) asked him:

‘O Commander of the Faithful, what makes you cry? By Allah, this is the day of thanksgiving, happiness and pleasure.’

Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

‘This money was not given to a people except that Allah put enmity and hatred among them.’¹

Abu Sinan ad-Duali entered when Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) was sitting with some members of the Emigrants. Umar asked for a basket to be brought which had been taken from a castle in Iraq. It had a ring and some of his children took it and put it in his mouth. Umar pulled it out of his mouth then started crying. Some of the people who were present said: ‘Why are you crying when Allah gave you victory and power and made you happy?’

He replied:

I heard the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) say:

“The world is not opened to any people but Allah puts enmity and hatred between them until the Day of Judgement.”

‘I am afraid of that.’²

Al-Hasan said:

‘The headgear and clothes of Kisra were brought to Umar from the expedition of Persia. Among the people who were present was Suraqah bin Malik. Umar threw the wristband of Kisra to Suraqah who put them on his hands and they reached up to his shoulders. When Umar saw them in the hands of Suraqah, he said:

‘Praise be to Allah! Kisra bin Hurmudh’s bangles in the hands of Suraqah bin Malik bin Ju’sham, a Bedouin of Banu Mudlij!

Then he added:

‘O Allah, You know that Your Messenger loved to give out in Your cause and among your servants whenever he got some money, but you kept the wealth away from him by your choice and for his protection. O Allah, I seek refuge with you that this be a test from You for Umar. He then read the following verses (which mean):

1 Ahmad (1/16)

2 Ahmad (1/16) and Abu Ya’la (1971)

“Do they think because we provide them with wealth and children, we hasten for them good things? No, they do not understand.” (23/55, 56)¹

The meaning is that the expansion of the world and its affluence are hindering the reward of the Hereafter and reducing it.

Jabir bin Abdullah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported:

‘After the battle of Uhud, the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) looked at the martyrs who were killed on the day and said: “I am a witness over them; wrap them as they are, with blood on their bodies.”²

Al-Hasan narrated that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said about the martyrs of Uhud:

“They have gone away and I bear witness that they did not enjoy any of their reward in this world while you have enjoyed your rewards and I do not know what you are going to do after me.”

Al-Hasan also reported that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) went with his Companions to Baqi’ al-Gharqad and said:

“Peace be on you, O residents of graves. If you were to know what Allah rescued you from that took place after you...”

Then he turned to his Companions and said:

“They are better than you.”

They protested:

‘O Messenger of Allah, they are our brothers, we embraced Islam as they did, emigrated as they did and took part in *Jihad* as they did. They completed that period of their lives and left this world, and we are still in the period of our life here; so, what makes them better than us?’

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) replied:

“These people left the world without enjoying anything of their reward; they left and I am witness over them while you have taken some of the benefits of your works and I do not know what you are going to do after me.”

When the people heard it, they realized the significance of it and benefited from it. They said:

‘Surely we are going to give account for what we enjoyed in the world

1 Al-Bayhaqi in *Dala’il* (6/325)

2 Abd al-Razzaq (6633, 9580), and Ahmad (5/431)

after them and that is going to reduce our rewards.’

As a result they ate pure things, spent moderately and sent the surplus for themselves in the Hereafter’.¹

Abdullah bin ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

‘Nobody was given worldly provisions but that his status was lowered.’

The leading wealthy people confirmed that they were tried in adversity and were able to sustain [their faith] and remain steadfast, but when they were put to trial by prosperity, they could not stand firm in it. This was spoken of by Abd al-Rahman bin ‘Awwf (may Allah be pleased with him) and others. It was also said by Sa’d bin Abi Waqqas (may Allah be pleased with him) as reported by his son Mus’ab that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

‘I am more concerned for you from the trial of prosperity than that of adversity. You were put to test with adversity and you stood firm, but the world is sweet and beautiful.’²

The advocates of the superiority of poverty further argue:

There are two authentic issues that demonstrate the supremacy of poverty:

1. Those who have more here will have less there in the other world. This has been proved sufficiently.
2. Abu Dharr (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated the following *Hadeeth* which is recorded in both collections of *Saheeh* narrations:

‘I came out at night once and found the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and walked alone with him. I thought he did not like to have anyone walking with him. I started walking in the shadows in the moonlight. Then he noticed me and asked:

“Who is there?”

‘Abu Dharr, may Allah make me a ransom for you!’ I replied.

He said: “Come.”

I walked with him for a while, and he said:

“Those who have plenty here will have little on the Day of Judgement, except the one to whom Allah granted wealth, and who spread it to his right, his left and before and behind him and did good deeds with it.”³

1 Ibn al-Mubarak (498)

2 Al-Bazzar (3/367), Abu Ya’la (2/115) and Abu Nu’aym (1/93)

3 Al-Bukhaari (2388, 6268, 6443, 6444), Muslim (2304)

If wealth were better than poverty, Allah would have not encouraged His Messenger (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) to forsake the world and turn away from it, and would have not condemned desire for it and interest in it. Rather, He would have encouraged him to acquire worldly provisions and to get more of it, as He has encouraged acquiring knowledge and performing actions that take a man higher. He emphasized indifference to the world and to take only a little from it and this is a clear indication that those who renounce the world and receive little from it are the better of the two groups.

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) showed the worthlessness of the world in the following words: *“If the world were equivalent to the wing of a mosquito to Allah, He would have not allowed an unbeliever to take a sip of water from it. It is of less value to Allah than a dead lamb is to its owner. Its likeness in connection to the Hereafter is like the drop of water which sticks to the finger of someone who dips it in water. It is cursed, as is all that it contains, except the remembrance of Allah, and what He likes, and the learner and what was learned. It is a prison for the believers and Heaven for the unbelievers.”*¹

He advised the believing man to live in the world as though he was a stranger or a passerby and to consider himself among the inhabitants of the grave. When he enters the morning he should not expect to live until the evening and when he reaches the evening he should not be sure of getting up the next morning.²

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) prohibited people from the acquisition of interest³. He cursed the man who is a slave to *Dinars* and *Dirhams*, and invoked on him misery, relapse and the inability to pull out a thorn with which he is pierced.

He warned that the world was attractive and sweet.⁴ It arrests the eyes by its beauty and the hearts by its sweetness, and he commanded people to keep away from it and be watchful, as one is on guard and alert from women.

He alerted people that the desire for the world, and the aspiration for leadership and distinction in it, destroys the religion like the destruction caused by two ferocious wolves let loose in a herd of sheep, or even worse.⁵

1 See

2 Ahmad (2/24, 41) at-Tirmithi (2333). See also Al-Bukhaari (6416)

3 Ahmad (1/377), and at-Tirmithi (2328)

4 Muslim (6948)

5 Ahmad (3/456, 460), at-Tirmithi (2376) and Ibn Hibban (3228)

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) himself considered his position in the world like a traveller who rested on a hot day under the shade of a tree for a while, then left it and went on his way.

In fact, this is the case of all the people of the world, but the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was able to realize it while the others remain blinded. He passed by some people who were repairing a hut that had become damaged and said:

“I see that the matter is more urgent than this.”¹

He noticed a curtain on his door and asked it to be removed, saying:

“It reminds me of the world.”²

He taught the people that no one had a right in having more than a house to live in, a dress to cover his body and food to survive.

He also informed them that when a man dies he is followed by his family, his belongings and his deeds; the family and the belongings return and only his deeds remain with him.

He warned that a man who acts freely and unfairly as he pleases with the wealth of Allah would have Fire for himself on the Day of Judgement.³ He asserted by oath that he was not afraid of poverty for his people but was afraid of affluence and their involvement in competition in obtaining more, which will make them forget Allah and the Hereafter. He further stated that the son of Adam has no share in his wealth except what he eats, digests, or wears, and makes it withered or gives out in charity that which is preserved for him. He said that it was sufficient for the son of Adam to have enough food to keep him alive. If he is not satisfied then he should fill a third of his belly with food, another third with drink but should reserve the remaining third for breathing.⁴

This last advice is useful for a healthy heart and body and for the protection of the religion and the world.

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) declared that the riches of a man lay in the riches of his soul and not in the abundance of the money.⁵ He prayed to Allah to make his provision in the world just sufficient. He praised the man, who, after being guided by Islam, had just

1 Abu Daawood (5236), at-Tirmithi (2335), Ibn Majah (4160), Ahmad (2/1610 and Ibn Hibban (2997)

2 Muslim (5521)

3 Al-Bukhaari (3118)

4 Ahmad (4/132) at-Tirmithi (2380) Ibn al-Mubarak (603), Ibn Hibban (674, 5213)

5 Al-Bukhaari (6446) and Muslim (2420)

sufficient provision.

He said that anyone whose mind was busy in thinking about the world, Allah would make him see his poverty with his own two eyes, and shatter his affairs, and he would get only what was written for him.¹

His Lord offered to make the valley of Makkah gold for him, but he did not accept and said:

“No my Lord, I would rather eat one day and remain hungry the next. When I am hungry I will entreat you and remember you; and when I eat I will give thanks to you and praise you.”²

He also informed his community that whoever among them was safe amongst his people, healthy in his body and had sufficient provision for the day, was as though the world had been gathered only for him.³

He taught that spending what a man had, over his need, was good for him, and keeping it was bad, and a man was not to be blamed for having what was just sufficient.

He prohibited his community from looking at those who were higher than them in this world, and taught them to keep their eyes on those who were lower than them.

He informed the people that only trial, affliction and sedition was left in the world. Its similitude can be seen in what arose at the releasing of the son of Adam: even if the beginning was good and tasty this was the end of it.

He made it clear that the true servants of Allah were those who were not comfortable in this world. They look ahead to the abode of pleasure; therefore they do not want the pleasure of this world in exchange for the pleasure of the Hereafter.

He warned that the redemption of the early generations of this community was due to their renunciation of the world and their firm faith; and that the destruction of later generations would be caused by their miserliness and false hopes.⁴

He used to say:

“I am here, O Allah. There is no real life but the life of the Hereafter.”⁵

1 Ahmad (5/183), Ibn Majah (4105) and Ibn Hibban (680)

2 Ahmad (5/2540, at-Tirmithi (2347) and al-Tabarani (8/207)

3 Al-Bukhaari in Adab (300), at-Tirmithi (2346), Ibn Majah (4141)

4 Ahmad in *az-Zuhd* (16)

5 Ibn Khuzaymah (2831) and al-Hakim (1/465)

He informed his nation that when Allah, the Almighty loves a man, He keeps him away from the world, just as people keep a sick person away from food and drink.

He visited Uthman bin Madh'oon (may Allah be pleased with him), who was about to die, bent down, kissed him and said:

“May Allah show mercy to you, Uthman! You received nothing from the world nor did it receive anything from you.”¹

He expressed his happiness at this matter.

He used to say:

“Indifference to the world gives comfort to the heart and the body, and indulging in it prolongs worry and grief.

He also said:

“Whoever turns all his concerns into one, Allah spares him the troubles of all other concerns, and whoever is taken to every direction for the concern of the world, Allah does not care in which valley he perishes.”²

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) also told us: “On the Day of Judgement a man who had passed a very pleasant and blissful life in the world will be brought forth and Allah, the Most High, will order His angels: ‘Give him a dip in Hell.’ After which he will be brought back and asked:

‘O son of Adam, have you ever enjoyed any bliss? Have you ever experienced any delight of your eyes? Have you ever felt happy in your life?’

‘Never, by your might!’ the man will reply.

Then the Almighty will order:

‘Take him back to Hell.’

Another person who passed a miserable life and experienced great troubles will be brought and Allah, the Exalted and Blessed, will say to his angels: ‘Immerse him in Paradise for a while.’

After that, he will be brought back and asked:

‘Have you ever experienced anything disagreeable?’

‘Never, by your might, I never went through anything undesirable or had an unpleasant time in my life’.³

In a report in *Kitab az-Zuhd* of Imam Ahmad (may Allah have mercy

1 *Az-Zuhd* (17)

2 Ibn Majah (257, 4106)

3 Muslim (7088)

upon him) the following account is given on the authority of Wahab bin Munabbih:

‘When Musa prayed to Allah to help him and his brother against Pharaoh, Allah granted their supplication and said:

‘Pharaoh’s pomp and the sources of enjoyment that he has been given should not appeal to you. Do not direct your eyes to those things. They are the splendour of the worldly life and the adornment of those who live in comfort. If I had wished to grant you such worldly luxurious goods, which if Pharaoh desired, he would realize that he had no power to obtain, I would have done so. However, I willed you to turn away from worldly comfort and keep you away from its pleasures. This is how I deal with my devoted friends and this is what I have chosen for them. I keep them away from the pleasure and comfort of the world as a kind shepherd keeps his herd away from the pasture of destruction. I protect them from its opulence and lavishness, as a careful shepherd protects his camels from resting in a dangerous place. I do not do it because they are of little value to Me, but in order to provide them with the opportunity to achieve complete respect in My eyes. Their reward has not been affected by the world nor spoiled by desire. Remember that people cannot cover themselves with an adornment more impressive than renunciation of the world. This is the adornment of the pious ones. They have upon them the dress of humbleness and tranquillity by which they are known. The mark on their faces is the sign of their prostration. They are indeed my true friends. When you see them, bend down in humility to them and make your heart and your tongue soft for them.’¹

Wahab also related:

‘The disciples asked ‘Eesa [Jesus] (peace be upon him):

‘Who are the friends of Allah who have no fear and no grief?’

‘Eesa (peace be upon him) replied:

‘They are those who looked at the inner nature of this world when others looked at its outside. They fixed their eyes on the end of the world while others fixed their eyes on what is available now. They destroyed the enjoyments which they feared were going to ruin them, and abandoned what they knew was going to desert them. Their search for it was brief. They remembered it only in passing by. Their happiness with what they obtained from it had turned into grief. They rejected what came their way from its benefits, and rejected any high status that reached them unjustly.

1 *Az-Zuhd* (79-84)

The world had become worn out for them and they had no intention of renewing it. It had reached the point of ruin and they did not seek to rebuild it. It has become dead in their hearts and they are not interested in giving it new life. They destroyed it in order to build their Hereafter. They sold it out so that they could buy what would remain forever for them. They rejected it and they felt happy. They saw its people lowered and become a lesson to others. They revived the remembrance of death and neglected the mention of life. They loved Allah and rejoiced in His remembrance; they acquired light from the light of Allah and passed it to others. They had an amazing tale and with them was a wonderful account. The Book supported them and they supported it. It spoke about them and they spoke about it. It was known by them and they were known by it. They did not value any benefit not resulting from what they had achieved. They did not see any safety beyond what they expected, or any fear beyond what they fear,¹

Thabit said:

‘It was said to ‘Eesa, son of Mary (peace be upon him): ‘O Messenger of Allah, if only you had a donkey to ride when you need to!’

He replied:

‘I am more honourable to Allah than being engaged in a thing that will keep me busy from Him.’²

Jesus (peace be upon him) also said:

‘Make your treasure in the heavens because the heart of a person remains with his treasure.’³

He said again:

‘Avoid superfluous materials of this world because such things are disliked by Allah.’

He taught:

‘O Children of Israel, make your houses like guest houses. You have no house in the world; here you are just passers-by.’

He asked his disciples:

‘Which one of you can build a house on the waves of the sea?’

They said:

‘O Spirit of Allah, who can do it?’

‘Then keep away from the world. Do not take it to be secure’, he said.

He also said:

1 Ibid (78)

2 Ibid (73)

3 Ibid (74)

‘Eating wheat bread, drinking cold water and sleeping on dunghills with dogs are familiar for the one who seeks to inherit Paradise.’¹

He declared:

‘A rich person will enter Paradise with great difficulty.’

He said:

‘The sweetness of the world is the bitterness of the Hereafter and the bitterness of the world is the sweetness of the Hereafter.’²

He addressed the children of Israel:

‘Attach little importance to the world for it will lose its value to you. Despise the world; the Hereafter will become dearer to you. Do not honour the world because the Hereafter will lose its importance to you. The world is not a place of honour; every day it calls to strife or loss.’

Al-Hasan said:

‘Treat the world with contempt. By Allah, it will cease to exist when looked upon with disdain.’

He added:

‘By Allah, I do not care whether the world goes to the east or to the west.’

Imam Ahmad (may Allah have mercy upon him) said to Ishaq:

‘Ishaq, how insignificant is the world to Allah!’

He added:

‘A little of the world is sufficient and an abundance is undesirable.’

It is reported from many of the pious predecessors:

‘The love of the world is the origin and source of all the sins.’

This saying is reported in a Prophetic narration, which is not established.

³It is attributed to Jesus that he said:

‘The root of sin is the love of the world; women are the net of the devil and wine is the vessel of every evil.’

He is also reported to have said:

‘Love of the world is the basis of all sin; wealth contains much of harm.’

‘What is its harm?’ the disciples asked.

‘Its owner is not free from arrogance and haughtiness.’

‘If he avoids that?’ they asked.

‘Its management will keep him busy from the remembrance of Allah’, Jesus replied.⁴

1 Ibid (76)

2 Ibid (119)

3 See *al-Dha'ifah* of al-Albani (1226)

4 *Az-Zuhd* (117)

The supporters for the case of poverty argue:

It is well known, by experience and observation, that love of the world incites all sorts of sins, hidden and open; especially such sins which are committed due to dependence upon it. Its love makes a man intoxicated, and he does not realize its true and evil nature; he loses sight of its repulsive character and does not attempt to avoid it. The love of the world drags him from doubtful matters to reprehensible things and then to that which is prohibited. Sometimes it leads him to disbelief. In fact, all the nations who rejected their Prophets did so because of love of the world. When the Messengers warned them against the association of partners with Allah and indulging in sinful ways, which were the sources of their worldly status and power, their affection for the world pushed them to oppose the Messengers and call them liars. This shows that every evil act in the world originates from a love of the world.

Do not forget the sin of our parents Aadam and Hawwa (Adam and Eve) in the beginning, which was caused by their desire to live forever in this world. Also remember the disobedience of Satan, caused by the love of power and authority, which is worse than the love of the world. Pharaoh, Haman and their like, Abu Jahl and his people, as well as the Jews: all took the path of disbelief for the sake of obtaining power and authority. Love of the world and power are the main reasons for people going to Hell. On the other hand, disinterest in the world and authority, are the main reasons for people to enter Paradise. Intoxication from love of the world is far greater than the intoxication caused by drinking wine. The man intoxicated by the love of the world does not come back to his senses until he lands in his grave. If the veil had been removed from him in the world, he would have come to realize the state of his intoxication and known that it was deeper than the intoxication caused by wine. The world fascinates and captivates the mind entirely.

Malik bin Dinar said:

‘Beware of the enchantment of the world! Beware of the charming world! It enchants the hearts of the learned.’¹

Yahya bin Mu’adh al-Razi said:

‘The world is the wine of the devil. Whoever is intoxicated by it will not recover, except when he is among the host of the dead, where he will regret like those who have lost.’

The least impact of its love is that it turns people away from the devotion

¹ Ibid (387)

to Allah and His remembrance. A man whose wealth makes him unmindful of Allah's remembrance is one of the losers. When the heart is oblivious to thoughts of Allah, the Devil takes residence in it and moves it in any direction he likes. He is so knowledgeable and expert in the means of evil that he makes a man contented with a few good deeds, to give him the impression that he is indeed doing good deeds in the world, while his heart is entirely subjugated by him. What kind of good work will he be able to do when his heart is possessed by the love of the world? The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) cursed such a man and said:

“Cursed be the slave of the *Dinar* and *Dirham*!”

He also said;

“May the slave of the *Dinar* perish! May the slave of a *Dirham* perish! If he is given, he is pleased, and if he is deprived, he is upset.”¹

The latter of the Prophet's statements is the explanation for a man's servitude to the world.

The entire world was offered to the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), and it appeared to him, but he pushed it back with his hands and drove it away.

After him, it was offered to his Companions and it confounded them; some of them followed the way of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and drove it back, but they were few. Others examined it and asked:

‘What have you got to offer?’

She (the world) replied:

‘I have all kinds of things: lawful, doubtful, reprehensible and prohibited.’

They said to her:

‘Bring forth your lawful things; we are not interested in any other kind.’

They took only what was lawful from it.

Then the world appeared to those after them. They looked for what was lawful but could not find it. Then they turned to doubtful and reprehensible matters. She said to them:

‘These things were accepted by the people before you.’

They said:

‘Well, then bring your prohibited things’, and they accepted them.

Then those who came after them demanded those prohibited things, and she said to them:

1 Al-Bukhaari (2886, 2887, 6435)

‘Now they are in hands of the unjust who have appropriated them. Try to get them by every means; incitement or threat.’

Today, the situation has become such that when an immoral person extends his hand to a prohibited thing, he finds that another stronger and more sinful man has already possessed it. All of us are only guests and what we acquire is borrowed. Abdullah bin Mas’ood (may Allah be pleased with him) put it in the following words:

‘Every man in this world is a guest and his wealth is borrowed goods. When the guest departs, the borrowed thing is to be returned.’¹

It has been said that the love of the world was the main cause of sin and destruction of the religion for the following reasons:

1. Love of the world requires the showing of respect and honour to it while it is despicable to Allah. It is a grave sin to honour what Allah has degraded.
2. Allah, the Most High, had cursed it, declared His hatred and aversion to it except for that which is for Him in it. If a person loves that which Allah hates, then he places himself in the position of risking the hatred, curses and loathing of Allah.
3. When a man loves the world it becomes his goal, and he tries to achieve it by any of the means that Allah has provided, in acquiring it and the Hereafter; but he fails to realise he has reversed Allah’s wisdom by seeking the world only. As a result, his heart and his priorities are turned upside down.

Now there are two things here:

- a) To make the means a goal
- b) To use the works of the Hereafter as a means of achieving the world

This is an adverse and evil process and the heart of a person involved in it is turned completely upside down. Such a person falls under the following statements of Allah (which means):

- ***“Whoever seeks the worldly life and its adornment, we will give them full reward of their acts and they will not be reduced. They are the people who will have nothing for themselves in the hereafter but Fire. All that they did in the world will be destroyed and false is that which they are doing.” (11/15, 16)***
- ***“If any do wish for the transitory things (of this life), we readily grant them as we will, to such persons as we will: in the end we***

¹ Al-Bayhaqi in Shu’ab (7/376)

have provided Hell for them: they will burn therein disgraced and rejected.” (17/18)

- **“To any that desires the tilth of the hereafter, We give increase in his tilth; and to any that desires the tilth of this world, We grant somewhat thereof, but he has no share or lot in the Hereafter.” (42/20)**

These three verses resemble one another and support the same meaning i.e. whoever seeks by his work, this world and its adornment, instead of Allah and the Hereafter, will obtain what he is looking for. That will be his share and he will not have anything beside that. The statements of the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) confirm what the Qur’an has said in this respect. For instance, the narration of Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) about the following three people, by whom Hell will be lighted first:

The man who took part in fighting, another who gave out charity and the man who was given the art of reciting the Qur’an; all these people intended by their work to achieve worldly fame and wealth and they received them. The narration is recorded in *Saheeh* of Muslim.¹

Abu Umamah narrated:

‘A man went to the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and said:

‘O Messenger of Allah, a man takes part in military expedition with the aim of getting reward and winning fame. What is he going to receive?’

“Nothing”, the Messenger (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) replied.

The man repeated his question three times and the Messenger’s answer was the same: ‘Nothing.’

Then he (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“Certainly Allah, the Exalted, accepts only those acts that are performed sincerely for Him and for seeking His pleasure.”²

The above man’s reward was destroyed and his act was rendered worthless, although his intention was to obtain reward, because he mixed it with the intention of becoming popular among the people. Since he did not devote his act to Allah alone it was made worthless.

1 Muslim (4923)

2 An-Nasaa’i (3142)

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that a man said to the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him): ‘A man intends to take part in *Jihad* but his aim is to gain worldly benefit.’ The Messenger (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “He is not going to receive any reward.”

The people found this hard and asked the man to go back to the Messenger (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and ask again as he may not have understood the question. The man went back and asked:

‘O Messenger of Allah, a man intends to take part in *Jihad* in the cause of Allah but his aim is to achieve worldly benefit.’

“He will not receive any reward,” the Messenger (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) replied.

The man repeated the question a third time and the answer of the Messenger (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was the same: “He will get no reward.”¹

Ubadah bin al-Samit (may Allah be pleased with him) related that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “A man who takes part in a military expedition in the way of Allah with the intention of getting a rope will get only what he intended.”²

Ya’la bin Munyah narrated:

‘The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to send me on expeditions. Once, when he sent me on such an expedition, I noticed a man riding a mule and I asked him:

‘Come and march, the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) has sent me on an expedition.’

He said:

‘I will not join you unless you give me 3 *Dinars*.’

I agreed. When I returned from my expedition, I mentioned it to the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and he said:

“He is not going to get anything from his participation in this expedition here in this world or in the Hereafter except those 3 *Dinars*.”³

Abdullah bin ‘Amr asked the Messenger of Allah (may peace and

- 1 Ahmad (2/290, 366), Abu Daawood (2516), Ibn Hibban (4637), and al-Hakim (2/85)
- 2 Ahmad (5/315, 320), an-Nasaa’i (3140), Ibn Hibban (4638) and al-Hakim (2/109)
- 3 Ahmad (4/223), al-Tabarani (18/65), al-Hakim (2/112), see also Abu Daawood (2527)

blessings of Allah be upon him) about *Jihad* and military expedition, and the Messenger (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) replied: “Abdullah bin ‘Amr, if you fight with patience expecting a reward from Allah, the Most High, Allah will raise you in that condition. If you fight with the intention of showing off and boasting, Allah will raise you as such. Abdullah bin ‘Amr whatever intention you have when you fought or killed, you will be raised on it.”¹

Abu Ayyub (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that he heard the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) saying:

“Countries will be conquered by you and you will despatch expeditions to them. A man from among you will not like to take part in an expedition; he will leave his people and will offer himself to the tribes saying:

‘Who wants to send me on this or that expedition?’

This man will remain a mercenary to the last drops of his blood.”²

Look how the love of the world deprived this man of the reward of *Jihad*, made his act worthless and made him the first to enter Hell.

4. The love of the world is the main cause of all kinds of sins because this love obstructs a man from doing acts that are beneficial to him in the hereafter, because he becomes entirely distracted by this world. The people in this respect are of various kinds:
 - a) Those who are so enchanted by the world that they ignore the belief and its requirements.
 - b) There are others who are distracted from carrying out their obligatory duties, which they have to perform for the sake of Allah and His creation. They do not fulfil them either openly or secretly.
 - c) There are those who are kept busy from doing most of their duties.
 - d) Those others, who are so consumed by their love of the world, that they are unable to do a duty that obstructs achieving their worldly objectives, even though they carry out other duties.
 - e) Yet there are others, to whom love of the world does allow enough time to do their duties at the appointed time and in the proper way, and neglect its time and its dues.
 - f) Finally, there are those who cannot put their minds to performing obligatory acts and concentrating while performing them. Their

1 Abu Daawood (2519)

2 Ahmad (5/413) and Abu Daawood (2525)

works are done outwardly without any internal feeling. These people are rare and they are not to be compared with the lovers and devotees of the world.

The lowest level of the love for the world keeps a person away from the sources of his happiness, which are: to empty the heart of everything other than the love of Allah, keep his tongue engaged in His remembrance, make his heart in agreement with his tongue and bring the heart and tongue together to Allah. The love and affection of the world are definitely harmful to the Hereafter, exactly in the same way as the love of the Hereafter is harmful to the world. This fact is confirmed in the following Prophetic saying:

*“Whoever loves his world causes harm to his Hereafter; and whoever loves his Hereafter causes harm to his world. Give preference to that which is lasting over that which is perishing.”*¹

5. **Love** of the world makes a man think and worry more about it. Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) reported the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) saying:

“He whose greatest concern is the Hereafter, Allah will place contentment in his heart and will put his affairs in order, and the world will come to him unwillingly. Whoever makes the world his biggest concern and worry, Allah will place his need between his eyes, shatter his affairs and he will not get from the world except what is ordained for him.”²

6. The lover of the world experiences the hardest suffering. He suffers in all his three conditions: he undergoes torment in the world in trying to acquire it, with his efforts in getting it, and being involved in competition with others in it. He then will feel agony in the *Barzakh* for losing it and will regret that his beloved has been separated from him in such a way that he can never be joined with it again. There is no other beloved that can substitute for it. In the grave, he will suffer even more. Worry, grief, distress and regret will torture his soul just as the insects and the vermin of the earth consume his body.

Imam Ahmad³ reported Wahab bin Munabbih as saying that Hazkiel was among the people arrested by Bukhtnasr, and then cited a long story from him, at the end of which Hazkiel said:

‘While I was sleeping on the bank of the Euphrates an angel came and

1 Ahmad (4/412) Ibn Hibban (709) and al-Hakim (4/308, 319)

2 Ahmad (5/183) and Ibn Majah (4105)

3 *Az-Zuhd*(104-106)

held my head, then took me and laid me on the plain of the land where a battle had taken place. Ten thousand people were killed; the birds and the beasts had scattered their flesh and dispersed their joints.

He said to me:

‘Some people claim that when one of them is dead or killed he goes out of my reach, and my power will not reach him. So, call them out.’

Hazkiel said:

‘I called them. Every bone joined the joints from which it was separated.

Every bone knew its joint better than a man knows his companion. All the bones came together, then flesh grew on them, veins appeared and the skin spread. All this occurred before my eyes.

Then He asked me to call their souls. I called them and every soul went into the body to which it belonged.

When they settled, I asked them:

‘Where were you?’

They replied:

‘When we died and left the world an angel met us and said:

‘Bring forth your works and take your wages. This is our way of dealing with you and the people who passed before you and those who will come after you. We looked at our acts and found that we were involved in the worship of idols. He set insects on our bodies and our souls felt the pain. Distress covered our souls and our bodies felt its pangs. We were in that torment when you called us.’

The lover of the world never finds any rest.

They confessed that they were involved in the worship of the idols. The worship of idols and the worship of money are the same. May the slave of Dinar be destroyed! May the slave of the Dirham be destroyed!

The gist of the above story is that the lover of the world is tormented in his grave and he will suffer on the day he meets his Lord.

Allah says (what means):

“Do not let their possessions or their children impress you: through these Allah intends to punish them in this world and for their souls to depart while they disbelieve.” (9/55)

Some early scholars said:

‘Allah will punish them for hoarding money; their souls will be tired of its love. They committed disbelief by not giving Allah His due rights.’

7. **The** person involved in the love and adoration of the world, who gives it preference over the Hereafter, is the most foolish person with the least understanding. He chose an imaginary object against the real one, preferring sleep over wakefulness and vanishing shadows over permanent pleasure. He selected a transient abode instead of lasting one, and he sold eternal life in a most comfortable and pleasant condition, for a life that was mere dreams or passing shadows. An intelligent man is never deceived by such things. His case is similar to that of a Bedouin who came as a guest to some people. They offered him food that he ate, then he slept in the shade of a tent. After some time the people pulled up the tent and left; the Bedouin felt the heat of the sun and woke saying:

‘A man, whose biggest concern is the world, is holding up the ropes of deception.’

Some early scholars have quoted the following lines:

‘O people, who indulge in the pleasures of the world which will not stay forever, to be deceived by a passing shadow is foolishness.’

Yunus bin Abd al-A’la said:

‘I did not compare the world but with a man who went to sleep and saw in a dream things that he liked, and things which he did not like, then he woke up.’

Layth reported:

‘Eesa, the son of Mary (peace be upon him), saw the world in the form of an old woman wearing all kinds of adornment, and he asked her:

‘How many people married you?’

‘I can’t count them’, she replied.

He asked further:

‘Did they die or divorce you?’

‘No’, she said, but I killed all of them.’

‘Eesa (peace be upon him) then said:

‘Misery is for your remaining husbands! Why do they not learn a lesson from your past husbands? You kill them, one by one, and yet people do not take any precautions against you!’¹

‘I see the wretched people are not tired of the world, despite being hungry and naked in it. I notice that though it is loved, it is like a cloud of summer

¹ *Dhamm al-Dunya* of Ibn Abi al-Dunya (27)

that soon will disappear.’

The nearest thing to resemble the world is a shadow. You think that it has a reality while it is constantly waning and shrinking. You run after it, trying to catch it up, but you fail. Another object that resembles it in many ways is a mirage.

“A thirsty person thinks it is water, but when he comes to it, he finds nothing and finds Allah there who takes full account of him. Allah is quick in reckoning.” (24/39)

Another object that is very similar to it is a dream, in which a man sees things he likes and others that he does not. When he wakes up he comes to realize that it was not real.

Another object resembling it is an old disfigured ugly looking woman who is disloyal to her husbands. She adorns herself with all kinds of ornaments for suitors and covers all her repulsive features. Those who focus on her outward features, and do not realize her secret are deceived and propose to marry her. She demands the dower to be the cash of the Hereafter. She says:

‘We are co-wives and our being together is not permissible or justifiable.’

The suitor prefers what is available here and now and says:

‘There is no harm for someone who joins his beloved by any means.’

When he removes her veil and opens her wrapper he discovers every kind of calamity and misfortune. Seeing this, some people divorce her immediately and relax. Others choose to stay with her, but their wedding night is full of tears and screams. The one who calls to her calls in public: ‘Come to no success!’ Her seekers and devotees get up and continue their efforts in chasing her day and night. They travel in the night and find in the morning that their journey has resulted in nothing but shame. They go in search of her and all of them return with broken limbs. They fall in her trap and she surrounds them for the slaughter.

Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

‘The world will be brought on the Day of Judgement in the form of an old grey-haired woman, her teeth visible and her features disfigured. She will look down on the people.

‘Do you recognize her?’ it will be asked.

They will reply:

‘We seek refuge in Allah from knowing her.’

Then it will be announced:

'This is the world about which you were involved in dispute among yourselves, for it you severed your blood relations and because of it you indulged in jealousy and hatred and you were deceived by it.'

Then she will be thrown into Hell. She will cry:

'My Lord, where are my followers and my fellows?'

Allah, the Most High, will command:

'Join her followers and fellows with her.'¹

Abu al-'Ala' said:

'I saw in a dream an old woman having all kinds of adornments on her; people bent down to her, looking at her with surprise. I approached her and was surprised by their gazing at her and their interest in her.

I said to her:

'Woe unto you! Who are you?'

'Do you not know me?' she said.

'No,' I replied.

She said:

'I am the world.'

I said:

'I seek refuge in Allah from your evil.'

She said:

'If you really wish to get rid of my evil, keep away from the Dirham.'²

Abu Bakr bin Ayyash said:

'I saw the world in a dream as an old, ugly, grey-haired woman clapping her hands. A crowd of people were behind her, clapping their hands and dancing. When she arrived near me, she faced me and said:

'If I succeeded with you, I would do to you what I have done to these people.'

Abu Bakr cried after saying it.³

Al-Fudayl said:

'I learned that a man's soul was taken up to Heaven. On the main road, there was a woman with all kinds of adornments of dress and jewellery. No one passed by her but she inflicted injury on him. When she turned back, she was the most beautiful object one had ever seen; but when she faced forward, she was the ugliest creature: old, grey-haired, blue and bleary eyed.

1 Ibid (123)

2 Ibid (128)

3 Ibid (29-30)

I said:

'I seek refuge in Allah.'

She said:

'No, Allah will never grant you refuge unless you abhor the *Dirham*.'

I asked her who she was and she replied:

'I am the world.'¹

Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) described the world saying:

'It is a house in which, if a person is healthy, he grows old; if he is ill, he regrets; if he is in need, he grieves; if he is well off, he is put to trial. Its lawful use is the subject of reckoning and its unlawful use leads to Hell.'²

Ibn Mas'ood (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

'The world is the home of he who has no home, and the wealth of him who has no wealth; and for it piles up that which lacks reason.'³

Al-Hasan wrote to Umar bin Abd al-Aziz:

'Now, the world is the place of journey and not a place of rest. Adam was brought down to it as punishment. Beware of it, O Commander of the Faithful! Its best provision is to abandon it and then its wealth is to end in poverty. In every condition here, someone is killed. It degrades the one who shows it respect; and makes him poor who collects for it. It is like poison, he who does not know eats it and it kills him.

So, be in it like the one who treats his injuries and seeks in it a little shelter because he fears to face undesirable results for a long time. He endures the hardship of treatment.

Beware of this imaginary abode of delusions and deceptions, which has deceptively with the fear of lengthy affliction, adorned itself and has caused trouble by its delusion. It deceives by its hopes and attracts its seekers. It appears like the unveiled bride to whom all eyes are fixed, hearts are attached and the soul is fascinated by it. Although it is known to kill all its husbands, the latest ones ignore the fate that befell those before them, nor are the later ones held back by the admonition of the earlier ones. The one who has knowledge of Allah keeps in mind what he was told about it. Its lover, who has achieved his desire from it, becomes deceived, crosses all bounds and forgets that he is going to return to Allah. His mind becomes completely occupied by it, which causes his feet to slip. In the end, he

1 Ibid (124)

2 Ibid (18)

3 Ibid (16) see also *az-Zuhd*(200)

starts regretting greatly and suffers from severe distress. Then the agony and pain of death comes to him and he experiences sorrow and the grief of loss. He departs from it in anguish, without achieving his aims, and he is unable to provide his soul with comfort. He leaves it without provision and reaches a place that is not easy.

Beware of it, O Commander of the Faithful! The more cautious you are in it, the happier you will be. The man who has the knowledge for obtaining the provision of this world relies on pleasure that leads to an unpleasant end. Its pleasing food is harmful to the body; its affluence is linked with affliction; life here ends in death. Its pleasure is mixed with distress. What has passed is not going to return, and what is coming next is not known, and hence cannot be foretold. Its hopes are false; its wishes worthless; what seems pure is muddy, and its life is misfortune.

If its Creator had not informed us about it and had not explained its nature by citing similitudes, it would have awakened the sleeping person and warned the neglectful. However, the warning came from Allah that contained a lesson: it has no value or merit with Allah, the Exalted. He has not looked at it since He created it. It was offered together with all its entire treasures, and their keys, to our Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) but he refused it. He did not care to love something which Allah, its Creator, abhorred, or to raise the status of an object which He had put down. Because He does not like it, He kept it away from His pious servants and expanded it to His enemies so that they were deceived by it. The deceived man, who has been given power in it wrongly, thinks that he has been honoured with it; and forgets how Allah tested Muhammad (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), who had to tie a stone on his stomach.¹

Al-Hasan also said:

‘O son of Adam, do not attach your heart to the world because you will be attaching it to the worst object. Break its ties and close its doors. O son of Adam, what is sufficient for you from it is that which will help you to reach your destination.’²

He also said:

‘People give undue importance to the world and it causes them to despise it. You will be more comfortable when you despise it. How impossible [it seems]! The world goes away and the deeds remain as necklaces around their necks.’³

1 Dhamm (202)

2 Ibid (405)

3 Ibid (489)

‘Eesa (peace be upon him) said:

‘Do not take the world as a lord so that it takes you as slaves. Cross it and don’t build on it. Remember that love of the world is the root cause of every sin. Many a desire produces great distress for its people. The world does not settle in the heart of a person except if his heart is attached to three things in it: work with consistent suffering; endless poverty and unending desire. The world is both a pursuer and sought after. The seeker of the Hereafter is pursued by the world, so that he can take his provision in full. The pursuer of the world is followed by the Hereafter, until death comes and grasps him by his neck.

O assembly of disciples! Be content with little of the world, keeping your religion safe, just as the people of the world are satisfied with little of the religion to keep their world safe.’¹

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

‘The world is suspended between the heavens and the earth since Allah created it and will remain so until He brings it to an end. It is calling upon its Lord: ‘My Lord! Why do you hate me?’

The answer comes from Allah:

‘Keep quiet, you are nothing! Keep quiet, you are nothing!’²

Al-Fudayl said:

‘The world will come, on the Day of Judgement, walking arrogantly with its adornment and glamour. It will say:

‘My Lord, make me the resting place of the best of your servants.

Allah will reply:

‘I do not approve of you for him. You are nothing. So, be scattered like dust.’³

Some examples to illustrate the true nature of the world:

1. The first example:
Human beings pass through three states:
 1. When he was nothing. This is before man came into existence.
 2. From the time of his death to the endless eternal life. His soul survives after leaving his body and is placed in Paradise or Hell. It will be united later with the body, and will be recompensed for the acts done in the worldly life. Afterwards it will abide forever in one of two abodes.

1 Ibid (31, 35)

2 Ibid (360)

3 Ibid (125)

3. Between the previous two states – after his coming to this world and before departing from it — he lies the middle state, which is his life on earth. He should look at the period of this state and compare it with the periods of the earlier mentioned states. He will find out that period of his life is less than the twinkle of an eye in relation to the length of the period of the world.

The one who looks at the world from this perspective will never be inclined toward it; and will not mind how his days pass in it: in need and hardship or in affluence and prosperity. This explains why the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did not place one brick over another, or one reed on another, to erect a building, and declared:

“What have I got to do with the world? My situation in the world is like a traveller who rests in the shade of a tree for a while, then leaves it and goes on his way.”

He also said:

“The world in relation to the Hereafter is no more than the amount of the water sticking to the finger of a man who dips it into the sea. He should consider how much water remains on his finger.”

To this fact, Prophet ‘Eesa (peace be upon him) also pointed out when he said:

‘The world is a bridge; cross it and do not build on it.’

This is a true illustration. Life in this world is the bridge to the Hereafter. The cradle is the starting point on this journey, and the grave is the second point, at its end. Some people have completed half of the journey, some two thirds and for some remains only a step, but they are not aware of it. Whatever the situation, one has to cross it. If a person stops on the bridge and starts constructing a building and decorating it with all kind of beautiful materials, while he is in a hurry to cross, he is undoubtedly extremely ignorant and foolish.

2. **The** second illustration is as follows:

If a passion for the world enters into the heart it become like the craving for food by the stomach. When a person approaches death, he will feel in his heart the same disgust, stench and ignominy for the passions of the world as he finds for the delicious foods after they are digested in the stomach. As in the case of food, the more delicious, fatty and sweet it is, the filthier is its excrement. The same applies to the desire which is in the heart of a person. The more powerful and more pleasant it is, the harder the pain at the time

of the death. It is like the agony of a man when he loses his beloved, which increases in relation to the intensity of his love for that object.

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said to Dahhak bin Sufyan:¹

“Aren’t you served your meal well prepared and salted, and then you drink water and milk?”

‘Yes, indeed,’ he replied.

“Then what does it turn to?”

‘To what you know’, he said.

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) then said:

“Allah sets forth the example, that the world is like what the meal of the son of Adam becomes at the end.”

Some early scholars used to say to their companions:

‘Come, I will show you the world.’

Then he would take them to a dunghill and say:

‘Look at their fruits, chickens, honey and butter.’

Example 3:

The world and its people, in their distraction from the Hereafter and the distress it is going to cause, are like people who board a ship that lands on an island. The captain tells them to disembark, to fulfil their natural needs, and cautions them not to be late, otherwise they will miss the ship. They scatter to all corners of the island. One of them completes his work and rushes to the ship. He finds the place empty and chooses the most spacious, comfortable and suitable place. Another person stays on the island looking at its wonderful flowers and attractive blossoms, listening to the singing of the birds, fascinated by the beauty of its stones. Then he remembers the departure of the ship and fears that he may miss it, so he rushes to it and finds a narrow place where he sits down. Yet another other person gets captivated by the beautiful stones and dazzling flowers; he picks up a load of them and when he returns to the ship he finds a narrow place and his load causes him more problems. It becomes a burden and encumbrance, but he cannot throw it away and has to carry it. Finding no place in the ship to put it, he carries it on his neck. He regrets taking it, but it does not avail him. After a while, the flowers fade and their smell changes; and their odours trouble him.

1 Ahmad (3/452) and al-Tabarani (8/299)

There is yet another person who goes into the island and forgets the ship altogether. He goes far away, sightseeing. The captain announces the departure of the ship, but he cannot hear it because he is absorbed in his enjoyment. He is engaged in plucking fruits, smelling the flowers and admiring the beauty of the trees. Yet he is scared that a beast might appear and attack him or a thorn might cling to his dress and prick his feet, or a twig might injure his body or a boxthorn tear his dress causing him to be exposed or a horrible sound frightens him. He may be able to reach the ship, but finds no space. As a result, he perishes on the shore. Another is engaged in his enjoyment and is killed by beasts or bitten by snakes. Yet another is lost and wanders aimlessly until he too perishes.

Similarly, the people of the world, with their preoccupation with their available provision, forget their end and their return. How devastating is it for a sensible person to be deceived by stones and plants that turn into chaff? It is sad, that such things should engage his thoughts, and prevent him from working towards his redemption.

Example 4:

The deception of the people by the world and their lack of faith in the Hereafter:

Al-Hasan gave the following account:

‘I learnt that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said to his Companions:

“My likeness and yours and the parable of the world is that of a people who travelled along a dusty desert, their provision was finished and their camels were exhausted, but they had no idea how much of their journey remained. They were stranded in the middle of the desert without food or transport, and they became sure they would perish. Then a man dressed in a robe appeared, his head dripping water. They assumed that he had recently been in a town which was nearby. When he reached them, he asked:

‘How are you?’

‘As you see’, they replied.

He said:

‘Well, if I lead you to fresh water and green gardens, what will you give me?’

‘We will not disobey you,’ they said.

He said:

‘Then make your pledge and promise by Allah.’

They made their promise and pledge by Allah not to disobey him in any

matter. He led them to water and green gardens. He stayed with them as long as Allah willed, then said to them:

‘People, be ready to leave.’

‘Where to?’ they asked.

‘To water, that is not like your water, and to a garden, that is not like your garden.’

The majority of them said:

‘By Allah, we came to this after being in a desperate state and thinking that we would not survive. What are we going to do with a life better than this?’

Others who were few in number said:

‘Did you not give this man your pledge, and promised him in the name of Allah that you will not disobey him in any matter? He told you the truth in the first instance and definitely tells the truth now.’

The man left with those who joined him and the rest remained behind. They were ambushed by their enemy in the morning and were killed or taken prisoner.¹

Example 5:

The similitude of the world and its people is the one in which the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) expounded that it was like the shade of a tree and the man is like a traveller to Allah in it, who takes rest under the tree on a hot day for a while, then moves on and leaves it.

Consider the beauty of this parable and how it fits in the actual case. The world in its greenery is like a tree and its quick end and gradual contraction are like the shadow. The man is travelling to his Lord. When a traveller notices a tree on a hot day it is not proper for him to build a house under it or to take it as residence, but to enjoy its shade as long as he needs. If he stays longer, he will be left behind his Companions.

Example 6:

The sixth illustration is the one made by the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) when he compared the gains of the world to the act of dipping a finger into the sea, and explaining that the resulting quantity of water that clings to the finger represents this world as compared to the world of the Hereafter.

This is another wondrous illustration. The world is going to end, even if it lasts longer than it is due, while the Hereafter is eternal with no end.

¹ *Dharm al-Dunya* (88), see also Ibn al-Mubarak (507)

A limited object bears no comparison to an unlimited one. Suppose the heavens and the earth were full of mustard seeds, and after every one thousand years a bird eats one of them; they will eventually finish, but the Hereafter is not going to finish. The relationship of the world to the Hereafter is like that of a single mustard seed to a heap of them.

Similarly, if seven additional seas are added to the existing seas, and used as ink, and all the trees of the earth are used as pens for recording the words of Allah, the ink and the pens would be exhausted but the words of Allah would not end. This is because they have no beginning and no end, while the seas and the ink have their limits.

Imam Ahmad and others said:

‘Allah speaks whenever He wishes. His holy perfection requires His speaking; His perfection is a necessary attribute of His essence, which cannot be detached from Him. The one who speaks is definitely more perfect than the one who does not. He, glory be to Him, is not affected by tiredness, weariness or exhaustion from speaking. He creates and manages the creation with His words. By His words, He gave rise to His creation and His command. This is the real nature of His kingdom, Lordship and divinity; He is the King, the Lord and the Divine being, there is no other being worth worshipping beside Him.

The point is, that the world is a breath of the hereafter, and a single moment from its moments.

Example 7:

This is the comparison of the world made in the authentic report by Abu Sa’id al-Khudri (may Allah be pleased with him) who said:

‘The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) one day gave a sermon, in which he said:

“By Allah, I am not afraid for you of anything except the blossom of the world, which Allah brings forth for you.”

‘Does good produce evil, O Messenger of Allah?’ a man asked.

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) remained silent for a while then asked:

“What did you say?”

The man repeated his question:

‘Does good produce evil, O Messenger of Allah?’

The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“Good produces only more good. However, among what grows in the spring is that which kills because of overeating, or at least brings death close, except to the animal that eats green crops; when its haunches are full, it lies in the sun and empties its bowel and urinates. Then it ruminates and goes back and eats again. So, he who earns through lawful means, he would be blessed in it, while he who takes it otherwise is like the one who eats and is never satisfied.”¹

The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in the above statement told his Companions that he was afraid of the world for them. He likened it to a blossom and described its good scent, beautiful looks and short life; and pointed out that behind it was a better and more lasting fruit.

His statement “among what grows in the spring is that which kills because of overeating or nearly causes death” is the best illustration containing warning against the world and becoming absorbed by it and enjoying it. It explains that the cattle like the plants of the spring and eat their fill, but may die because of overeating. The word “*Habal*” means swelling of the belly of the animal by being full or by illness.

The greed and voracity of a greedy man kill him; if they do not kill, they at least will bring him close to death. Many owners of wealth are killed by their wealth, because they were excessive in their greed and hoarding, while others, who were in need, were unable to obtain anything, and had to resort to killing them or subduing and forcing them to humiliation.

The phrase “except the animal that eats the green plants” is an illustration of the person who takes only what he needs from the world. He is like the goat that eats green plants to her need till her haunches are full or extended, because the food fills them. Two haunches refer to two sides of her belly. The sentence “she faces the sun and empties her bowl and urinates” has three useful lessons in it:

1. When this goat has received its share of grazing, it stops eating and sits facing the sun to relish what it has eaten.
2. It abandons grazing because the greed for more is harmful to her and instead turns to what is beneficial for her; it sits in the sun, the heat of which would help in digestion and bringing out what she had eaten.
3. She brings out the urine and excrement that had gathered in her stomach from the food, and thus is relaxed. If the waste had

1 Al-Bukhaari (1465, 2842, 6427), and Muslim (2421)

remained in her belly, it would have caused her death. In the same way, the interest of the man who is engaged in collecting wealth lies in doing what the goat did.

23

The first part of the *Hadeeth* illustrates the condition of the man who is greedy in acquiring wealth and is interested in having more and more. He is like the animal that is pushed by greed to eat such a huge quantity of food that it causes its death, or brings it very close to death. A greedy covetous person is doomed to perdition or comes very close to that fate. The spring season provides all sorts of plants and vegetables and the animal eats a great deal of it, which causes its stomach to become inflated. If it consumes beyond its limit its intestines blow up, and it dies. This is also the case for a man who gathers worldly wealth through illegal means and hoards it or spends it in unlawful ways.

The last part of the *Hadeeth* includes the illustration of the moderate person, with the example of the goat that consumes the green plants, which are useful for the cattle. Its craving and voracity did not cause it to eat more than it could bear. She ate only what she needed. In the same way, the moderate person should take from the world only what he needs, then turn to matters that are beneficial for him. The urine and excrement of the animal are mentioned as a parable to the spending of wealth in lawful causes, as hoarding and keeping it are harmful. By spending in good causes, this man rescued himself from the evil consequences of his hoarding. He took only the amount that he needed and this led him to escape the harm of holding back what he had, just as cattle escaped death by bringing out what they ate through urine and faeces.

The *Hadeeth* teaches moderation and the middle course between being greedy in a grassland, [the growth of] which kills if taken beyond limit, and turning away and deserting it altogether, which may cause death by hunger. It also includes advice to those who are wealthy; to adopt a path that will preserve their strength and health of their bodies and hearts, and that is by spending, because hoarding is harmful for them.

And we seek Allah's help.

Example 8:

This is the report of Maymunah (may Allah be pleased with her) who said: 'The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said to 'Amr bin al-'As (may Allah be pleased with him):

"The world is sweet and beautiful. He who is conscious of Allah in it,

and does good deeds (is successful), otherwise he is like the one who eats without being satisfied. The difference between these two is like the distance between two stars one of which rises in the east and the other sets in the west.”¹

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) pointed out that its beauty and its attraction captivates the eyes, and its sweetness fascinates the heart. With this beauty and sweetness, it has been made attractive and beloved to the people, especially because they are created from it and in it, as it is said:

‘We are the children of the world. From it we grew; and the matter from which you are made of is always very dear to you.’

The above *Hadeeth* divides the people of the world into two categories:

First: the righteous and religious man, whose piety does not let him become involved in worldly affairs; with the result that he is not greedy for them, nor does he acquire wealth through unlawful means, or dispose of it in prohibited ways:

Second: the man who is not religious and conscious of Allah, and who has directed his power and energy to the acquisition of worldly wealth by any means. He is like a man who eats but is never satisfied.

This is an excellent illustration. The aim of eating is to preserve health and energy; it follows that food should be taken in accordance with need, because eating itself is not the aim. He who places his desire above his aims will never be satisfied. That is why Imam Ahmad (may Allah have mercy upon him) said:

‘A little of the world is enough, but abundance is not.’

The *Hadeeth* also indicated that the distance between the righteous and pious and the greedy and covetous people is like the distance between two stars, one rising on the horizon, and the other setting on it. Between these two there are different stages.

Example 9:

This is the report of al-Mustawrid bin Shaddad, which has been cited earlier. It says:

‘I was among the people who were in the company of the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) when he happened

1 Abu Ya’la (7099)

to come across a dead lamb and he asked us:

“Do you think that this was so worthless to its owners that they threw away it like this?”

‘They threw it because of its worthlessness, O Messenger of Allah,’ we replied.

He said:

“By Allah, in Whose hand is Muhammad’s soul, the world is of less value to Allah than this lamb was to its owners!”¹

Here the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) not only likened the world to the dead lamb but also declared that it was less in value to Allah than it.

The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) reinforced his statement with swearing by Allah. Now if the world were as base and worthless to Allah as a dead lamb was to its owners, then the lovers and seekers of the world are more despicable to Allah than the dead lamb, which was thrown away because it was a small lamb. If it had been a large sheep, the owners might have used its wool or benefited from its skin, after tanning it. A small lamb was completely useless to them.

And we ask for Allah’s help.

Example 10:

This example of the world likens it to the sea, which everyone has to cross, from one shore to the other, to reach his house and his dwelling place. He can cross it only in the ship of salvation. Allah, the Exalted, sent His Messengers to teach people how to find the ships of redemption and how to make use of them. This is possible by obeying Allah and His Messengers, devoting oneself to Allah alone through worship and by dedicating one’s acts only to Him. Preparing for the Hereafter and working toward it is also required. Those helped by Allah board such a ship and do not jump into the sea, because they know that it is impossible to cross it by swimming or diving.

The foolish ones find it hard to build the ship or to use the tools, and they fail to board it. They say:

‘We will plunge into the sea and cross it by swimming’, and they are the majority of the people of the world. They plunge into the sea and start swimming, but get into difficulties and drown. Only the people who boarded the ship were saved, just as the followers of Noah were saved.

1 At-Tirmithi (2321)

Consider this parable and the state of the people in the world and you will realize that it gives a true example of the situation we find ourselves in now. This parable is set forth to explain the example of the world, the Hereafter, our fate and the command. The fate is the sea, and the command is the ship. No one can be saved unless he embarks on it.

Example 11:

The world is like a pot full of honey. The flies notice it and approach it. Some sit on the side of the pot and take as much as they want, then fly away. Others are driven by greed and drop themselves in the middle of the pot. It does not give them a chance to enjoy themselves for long and they perish.

Example 12:

It is like grain that is spread on the ground, with a trap fixed to every grain, except at the edges, where there is some grain without traps. Birds come. Some are satisfied by staying at the edges, do not go to into the middle, take only as much as they need, and leave. Others, compelled by their greed, rush to the middle and are hardly able to pick up a grain before they become prisoners in the traps.

Example 13:

The world is like a man who lights a big fire, and the moths and grasshoppers, noticing it, rush to it and fall into it. The insects that are aware of the danger keep away and enjoy its heat from a distance.

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) pointed out this parable in a *Hadeeth* reported by ‘Umar. He said:

“I am holding you by your waist from the Fire and you are rushing into it like moths and grasshoppers. It is likely that I may lose my grip on you.”¹

In another version:

“My likeness with you is like a man who ignites a fire. When its light reaches the surrounding area the moths and grasshoppers start to fall in it. I am holding you by your waists from the Fire and you overwhelm me in rushing to it.”²

This parable fits those people who grossly indulge in the world. The

1 Al-Bazzar (1/314, and Abu Ya’la (486)

2 Al-Bukhaari (3426, 6483), Muslim (5955, 5958)

messengers are calling them to the Hereafter but they rush to the world like moths to the Fire.

Example 14:

It is like a people who go on a journey with their wealth and their family. They pass by a valley full of plants and plenty of water and fruit. They halt there and erect their tents, and build houses and palaces. A man known to them for his honesty, truthfulness and sincerity approaches them and says: "I have seen with my own eyes an army behind this valley preparing to attack you. Follow me I will take you away from your enemy's harm and will rescue you."

A small band of them listens to him and follows him. He shouts: "Escape and save yourselves because you are going to be attacked!"

Those who hear this call say:

'How can we leave this place where our cattle, our wealth and our houses are, and we have taken it as our dwelling place?'

The sincere man says:

"Let everyone escape with his life and a little of his belongings. Otherwise, he is going to fall captive and be taken as prisoner and his belongings will be seized."

The wealthy and the owners of property find it difficult to move from that place and leave their means of luxury, pleasure and comfort. Every foolish man said:

'I want to be like those who stay behind. They have more wealth and bigger families than I have. Whatever happens to them will happen to me.' Only a few people follow the sincere caller, and join him and are saved. The army attacks in the morning and sweeps away all the people who remain there, together with their wealth.

This is exactly what the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) explained in the *Hadeeth* reported in Al-Bukhaari and Muslim on the authority of Abu Musa, he said:

"My example and the example of that which Allah has sent with me is like a man who comes to his people and says:

"My people, I have seen an army myself and I am a warner for you. Escape, escape!"

A band of his people obeys him and leave in the dark; they go at ease and escape. Others take his warning as a lie and stay in their places. The army raids them in the morning, kills them and sweeps away their property.

This is the example for those who obey me and follow the teachings I brought; and the example of whoever disobeys me and denies the truth I brought.”¹

Example 15:

A man constructs a house, decorates it by furnishing it with all kinds of furniture, and invites people to it. When a man comes, he seats him on a luxurious cushion and offers him food in a gold dish. He also places before him excellent pots containing all that he might need and orders his servants to be at his service. The sensible person knows that all this is the property of the owner of the house; the servants and the furniture belong to him. He enjoys these facilities as long as he stays in the house and does not let his heart become attached to them. He never thinks that he is the owner of these things. He behaves with the owner of the house as a guest is expected; he sits down when he is asked to do so and eats what is offered to him. He does not ask for more than that because he knows that his host is aware of his need and being generous, he treats his guests with honour. So, he enters the house with honour and leaves it respectfully. The owner of the house has no complaint against him.

However, a foolish person thinks that the house is his residence, and he regards everything in it his property and uses them according to his desires and wishes. He chooses the place to sit and starts moving the utensils to a place in the house to hide them. Whenever the host offers him something, he thinks of taking it and preserving it for himself. The owner of the house is watching all his actions but his noble manners prevent him from throwing that man out of the house. When the man thinks that he has acquired all these things, including ownership of the house, and starts behaving as the real owner, and considering the house his residence, the owner of the house summons his slaves who throw him out of the house by force and snatch all that he has taken. Nothing is left with him. In addition, he is the subject of the anger of the owner of the house and is disgraced by him in front of his slaves, servicemen and entourage.

Let an intelligent person pay due attention to this parable because it is in conformity with reality.

And Allah's support is sought.

1 Al-Bukhaari (6482, 72830 Muslim (5954)

Abdullah bin Mas'ood (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

'Every man in this world is a guest, and his belongings borrowed. The guest is to leave and the borrowed materials are to be returned.'

Al-Bukhaari and Muslim reported the following story on the authority of Anas (may Allah be pleased with him):

'A son of Abu Talhah from his wife Umm Sulaym died. She said to her family:

'Nobody should tell Abu Talhah about the incidence; I will be the one who will convey the news to him.'

When Abu Talhah came home, she offered him supper. He ate and drank. Then she dressed up in the most beautiful manner for him. He had intercourse with her. When she noticed that he was relaxed and comfortable, she spoke:

'Abu Talhah, tell me if a person lent something to a family, and later demanded it back, do they have right to refuse to return it?'

'No', he replied.

'Then expect a reward concerning your son', she said.

Abu Talhah was furious and said:

'You left me soiled and then are telling me about my son's death!'

He went to the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and told him what she had done.

The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"Allah has blessed your night."

Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) cited the rest of the story.¹

Example 16:

Some people are travelling along a desert and feel thirsty. They reach the seacoast. It is well known that sea water is very bitter and salty, yet, they do not feel its bitterness and saltiness because of the intensity of the thirst. They drink, but are not satisfied. The more they drink the thirstier they feel, until their intestines are torn apart and they die out of thirst.

The people of reason among them are aware that the seawater is bitter and salty; the more a person drinks it the thirstier he feels. Therefore, they keep away from it until they reach a cultivable land and dig a well. Sweet cold water gushes from it, they quench their thirst by it and use it for cooking. They call those who are at the seacoast: 'Come, here is sweet water.'

¹ Al-Bukhaari (1301, 5470) and Muslim (6322)

Some of them mock their call; some others ignore it and are content with what they have. Only a few respond.

This parable was put forth by 'Eesa (peace be upon him) when he said: 'The parable of the seekers of the world is as the one who drinks sea water. The more he drinks the more his thirst increases until he is killed.'¹

Example 17:

The example of man, his wealth, his actions and his family is like a man who has three brothers. He has to make a long and hard journey; he calls all his three brothers and says to them:

'As you see I have to take this long and hard journey and I need your help.' One of them said:

'I was your brother till this moment, but from now on you are no more my brother or friend. I have nothing to offer you.'

He said to him:

'You are of no use to me.'

He asked the second one:

'What have you got?'

He replies:

'I was your brother and friend uptil now. I will be with you and help in arranging for your trip and transport. After that, I will not be your companion any more.'

He said:

'I need you on my journey.'

'That is not possible', he said.

He said:

'You are of no use to me.'

Then he spoke to the third brother and said:

'What can you do for me?'

He replied:

'I have been with you during your health and illness, and I am with you now. I will be your companion when you mount your camel, and accompany you on your trip, travelling when you travel and halting when you halt. When you arrive at your town, I will remain there with you. I will not part from you.'

He says:

1 *Dhamm* (342)

'I always considered you the most insignificant friend to me, and gave the other two preferences over you. I wish I had known your worth and placed you above them.'

23

The first brother is the wealth of the man; the second his relatives, his family and friends; and the third is his deeds.

This example has been cited in a Prophetic narration, but it is not authentic. It is true in itself and in conformity with the reality of our situation.

Example 18:

This is the best example of its kind.

A king constructs a house so beautiful that no one has ever seen or heard about a more beautiful and more spacious house. It has every means of pleasure in it. He prepares a road to it and sends a messenger to invite people to this house. He appoints a beautiful woman adorned with all kinds of finery and a variety of dresses and jewellery to sit by the road. Every one passes by her, and he appoints servants and helpers to assist her and gives her and her servants leave to dispose provisions for those who are going to the king. He orders her and her assistants:

"He who lowers his gaze from you and is not distracted by you from me and is looking only for provision to reach me, serve him, supply him with his needs and do not obstruct his journey but help him with all that can make his trip easy. But he who extends his eyes to you, is pleased with you, gives preference to you over me and seeks union with you, then inflict on him the severest torment, cause him utmost disgrace and make him run after you like a wild animal. The one who eats from you, deceive him a little then take back from him and snatch what he has taken. Set your servants and followers upon him. If he goes to extremes in your love, respect and honour, treat him in the same measure by despising, deserting and humiliating him. Let his soul be torn apart in regret."

Think carefully over this example and look at the conditions of the seekers of the world and those who desire the Hereafter. And Allah's help is sought.

This example is extracted from the statement referred to Allah in a Sacred narration:

'O world, serve those who seek Me, and enslave those who are your servants.'

Example 19:

A king designs a city in the most wholesome and healthy place with fresh air and plenty of water. He sets a course for its rivers to run, and plants trees in it. He announces to his subjects:

‘Hasten to the best place in the city. Whoever gets to a place first it is for him, and whoever remains behind, others will get ahead of him to the city.’ The people choose their places and occupy their houses in them, and those who remain behind regret.

The king later prepares a racecourse and plants a big tree in it, which has an extended shade with water flowing beneath. The tree has all kinds of fruits and wonderful songbirds are perched on it. He says to the people:

‘Don’t be deceived by this tree and its extended shade; soon it will be cut down by its roots. Its shade will disappear, its fruits will run out and its birds will die. The city of the king, on the other hand is better; its food is eternal, its shade is permanent and its pleasure is everlasting. In this city there are things that no eye has ever seen, no ear has heard of and the thought of them has not occurred to any mind.’

Hearing this, the people go out in search of it. They come across that tree after being exhausted and tired, and suffering from heat and thirst. They halt under it and relax under its shade. They taste the sweet fruits of it and listen to the singing birds. It is said to them:

‘You halt under this tree to have some rest and prepare your mounts to race. Be ready to ride and be alert. As soon as the whistle is blown, you should join the race track.’

Most of them said:

‘How can we leave this extended shade and running water, the ripe fruits and the comfort and leisure, and go to the race course in the heat and dust while we are suffering from fatigue, exhaustion? How can we embark on a long journey in the barren desert where the intestines are torn apart? How can we sell this present comfort for something that is not to be found? How can we leave what we see for something that is not visible? A small amount of cash in hand is better than a pearl that is promised after tomorrow. Take what you see and leave that which you only hear of. We are the children of today. This is the life that is available now; how can we abandon it for an unknown life in a far away country, about which we do not even know when we will arrive in it?’

Only one man rose out of a thousand, saying:

23

'By Allah, our stay in this vanishing shade under this tree which soon will be uprooted is worthless. Its fruits are to expire and its birds are to die. How can we abandon going to the extended shade that will never go away and an easy life that will never end? This is the attitude of the most foolish of men. Is it good for a traveller, when he has taken rest under a tree, to put up his tent there and take residence in it mainly because of the fear of heat and cold? Is it not the most foolish act? So, make haste to race and hurry. Death is the law which is in force about human beings, and this world is not a resting place.

Achieve your desires quickly; your life is only a journey.

Run fast on the racehorses and hurry up, lest they are taken back because they are borrowed.

Give up staying under the vanishing shade; you are on a journey in this place.

He who hopes for a pleasant life in it is building his hopes on the crumbling edge.

The real life is that which comes after departure from this world and going to the abode of the people of merit, which is the most respectable abode.

The fortunate ones enter the racetrack and are not bothered by the meagre numbers of their companions. They march with firm resolutions without caring about the blame of any one. Those who stay behind remain sleeping under the shade of the tree. Soon after the branches of the tree wither, its leaves fall down, its fruits are depleted, its twigs dry up and its roots break apart. Its caretaker then cuts it from the root. The people resting under it find themselves in the heat of the hot wind distressed by the bygone life under its shade. Later, the caretaker burns it and the area around it is also set ablaze. The fire surrounds those who are under it and none of them is able to escape. They start asking: 'Where are those who were with us under the shade of this tree, then left and went away?'

They are told:

'Raise your eyes, you will see their houses. They look and see them far away in the palaces of the king's city, enjoying all kinds of pleasure in its apartments. At this point, their distress increases and they regret not joining them. Their grief is compounded because the way to reach their desire is blocked. It is said to them:

'This is the recompense of those who lagged behind. ***"And We did not wrong them, but they did wrong to themselves."*** (16/118)

Example 20:

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) described the world as a cloth which is torn and remains hanging by a thread at its end. How long will that thread hold it?

Anas bin Malik narrated:

The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“The likeness of this world is like a cloth that is cut from its side to the end, and remains hanging with a thread at its end. That thread will break at any moment.”¹

If you need further explanation of this comparison, pay attention to the following report in the *Musnad*² of Imam Ahmad on the authority of Abu Sa'id who said:

‘The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) led us in ‘*Asr*’ prayer. After completing the prayer, he gave us a sermon and spoke about everything that was going to happen before the coming of the Hour. He who remembered it, remembered it, and he who forgot, forgot it. The people started looking at the sun to see whether it was still there. He said: “Remember: what remains of the world in relation to what has passed is just what remains of this day compared to what had passed.”

Ibn ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) came out to us when the sun was on the edge of palm leaves (i.e. about to set), and said: “What has remained of the world is like what remains of this day of ours compared to what has passed.”³

Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) addressed us at the time of sunset and said:

“What has remained of the world in relation to what has passed is like what remains of this day of yours compared to what has gone by.”⁴

The world is like a day and the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was sent at the end of it. He said:

“I and the Hour are as close as these two”, and he joined his index and the

1 *Dharm* (221), see *al-Da'ifah* (1970)

2 (3/19, 61), see also at-Tirmithi (2191)

3 Ibn Abi al-Dunya in *Qisar al-Amal* (120), see also Ahmad (2/133)

4 *Qisar* (121)

middle finger together.¹

One of the early scholars said:

‘Exercise patience. There are only a few more days. You are people on a journey who have halted. One of you is about to be called and he will respond without looking back. Your death has been announced; and it is an ultimate departure. Allah is in wait. The souls will go out as has been described at the end of *Surat al-Waqi’ah* (56).’

Example 21:

The example of the world is like a big pool full of water, which is a watering place for people and animals. So much water has been taken from it that it is exhausted and only some muddy stuff remains at the bottom. The animals pollute it by urine, and men and animals plunge in it.

Muslim² reported that Utbah bin Ghazwan addressed his fellows and said: ‘The world is on the verge of elapsing and has turned its back. No more than few drops remain of it, like the water which remains in the pot that its owner pours out. You are going to move from it to a place that has no end. So, move with the good provisions of what you have.’

Abdullah bin Mas’ood said:

‘Allah, the Exalted, made the whole world negligible. What remains of it is little of that little. What remains of it is like a pool whose pure water has been consumed and only the muddy part is left.’³

Example 22:

Some people lived in a town for a period of time. Then a series of calamities and troubles struck, it was affected by ordeals and injustice and corruption left it in ruin. The king of the people built a city in a place where no calamity or malady could occur. He decided to demolish the first town and sent a message in this regard to the residents who were told to leave after three days. No one should remain behind and all of them should move to the second city and transfer all the best and most useful commodities to it. All the pearls, gold and silver, and all those items that can be carried easily and were highly valuable and suitable for kings, must be taken away.

1 Al-Bukhaari (6505) Muslim (2005)

2 (7435)

3 Abd al-Razzaq (20809), see also Al-Bukhaari (2964)

He provided the means of transport and guides. He designed a road and put signs on it for them, and sent envoys, one after the other, to ask them to hurry.

However, the people were divided into groups:

A few people were certain that their stay in the first town was short. They believed that unless they took quick steps to collect the precious materials of the town and carry them over to the new city, they would lose everything. They thought it foolish to engage in collecting things of little worth, while neglecting those of outstanding value. They looked for the best, most valuable materials and those things that the king appreciated most, and would be useful in his city. When they discovered these, they took them and did not concern themselves about other valueless things. They realized that if one had a big gem, it would receive the appreciation of the king much more than carrying great wealth, iron and similar valuables. They focused their attention on collecting what was most valuable and dear to the king even though it was little in the eyes of the people.

Another group turned to collecting heavy loads and they competed with one another in accumulating more and more. The people were on various levels:

some had heavy loads; others less than that. Each one collected in line with his ambition and ability, their intentions were to collect large amounts of goods and transfer them to the new city.

There was another group of people who turned to building palaces in the town and were busy with its pleasant materials, means of pleasure and enjoyment. They opposed those who wanted to move and said to them:

‘We will not let you take away any of our goods. If you join us in building the town and make your residence here, then we will approve of you. Otherwise, we will not allow you to move or transfer anything from here. A war broke out between the two parties and the party of people who were building the town fought those who wanted to move and seized their wealth and their families. The reason for this was no more than that the people wanted to move to the new city of the king in response to his caller had lost interest in this town which the king had ordered them to leave.

Some other people who were preoccupied with their comforts and enjoyment said:

‘We are not going to take the trouble to build here and we are not moving from here either. We will not stop anyone who wants to move, but we will neither fight them or help them.’

The king had a special palace, in which the female members of his family lived. He had erected a fence around it and appointed guards to protect it. The people of the town were not allowed to approach it. Those who stayed behind went around the fence but could not find an entrance. They dug a hole in the walls, reached the inviolable area and spoiled its inmates. Their behaviour aroused the king's fury. They did not stop there, but invited others to destroy the sanctuary and ruin what was in it. While they were busy doing this, a general alarm was sounded and all of them were brought before the king. Not a single man was left out. The monarch inspected everyone's belongings and checked whatever they had brought from the town. He accepted what was valuable and compensated its owners with more than its value. He gave them places to live, close to his residence. He rejected what was worthless and threw it in the faces of the owners. He treated those who had made a hole in his sanctuary, looted and plundered his inviolable property in a manner that they deserved. They begged to be returned to the town so that they could reconstruct his palace and safeguard the sanctuary, and bring him the same type of materials that others had brought. The king said to them:

'This is not possible. The town has been ruined in such a way that it cannot be reconstructed. There is now only this city which will never be ruined.'

The world is likened to sleep, life in it to a dream, and death to awakening. It is also said to be like a farm, and working in it similar to sowing seeds, the harvest of which will be on the day of return. It has also been compared to a house that has two gates: one the entrance and the other the exit. It is depicted as a snake, soft in touch, beautiful in colour but deadly in its bite. It is like poisoned food, good in taste, pleasant in smell; for the one who eats it in accordance with his need, it will be a cure for him, and he who takes more than that it will cause his death. It is said to be like the food in the stomach when the parts of the body taken what they need from it, to keep it inside is lethal or painful, and a person does not get relief unless he brings it out. This was illustrated by the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in the parable of the goat that eats green grass, which has been cited above. It is like the ugliest woman who has put veil over her eyes and charms people with them, and invites people to her place. When they accept her invitation, she reveals her real shape, then kills them with her knives, then throws them into a ditch.

The world has been given power over its lovers, and has afflicted them with many troubles, and has murdered them in the past, and in the present.

It is surprising, therefore, that its lovers, continue to engage in competition with one another to get killed.

“You lived in the houses of those who did wrong to themselves and it was clear to you what we did to them, and we set forth parables for you.”
(14/45)

What Allah has said in His Book to illustrate this is sufficient; it gives the most insightful example.

The supporters of the case of poverty argue:

If the position of the world is as described above, then to renounce it and to have only a little of it is better than getting immersed in it, and trying to have more and more of it.

It is clear that running after it does not conform with devotion to Allah and preparation for the Hereafter. These two aims cannot both be fulfilled simultaneously. One will inevitably dominate and replace the other. A daughter of the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and a daughter of the enemies of Allah cannot live together with one man.

They go on to say:

It is sufficient to prove the point that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was offered the keys of the treasures of the world, but refused them. Had he taken them, he would have certainly been the most grateful of the creatures of Allah, and it would have not reduced his status with Allah at all. Nevertheless, he preferred instead to eat one day and remain hungry the next. When He passed away, his coat of armour was held in security for food for his family, as mentioned above.

The people after him were divided into four groups:

A group that showed no interest in worldly wealth, and in whom the world was not interested either. This was the group that included Abu Bakr as-Siddeeq (may Allah be pleased with it) and those who followed his way.

The second group consisted of people in whom the world was interested, but who showed no interest in it. They were people like Umar bin al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him) and others like him.

The third group was composed of people who had an interest in the world and it was also interested in them, like the Umayyad Caliphs and their followers, with exception of Umar bin Abd al-Aziz, who had no interest in it though it was interested in him.

The fourth group included people who yearned for the world but it did not pay attention to them. These are the people who got nothing, although

Allah afflicted their hearts with its love, and put them to trial in search of its wealth.

Undoubtedly, the first group is the best one, then the second one, because they showed no love for worldly status.

23

They argued further, saying that a man asked the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) to advise him to do something which will make Allah and the people love him. The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“Show indifference to the world and Allah will love you, and do not be concerned with what the people have, they will love you.”¹

If having wealth were better, he would have advised him to that effect.

Additionally, Allah, the Exalted, prescribed fighting with unbelievers, and He commanded them to keep away from monks, due to their disinterest and renunciation of the world. It became the accepted practice that these people are not to be attacked and no tax is to be imposed on them, even though they were enemies of Allah, His Messenger, and His religion. It shows that renunciation of the world is of great value to Allah Almighty.

Allah’s wisdom has also ruled that the punishment for a man, who has access to something, is greater for him, than the one who does not. This is clear from the fact that a person who is married and commits adultery is to be stoned to death, while the one who is not married is to be punished by lashes and exile for a year. In the same way, the reward of someone who has nothing is greater than that for one who has considerable resources.

How can lowliness, ignominy, humbleness, suffering from poverty and experiencing its hardship and difficulty be equal to high rank, joy, power and enjoyment, pleasure and the taste of the power of wealth? Allah watches over the bitter taste of poverty which a poor man endures, the degree of patience he shows, and the contentment he displays with Allah, the Almighty. How can the rewards, for those who struggle, be equal to the reward of those who sit, relaxing in peace, comfort and ease?

How can two things be the same: one by which Paradise is surrounded, and the other by which Hell is encircled. The means to satisfy desire is based on money while the cause of hardship lies in poverty.

A poor man’s deprivation makes him suffer from the pain of poverty,

1 Ibn Majah (4102), al-Tabarani (8/237) and al-Hakim (4/313)

hunger, nakedness, need and destitution. Each one of these sufferings wipes out his sins. In addition, he receives rewards for his good deeds. He shares with the rich the rewards for good acts and enjoys the forgiveness of his sins. The advantage the rich people have comes in the form of charity, spending and giving benefit to others. A poor man can receive it only if his own intention, would have been the same, had he been rich. This intention is known only to Allah. With this intention, he becomes equal to rich men in reward, as the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) has said in a *Hadeeth* reported by Ahmad and At-Tirmithi on the authority of Abu Kabsha al-Anmari.¹

A poor person in this world is like a prisoner. His hands cannot reach what he desires and he is unable to enjoy the pleasures of the world, while a rich man is free and has no hindrance in his way. The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“The world is a prison for the believer and Paradise for the unbeliever.”²

If the rich person does not control his temptations and roams freely in the fields of desire and lust, the world becomes a Paradise for him. His merit rests on his attempts to join the poor by controlling his desires.

Allah, the Most High, and His Messenger, condemn a man who receives the pleasure of this world, and which may very likely take the place of the pleasures of the Hereafter, or at least will be a cause for reduction in any reward there. This is in contrast to the person who was deprived in the world of any pleasure, but will get his full rewards in the Hereafter. The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was once served with a stalk of almond and he refused it by saying: “This is the drink of luxurious people.”³

Hasan al-Basri was asked:

There are two men, one who has no interest in the world, and the other who works and spends what he earns in good causes: which one is better? ‘The one who has no interest in the world is better in my opinion’, he replied.

The same question was put to ‘Eesa (peace be upon him):

There were two people, one of whom passed by a gold brick, went ahead

1 See Ahmad (4/431) and at-Tirmithi (2325)

2 Muslim (7417)

3 *Az-Zuhd* (11)

and did not pay attention to it; the other took it and gave it in charity; which one was better?

He replied: 'The one who did not concern himself with the brick.'

It is supported by the practice of the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as he passed by the world and did not pay attention to it. Had he taken it, he would surely have spent it in the cause of Allah.

An intelligent poor man may reach, by his intentions and good words, all that the rich person has acquired by his wealth, and be equal to him. In addition, he will excel him, in that he will not be required to give reckoning, because he had no wealth. Thus, he will equal the rich in reward and be spared the reckoning. He has also the advantage of entering Heaven before his rich counterpart, by 500 years. He will receive additional rewards for his patience in enduring his pain of poverty and need.

Abu Kabshah reported that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"There are three things that I swear by Allah about them, and I am going to tell you something about them which you should remember: Never does the wealth of a person decrease by giving out charity; no person is oppressed, and he endures it, but Allah will give him additional honour for it, and no man opens the door of begging, but Allah will open the door of poverty for him.

The lesson, which you must remember, is as follows:

The world is for four types of people:

The man whom Allah has granted wealth and knowledge together; he remembers his Lord concerning his wealth, preserves his blood ties and is aware that he has a duty to Allah in his wealth. This man is in the best position with Allah, the Almighty.

The second is a man to whom Allah gave knowledge but did not give him wealth. He says that if I had wealth I would follow so and so (in spending in good causes). These two persons are equal in reward.

Then there is a man who has been given wealth by Allah without having knowledge. He acts in a haphazard manner with his wealth, does not fear his Lord, does not give to his relatives and does not recognize the right of Allah in his wealth. This man is in the worst position with Allah.

The last is a man who did not receive any wealth or knowledge and he says:

If I had money I would have done what so and so is doing (i.e. squander

lavishly).

Because of this intention he and the third person are equal in their sinfulness.”¹

When a rich person is accorded superiority due to his charity, the sincere poor man equals him due to his intentions. The other rich man lagged behind because he did not act properly; and the poor man suffered due to his intention. The rich man did not benefit from his wealth because he did not spend it correctly and the poor man suffered because of his bad intentions, as the rich man, who was able to enjoy his wealth and spend in charity, and the poor one, who had good intentions and received their rewards. The poor man who had bad intentions gained nothing from his poverty. The whole matter depends on intention and good deeds.

The advocates of the case of poverty say:

All this is enough to illustrate fully the issue, and decide the cases between the two groups.

And help comes from Allah.



1 Ahmad (4/231)

Chapter

Twenty-Four

The argument for the rich in their favour from the Qur'an, Sunnah, the reports of the early scholars and analogy

The rich people spoke and said:

You, the poor people have fielded against us all the forces of evidences and proofs. We are aware that you have other evidences like these and more. You followed the middle course between lengthy and brief discussion and thought that your discussion had established your excellence over the rich people. Now we are going to refer to the same sources you have relied upon. We will present our case as you have presented yours. We will put our arguments together with yours in the undisputable balance of the Sharee'ah and reason. Only then will both of us be able to find out who is superior and who is inferior.

However, first of all, take out from among our ranks those who are trying to imitate the truly patient poor people. They take upon themselves the dress of a poor man while their hearts are throbbing with greed and desire for the world. They are distanced from poverty and endurance.

Take such a person away who shows poverty but hides greed. He is unmindful of his Lord and follows his desires and is neglectful of his affairs in the life to come. He has taken the attire of poverty as his livelihood and adopted an appearance from which he is far removed. The poor, whose poverty is the outcome of inevitable circumstances, not selected by them and chosen by their will, should also be dismissed. Their indifference to the world is the result of bankruptcy and does not arise from the desire to seek the pleasure of Allah and the Hereafter. Also, the people who complain about their Lord by tongue and by behaviour should be disregarded. They are not happy with their Lord in their poverty. They are in such a state that if they are given wealth they show happiness and if deprived they are unhappy. Their minds are occupied with a concern and longing for the world. They are the most impoverished people, full of craving for the world, while the world is not in the least concerned with them.

Remove as well from our discussion those rich people, who accumulate wealth and do not give out, seek more and more, and want to be the exclusive owners of their property, and grip it tightly with tooth and claw. They feel happy when there is an increase in their wealth, and are distressed when they suffer a loss. Their hearts are attached to it and their minds are busy in searching for methods of acquiring more and more. If an occasion for giving in charity presents itself, they spend very little, and when there is an opportunity to give preference to others over their interests they try to run away.

Let our debate be exclusively about our fellow brothers and leading figures who are engaged in the race to reach Allah first, and then to the Hereafter, by their faith and work, and compete with one another in getting closer to Allah by their deeds and their wealth. Their hearts are inclined towards Him and their intention is directed to achieve His pleasure. The rich among them look at the poor man, and when they notice that he has gone ahead of him with a good deed, they make attempts to reach him. When the poor man notices the rich going ahead by spending in the cause of Allah, he puts forward his deeds, words, patience and piety to a similar degree or even more to reach the same status.

These are our brothers regarding whom the whole argument is concerned and an attempt to determine their position is made. As for the pretenders, the only question is: who is lowest and more deserving of punishment. And Allah's help is sought.

24

Now, when this matter has become clear then one should know that Allah, the Glorified, has praised certain deeds in His Book, and commended those who perform them. These deeds cannot be performed without wealth, like *Zakat*, spending in good causes, struggling in the way of Allah by giving out money, providing materials to the warriors, helping the needy, freeing slaves and supplying food in the time of famine.

What is the worth of the patience of a poor man compared to the happiness of a distressed person, who is hard pressed to the extent of perishing, when a rich man comes to his help, and gives him support in his poverty and need?

What value does the patience of the poor carry in relation to the benefit that a rich man brings about by his money in supporting the religion of Allah, furthering the word of Allah, and subduing His enemies?

What value does the patience of Abu Dharr (may Allah be pleased with him) in his poverty carry compared with the gratefulness of Abu Bakr as-Siddeeq who bought those who were tortured for the sake of Allah and freed them, and spent his money to support the cause of Islam, which the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) acknowledged? The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "No one's money helped me as much as Abu Bakr's money did."¹

Where does the patience of the people of the Suffah stand compared with the vast amount of money spent by Uthman bin Affan (may Allah be pleased with him)? The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said in appreciation of the action of Uthman (may Allah be pleased with him):

"No harm will come to Uthman whatsoever he does after today."

Then he added:

"May Allah forgive you, Uthman, all that you did secretly or openly, or what you concealed or revealed."²

If you reflect carefully on the Qur'an, you will notice that Allah, the Almighty has praised those who spend many times more than He praised

1 Ahmad (2/153, 366), Ibn Majah (94) and Ibn Hibban (6858)

2 Ahmad (5/63), at-Tirmithi (3700), and al-Hakim (2/102)

poor people who endure patiently.

The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) asserted that the upper hand was better than the lower one. He himself explained that the upper hand was the giving one and the lower hand was the receiving one.¹ Allah, glory be to Him, cited among His bounties on His Messenger (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) that He made him rich after he was poor. Being rich was the condition to which He moved him and poverty was the condition from which he was moved. It was the Almighty's method with His Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), to move him from one condition to another that was better.

The advocates for the case of rich said:

Wealth accompanied by gratitude is an additional bounty and grace. ***“And Allah chooses for His grace whosoever He wishes. Allah is of great bounty.”*** (2/105)

They continued:

The grateful rich are a means of support for the good deeds of the patient poor. They support the poor by giving them charity, showing kindness to them and helping them in doing good deeds. In this way they receive similar rewards to those of the poor. In addition, they receive the reward for spending their money and for doing good deeds. Salman al-Farsi (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) spoke about Ramadhan and said:

“Whoever provides a fasting person with provision to break his fast, his sins will be forgiven and he will be delivered from Hell. He will receive a reward similar to that of the fasting person without any one's reward being reduced.”²

According to this report the grateful rich person gets the reward for his fasting and an additional reward for the fast of the poor man whom he provided with food.

If the grateful rich had nothing more the merit of charity, which stands higher than other good deeds in the competition of the deeds, it would have been enough. This competition is reported by Umar bin al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him) who said:

‘It was said that good deeds boast of their excellence and that charity said,

1 See Al-Bukhaari (1429), and Muslim (2385)

2 Ibn Khuzaymah (1887), see also Ahmad (4/114, 116), at-Tirmithi (807), Ibn Majah (1746)

'I was the best of you.'¹

Charity is a means of protecting the servant from the Fire. A person who gives out with sincerity and keeps it secret, will be honoured with the shade of the Throne of Allah on the Day of Judgement.

Uqbah bin Amir narrated that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"Charity quenches the heat of the grave for those who give out and the believer will stay in the shadow of his charity on the Day of Judgement."²

In another version: "Everyone will enjoy the shadow of his charity till the work of the judgement is completed."³

Abu 'l-Khayr, one of the reporters of the above *Hadeeth*, used to give out charity every day, even if it was only a piece of cake, or an onion.

Mu'adh reported that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"Charity extinguishes sins as water puts out the fire."⁴

Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) reported the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as saying:

"Make haste with charity because misfortune cannot cross charity."⁵

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) related, as recorded in the two *Saheehs* that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"When a person gives out in charity from his lawful earning –and Allah does not accept but the pure lawful – Allah receives it in His right hand, and raises it as one of you raises his foal or young camel till it becomes like a big mountain."⁶

In a version of al-Bayhaqi ⁷the following addition occurred:

"A date or a bite grows bigger than Uhud Mountain."⁸

Muhammad bin al-Munkadir said:

'Among the causes for gaining forgiveness is to feed a hungry Muslim.'⁸

1 Ibn Khuzaymah (4/95), al-Hakim (1/416) and al-Bayhaqi in Su'ab (3329)

2 Al-Tabarani (17/248)

3 Ahmad (4/147), Ibn Khuzaymah (2431), Abu Ya'la (3/301), Ibn Hibban (3310), al-Tabarani (17/244) and al-Hakim (1/416)

4 Ahmad (5/231, 248), at-Tirmithi (2616)

5 Shu'ab al-iman (3082)

6 Al-Bukhaari (1410, 7430), and Muslim (2342)

7 See Shu'ab al-iman (3201), also Ibn Khuzaymah (1/148), and at-Tirmithi (662)

8 Shu'ab al-Iman (6/541) see also al-Hilya (7/90)

If Allah, the Exalted, forgave a woman who gave water to a thirsty dog, what would He do to the one who gives water to the thirsty, food to hungry and dress to those Muslims who do not have clothes?

The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“Protect yourselves from the Fire even by giving out a piece of date. If you do not have a date, then with a sweet word.”¹

Here the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) made a good word the substitute for charity for those who have no means of spending.

Where does the reward of enduring poverty stand in relation to the pleasure of charity and benevolence, and the satisfaction and support which the heart of the receiving man feels, beside the love and respect that Allah puts in the hearts of His sincere servants for the charitable people, and the supplications and praise enjoyed by them? Yes, patience has merit and brings reward, but the size the reward varies with the will of Allah, the Almighty.

They further continued:

Charity, benevolence and giving are the qualities of Allah, the Lord of the world. A person marked by these qualities is the most beloved of Him, as indicated by the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in the following statement:

“The creation are the children of Allah; the most beloved to Him is he who is the most beneficial to His children.”²

When Allah mentioned the categories of the fortunate people, He started with charitable people, putting them ahead of all others. He said (what means):

“Men and women who give charity, and give good loan to Allah will get increase and for them is honourable reward. And those who believe in Allah and His messengers they are most truthful and martyrs with their Lord. They will have their reward and their light.” (57/18, 19)

This verse speaks about the categories of successful people and puts charitable men and women at the top of the list.

Charity has unlimited benefits and advantages, which are known only to Allah. One of its benefits is that it gives the person protection from evil perdition, and expels this affliction even from a wrongdoer.

1 Al-Bukhaari (1413, 1417, 3595, 6023, 6540, 6563), and Muslim (2349)

2 Abu Ya'la (6/65, 106, 194) and al-Bazzar (1949), see *Majma'* (8/191)

Ibrahim al-Nakh'i said:

'The scholars believe that charity protects a wrongdoer.'¹

It wipes out sin, guards the wealth, brings provision, gives comfort to the heart, promotes trust in Allah and nurtures a good opinion about Him, just as stinginess leads a person to having a low opinion about the Creator. It also compels the devil, purifies the soul, brings the person closer to Allah and to His creatures and covers his weaknesses, just as stinginess hides all goodness of a person.

It causes an increase in the life of the charitable person, earns him the supplications and the love of those who benefit from his gift, repels the torment of the grave, serves as shade for him on the Day of Judgement, intercedes on his behalf with Allah and makes the hardship of the world and the Hereafter easy for him. It induces him to do all sorts of good deeds, which do not seem difficult for him anymore. The advantages and benefits of charity are much more than those that have been enumerated.

If charity and benevolence were no more than just the attributes of Allah, it would have been enough for them to be excellent. Allah, the Almighty loves those who possess these aspects of His qualities. Hence, He loves the forbearing, the generous, bashful and modestly dressed people. A strong believer is dearer to Him than a weak one. He also loves the just, the forgiving, the beneficent, the thankful, the kind and the generous. His attributes are richness and generosity, and He loves rich generous people.

It is sufficient to prove the merit of the benefits that are achieved by money, the reward of it is like the act itself. Allah will provide the one who provides a believer with clothes with the robes of Paradise, in reward. If someone satisfies a hungry person with food, Allah will gratify him with the fruits of the Heaven. If someone quenches the thirst of a man, Allah will supply him with the drink of Paradise. For the one who frees a slave, Allah will free from Hell a part of his body for the same part of the slave, even his private parts. Whoever brings comfort to a man, in his time of hardship, Allah will make things easy for him in the world and in the Hereafter. Whoever relieves a person of his worry for the world, Allah will relieve him of his worry for the Hereafter. Allah continues supporting a person as long as he is engaged in support of his brother.

They also argue, saying:

We do not deny the value of enduring poverty, but what is that compared to the merits of the wealthy people? Allah has a fixed measure for everything.

1 *Shu'ab al-iman* (3559)

The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) declared that a person who eats and gives thanks is like that one who fasts and exercises patience. It is beyond doubt that if his thanksgiving leads him to show beneficence to others, he acquires another additional degree of rank. This is because gratefulness can go to unlimited degrees unlike patience which has a limit and cannot cross it. This is another proof for this case, which is further elucidated in the following way:

A thankful person is better than a contented one, and the latter is better than a patient person. Consequently, the thankful person is above the patient by two degrees.

Ibn Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“Envy is not allowed except in two matters: a man whom Allah has gifted with the Qur’an and he is engaged with it day and night; and a man whom Allah has favoured with wealth and he expends it day and night.”¹

In this *Hadeeth* the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) equates wealth, accompanied by the spending of it, to being engaged with the Qur’an.

The report of Abu Kabshah stated that if a wealthy person acts according to his knowledge, is mindful of his Lord, joins blood ties and takes out of it what is due to Allah, he would be placed in the highest position with his Lord. It is a clear indication of the excellence of a rich man. The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) put a sincere poor person who had the intention of following the way of the above mentioned rich man and expressed his intention in words, in the same position with Allah, because of his good intention and determination. Each of them had good intentions and did what he was able to do. The rich was able to carry out what he intended; the poor spoke of his intention but could not do it. So they were equal in reward. Their being equal in reward does not necessarily mean that they will be equal in all the details and qualities of the reward. Definitely, an intention fulfilled by action has superiority over an intention accompanied by words only. If a person intends to perform pilgrimage but has no funds, he will be given the reward for performing it; however the reward of the one who performs the pilgrimage would be greater than his. If you are interested in understanding this issue more clearly, then reflect on the following saying of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him):

¹ Al-Bukhaari (5025, 7529) and Muslim (1894)

“Whosoever asks Allah for martyrdom with a true intention in his heart, Allah would place him among the ranks of the martyrs, even if he dies in his bed.”¹

24! There is no doubt that the reward for a person who is killed in the cause of Allah will be better in quality, and nature, than the reward of the man who had a wish to die fighting, but could not achieve it and died in bed. There are two things at play here: reward and the closeness to Allah. Both men will be rewarded, but actions done by a man require additional appreciation and special closeness. This is the grace of Allah; He gives it to whomever He wishes.

The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) has said:

“When two Muslims face one another with swords, the killer and the killed will both enter Hell.”

The Companions asked:

‘The case of the killer is obvious, but why will the killed be punished?’

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) replied:

“He had the intention of killing his opponent.”²

Both deserved to go to Hell, but it does not mean that they will suffer the same degree of torment or will be placed in the same position. Always try to give the words of the Messenger (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) due consideration and reflect on them carefully; the message will be clear to you.

The following account will clarify the issue further:

The poor members of the Emigrants complained to the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) saying:

‘O Messenger of Allah, the wealthy people have carried away all the rewards. They pray as we do, fast as we do, but they possess extra money by which they perform pilgrimage and *Umrah*, take part in *Jihad* and give out charity.’

The Messenger (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) told them: “Should I tell you something which if you do, you will catch up with those who have gone ahead of you and be ahead of those who are coming after you; and nobody will be above you except the one who does as you do?”

‘Yes, indeed’, they said.

1 Muslim (4930)

2 Al-Bukhaari (31, 6875, 7083) and Muslim (7252)

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“After every prayer glorify Allah, praise Him and extol Him 33 times.”

After a while, they returned and said to the Messenger (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him):

‘Our wealthy brothers heard what we were doing and they started doing the same.’

The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“This is the grace of Allah; He gives it to whomever He wishes.”

If it were possible for the poor to catch up with the rich in rewards by intention only, the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) would have advised them to make intentions and receive the same reward. However, he recommended that they seek compensation for the rewards for charity, freeing slaves, and performing the pilgrimage and *Umrah*, by engaging in remembrance of Allah. This is a clear proof that the rich had surpassed the poor by their charity. When they joined the poor in remembrance, the merit of spending still gave them advantage. This is what made the poor Emigrants complain to the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) that the gap still remained and the rich were ahead of them because of their wealth. The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) told them that it was the grace of Allah, Who gives it to whomever He wishes. If there were any means by which the poor could reach the same rank as the rich by having good intentions and expressing them in words, the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) would surely have told them so.

The poor refuted this saying:

If the above *Hadeeth* is understood correctly, it supports our case. The meaning of the statement of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is: although the rich are on the same footing with the poor as far as faith, submission, prayer and fast is concerned, and are ahead of you by giving charity, engaging in glorifying, extolling and praising Allah raises you to the same level. You are also on the same level with them for your good intention that if you had resources, you would have spent like them.

In some reports, the wording is as follows:

“If you do it, you will surpass those who are ahead of you, and those after you will not be able to catch up with you.”

It means that the rich will not be able to join the poor even though they say

what the latter are saying.

The Prophet's quotation of the following verse (which means):

"This is the grace of Allah; He grants it to whoever He wishes," means that Allah's grace is not limited to you. Whatever He granted to you from His grace, for remembering Him, He will show it to them as well, if they do what you are doing.

'You thought,' the poor went on, "that Allah's grace was limited to the rich and thus you misunderstood the verse." The statement is general and comprehensive and includes all, whether poor or rich. His grace and bounty cover rich and poor alike; and you are the only people to get it. With this meaning, there is no superiority for you over us.

They argued further:

The phrase "this is the grace of Allah" has three possible meanings:

1. The merit of the rich over the poor because of spending
2. Equality of both parties in the advantage of remembrance, which means that you are not exclusively entitled to it
3. Your entrance into Paradise before the rich by half a day

Although this last one is not mentioned in the *Hadeeth* quoted above, it is mentioned in some other versions of it.

Ibn Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated:

'The poor members of the Emigrants complained to the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) about the superiority of the rich over them. They said:

'O Messenger of Allah, these brothers of ours accepted the truth as we did, believed as we did, fasted as we did, but they have money which they use in giving out charity, help the relatives and spend it in the way of Allah. We are poor and unable to do that.'

The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said to them:

"Shouldn't I tell you something which if you do, you will be able to reach their status? Say: '*Allahu Akbar* (Allah is Great) 11 times in every prayer; *Alhamdu-lillah* (praise be to Allah), *Laa ilaaha illallaah* (there is no god worthy of worship except Allah) and *Subhaan-Allaah* (glory be to Allah) 11 times each; you will get their ranks."

They did, but they told the rich about it and they started doing it as well.

Then they went again to the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and told him what happened saying:

'Our brothers started doing what you told us.'

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“This is the grace of Allah; He grants it to whoever He wishes. I am giving you glad tidings: the poor Muslims will enter Paradise half a day, that is 500 years, before the rich ones.”

Musa bin Ubaydah one of the reporters of the above *Hadeeth* recited (what means):

“A day with your Lord is like a thousand years of what you count.”
(22/47)¹

In this report, the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) gave the good news to the poor when they told him that the rich had also started remembrance of Allah. It is very likely that the grace in this respect refers to the excellence of the poor over the rich, and the news is exclusively for the poor. The excellence belongs to them, although they were able to join the rich only by words and an intention of spending. In addition, they have the advantage of poverty.

The rich responded by saying:

You have gone to extraordinary lengths in your attempt to turn the *Hadeeth* away from its message to support your case. The text is very clear to any fair-minded person. The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “This is the grace of Allah, He grants it to whoever He wishes” in response, when the poor said that the wealthy people had become equal with them in remembering Allah, as they were equal with them in prayer, fasting and the belief and had the merit of spending as well. The poor did not possess sufficient resources to join them. They told the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), “They also adopted the words of remembrance you taught us and started saying them”. Whereupon the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “This is the grace of Allah which He gives to whoever He wishes.”

The message of the narration is very clear. When the poor realized that there was no way to reach the level of the rich, because of the lack of wealth, he (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) gave them the good news of entering Paradise half a day before the rich. This advantage was to compensate for what they had missed by not having the opportunity of spending money in the way of Allah. However, it does not necessarily mean that the poor will be above the rich in position and rank. Some people, who will not be immune from an accounting, may be better and superior in rank than many of those seventy thousand Muslims, about whom the

¹ Al-Bazzar (3094), see *Majma'* (10/101)

Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said they would go to Paradise without accounting.

The rich go on in their argument and say:

Allah, the Exalted, called money 'good' in many places of His Book. He said for instance (what means):

"It is prescribed, when death approaches any of you, if he leave any goods, that he make a bequest to parents and next of kin." (2/180)

He also said about man:

"He is violent in his love of good." (100/8)

The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) called it good as well when he said:

"Good does not produce anything but good." This report has been cited above.

The evil effects come from behaving badly in the use of good, not from good itself. He declared that Allah, the Almighty made money in support of life and commanded that both money and life be preserved; He prohibited giving money to foolish people and women, and others like them without scrutiny. The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) praised money and said:

"What an excellent thing is good money for a good man!"¹

Sa'id bin al-Musayyib said:

'There is no good in a person who earns money from unlawful sources, does not refrain from begging from others, fails to strengthen his family bonds and does not pay its dues.'²

Abu Ishaq al-Sabi'i said:

'Wealth is considered a support for religion.'³

Muhammad bin al-Munkadir said:

'Wealth is a wonderful support for righteousness.'⁴

Sufyan al-Thawri said:

'Money in our time is the weapon of the believers.'⁵

Yusuf bin Asbat said:

'Since the world came into existence, never was money more useful than it is today. Money is like a horse: it is a reward for one person, a cover for another and a burden for other.'

1 Ahmad (4/197, 202), Ibn Hibban (3210) and al-Hakim (2/2)

2 Ibn Abi al-Dunya in *Islah al-Mal* (55)

3 *Al-Hilya* (4/340)

4 *Islah* (58)

5 *Ibid* (79)

They contended further:

Allah, the Most High, has made money the means for the maintenance of the body, which is itself the means for the preservation of the soul. The soul is the resting place for the knowledge of Allah, belief in Him, and acknowledgement of His Messengers, as well as the centre of the Divine love and dedication to Allah. Money, therefore, is the source of the prosperity of the world and comfort in the Hereafter. The only money that is condemned is that which is acquired through unlawful means and spent in unlawful ways. It is bad if it enslaves its owner, dominates his heart and turns him away from Allah and the Hereafter. In short, the sort of money that is condemned is that which is used for evil purposes or that which keeps the owner away from noble causes. The fault does not lie with the money but the person who uses it.

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“May the slave of the *Dinar* perish! May the slave of the *Dirham* perish!” He cursed the *slaves* of the *Dinar* and *Dirham* and not the *Dinar* and *Dirham*.

d bin Maysarah told the following story:

‘There was a man in the past who had accumulated money and hoarded it. Then he thought and said while sitting with his family, “I am going to enjoy it for years to come.” A little later, the angel of death, in the shape of a poor man, called on him and knocked at the door. The servants came out and he said to them:

‘Call the master of the house for me.’

They said:

‘Will our master come out to see a man like you?’

After a while, he returned and knocked at the door again and demanded to see the owner and said to the servants:

‘Tell him that I am the angel of death.’

When the owner heard this, he jumped in fear and said to his people:

‘Speak gently to him.’

They asked the angel:

‘Do you not want anyone other than our master, may Allah bless you?’

‘No’, he replied.

He entered the house and said:

‘Go and make your will the way you want. I am going to take your soul before I leave.’

His family started crying and yelling. The man said:

‘Open the boxes and all the containers of money.’

They opened them, and he turned to his wealth cursing and abusing, saying: ‘Damn you! You are the reason for my negligence in remembering Allah. You kept me preoccupied from working for my Hereafter until my death came.’

The wealth spoke:

‘Don’t curse me! Were you not a mean person in the eyes of the people and I raised your status? Didn’t my effect appear on you when you attended the courts of the kings and rulers and were ushered in while the righteous good people were not admitted? Wasn’t it the case that you proposed to the daughters of the kings and the chiefs and you married them, while the righteous servants of Allah were turned down when they asked for marriage with them? Didn’t you spend me in the ways of evil and I didn’t resist? Had you spent me in good causes I would not have resisted either. You deserve more condemnation than me today. You, and I, children of Adam, are created from dust. Some of us walk with piety and others with sin.’

This is how the wealth spoke, so be careful.¹

According to a narration, Allah, glory be to Him, says:

‘It was our money which came back to us, he who was lucky benefited from it, and he who was unfortunate became unhappy with it.’

They [the rich] argue:

Money is the support of good works and righteous deeds. On it depend the performance of the pilgrimage and Jihad, and through it the obligatory and desirable giving out of charity is achieved. It helps to earn the reward for freeing slaves, making endowments, building mosques, bridges and other useful projects. By its means marriage is conducted, which is better than devotion in seclusion for voluntary acts of worship. Noble works are done through it. The qualities of generosity and benevolence are demonstrated by it. It is used to protect honour and to win friends and associates. With its help pious people reach a higher rank and win the company of those on whom Allah has bestowed His favour. It is a ladder to take the righteous people to the highest apartments of Paradise or to descend to the lowest level in Hell. It asserts the honour of the honourable.

Some early scholars said:

‘No honour is received without work, and no work is possible without money.’²

1 See *al-Hilya* (5/240-241)

2 Ibn Sa’d in *al-Tabaqat* (6/614) and al-Hakim (3/253)

Another person used to pray:

‘O Allah, I am one of your servants who will not be on the right course without money.’

Wealth is the source of the favour of Allah, the Exalted, to the servant and simultaneously, it may also be the cause of His displeasure with him. Out of three people, a leper, a bald man and a blind man, who were put to trial by Allah through money, the blind man won the favour of Allah, and the other two deserved His displeasure.¹

Jihad, which is the greatest of acts, is performed by the soul and sometimes by money, and the struggle with money is possibly the more effective and far-reaching. What was the reason for Uthman (may Allah be pleased with him) to be given preference over Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) when Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) was more active in taking part in *Jihad* and ahead of Uthman (may Allah be pleased with him) in embracing Islam? Az-Zubayr and Abd al-Rahman bin ‘Awf (may Allah be pleased with them) are better than the rest of the Companions despite having a vast amount of money. Their contribution to the religion was more than that of the people of the *Suffah*.

The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) prohibited squandering money and said that to leave heirs wealthy was better than leaving them without resources. He also announced that no owner of wealth spent his money seeking the pleasure of Allah, but that He would raise his position and rank.

The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) sought refuge from poverty and linked it with disbelief. He prayed:

“O Allah, I seek refuge with you from disbelief and poverty.”²

Good is of two kinds: good of the Hereafter, its opposite being disbelief; and the good of the world, the opposite of which is poverty. Poverty is the cause of suffering in the world, while disbelief is the cause of torment in the Hereafter.

Allah, the Exalted, has prescribed *Zakat* as a duty for the rich and receiving it the act of the poor. He differentiated between two hands (the giving one and the receiving one) in terms of their religion and rank. He made the giving hand higher than that of the receiver. He declared *Zakat* to be the means of purification and for that reason He made receiving it unlawful for the purest of His creatures, and his family, in order to safeguard their

1 See the story in Al-Bukhaari (3464) and Muslim (7431)

2 An-Nasaa’i(5487) and al-Hakim (1/532)

honour and raise their status.

We do not deny the fact that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was poor, and then Allah made him rich, and opened the gates of prosperity for him. He bestowed upon him His favour, and gave him plenty of wealth, to the extent that he was able to store for his family sufficient provisions for a year, and give such gifts that no one else gave. He used to give out without having any fear of poverty. After his death, he left Fadak, the property of an-Nadheer and other properties that Allah had granted him. Allah, the Almighty Says (what means):

“What Allah gave as booty from the people of the town to His Messenger was for Allah and His Messenger.” (59/7)

In this way Allah, the Most High, saved His Messenger (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) from the poverty that necessitated receiving charity, and compensated him by the noblest and most honourable and preferable wealth which he acquired by his spear and sword from the enemies of Allah, who had hoarded the money of Allah wrongly and unjustifiably. Allah created money to be used in doing good works for His sake, but unbelievers and sinners accumulate and hold it in their hands wrongly and unjustly. When it returns to the believing servants of Allah, it comes back to the people for whom it was originally created. However, the wealth and property of the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) were not like the wealth and possessions of the worldly people. Their affluence depends on worldly goods, whereas the wealth of the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was free from the need for anything; and this the highest level of richness. Others disposed of their belongings in the manner they wished, while the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) acted with his possessions in the way a slave does, not moving without the permission of his master.

Jurists are not in agreement on the issue of whether the booty was the property of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). There are two opinions about it and both are attributed to Imam Ahmad. Strictly speaking, it was owned by the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), but this ownership was of a special kind. It was under his control, but he acted in it according to the command of Allah, the Almighty. He said:

“By Allah, I am not the one who gives to anyone or withholds from any. I

am only a distributor, to place things where I am commanded.”¹

This was at the highest point of his devotion and servitude, and for that reason he did not appoint anyone as heir. He was a perfect slave to his Lord, and a slave does not own property to be inherited. Allah, the Exalted, gave him both the highest level of riches and the noblest position of poverty, thus completing the highest degree of perfection for him. Therefore, neither party has a higher claim over the other as regards the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). He was, in his poverty, the most steadfast and the most thankful of all the creatures of Allah. He behaved in the same way in his affluence. Allah, the Almighty made him a model for both the rich and the poor. Who can be wealthier than a man who was offered the keys of the treasures of earth? Who can claim to be more affluent than the man for whom Allah offered to turn the mountain of Safa into gold? He was given the option of being a king prophet or a slave prophet, and chose to be a slave prophet.²

The wealth of the Arabian Peninsula and Yemen was brought to him and he gave it all out and did not keep anything for himself. Moreover, he took upon himself the responsibility for the children of the Muslims and the payment of their debts. He announced:

“Whoever leaves money it goes to his heir, but if he leaves behind dependants I am responsible for them.”³

Allah, the Exalted, raised his status above the level that allows receiving charity, just as He saved him from being one of the rich who receive money through inheritance. He made him rich and did not let him be in need of anyone except Him. He made his heart extremely rich and bestowed on him plenty of wealth, which he spent in every good cause and gave the greatest gifts. He did not hoard money for himself; nor did he acquire property or land. After his death, he did not leave a goat, a camel, a slave, a slave girl, a *Dinar* or a *Dirham*.

If a thankful rich man is interested in supporting his case by the condition of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), then he must emulate him. Similarly, if a steadfast poor man wants to advance his claim of superiority on the basis of the condition of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), it will not be possible for him

1 Al-Bukhaari (3117)

2 Ahmad (2/231) and Ibn Hibban (7365)

3 Ahmad (4/131, 133), Abu Daawood (2900), Ibn Majah (2738) and Ibn Hibban (1225)

unless he endures like him, and leaves the world out of free will, and not under exigency. The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) – in both positions of affluence and poverty – fulfilled his duty as the devoted servant of Allah. Besides, Allah, the Most High, caused the poor people to be rich through him; his community received wealth through him only. The richest person certainly is the source of wealth for others.

Ulayy bin Rabah al-Lakhmi narrated:

‘I was with Maslamah bin Makhlad al-Ansari who was the governor of Egypt at the time, and Abdullah bin Amr b. al-As, was also present. Maslamah quoted a line from the poetry of Ali bin Abu Talib (may Allah be pleased with him) and said:

‘If Abu Talib had been able to see the grace and favour of Allah, which we enjoy today, he would have realized that his nephew was a leader who brought good. Abdullah bin Amr remarked:

‘He was a noble leader even in those days and a noble man who brought good.’

Maslamah argued back saying:

‘Didn’t Allah say (what means):

“Didn’t He find you an orphan and gave you shelter? He found you astray and guided you; and found you in need and made you rich.”
(93/6-8)

Abdullah bin Amr commented:

‘He was an orphan because he lost his parents, and as for need, all that the Arabs had at that time was little.’¹

Abdullah wanted to say that all the Arabs were poor until Allah opened the gates of wealth for the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), and for those who embraced Islam and entered in the religion of Allah in groups. Then Allah caused him to die before he could get involved in it in any way. He departed, leaving all this behind, and warning and cautioning against its seduction. This is the meaning of Allah’s saying (which means): **“He found you in need then He enriched you.”**

As for the saying by Allah after it (which means): **“Your Lord will give you so much that you will be pleased with it.”** Worldly materials did not please him, nor did he like them for his community. He warned against them, and although they were offered to him, he refused to take them. The above

1 Al-Bayhaqi in *Dala’il* (7/62)

verse refers to the reward which Allah will give him and the victory over Kisra and Caesar, which Allah will grant him. It also included glad tidings of masses of people embracing Islam and the domination of the religion. This is what he wanted and his pleasure lay in it, may Allah's blessings and His greetings be upon him.

Sufyan al-Thwari related from Abdullah bin Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"I saw that which will be conquered after me, area after area, and I felt happy by it. Then this Chapter (i.e. no. 93) was sent down in which Allah said (what means): ***"Your Lord will give you so much that you will be pleased."***

Ibn Abbas said that he will be given 1,000 palaces of pearl, the floors of which would be of musk, and each palace would have whatever befits him."¹

The advocates of the case of the rich argue:

All that you say about disinterest in the world and taking only a little from it is not in contradiction with being rich. In fact, a rich man is less impressed by the world than a poor one. The indifference of the rich emerges from possessing means, while that of the poor is the result of their inability to gain riches. There is a big gap between these two situations. The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in his affluence, was a man totally disinterested in the world. The same is true of Ibrahim al-Khalil, who, although he possessed a huge amount of money, was extremely averse to the world.

Abu Dharr (may Allah be pleased with him) related that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"Aversion to the world is not to consider the lawful as prohibited, or to waste it. Rather, it is not to be more confident in what you possess, than what is with Allah. This also means that you remain more interested in the reward for mishaps that befall you, and wish that they would stay with you."²

Imam Ahmad (may Allah have mercy upon him) was asked about a man who had 1000 *Dinars*, whether he should be regarded as abstinent (*Zahid*)? He replied:

'Yes, provided he does not feel happy when the amount increases and does

1 Ibid (7/61)

2 At-Tirmithi (2340), Ibn Majah (4100)

not feel worried when it reduces.’

One of the early scholars said:

‘The abstinent person is he whose thankfulness is not overwhelmed by the lawful; and his patience is not defeated by the prohibited.’

This is the best definition. Abstinence is a quality composed of both thankfulness and steadfastness. A man who does not possess both of them does not deserve to be called *Zahid*.

A person whose thankfulness encompasses what he has been given of lawful materials, and his steadfastness keeps him away from whatsoever comes in his way, is the real *Zahid*, not the one whose thankfulness is dominated by what is lawful, and whose patience is defeated by the unlawful. His thankfulness and his patience are overwhelmed; and such a person is not a *Zahid*.

I heard Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah (may Allah have mercy upon him) say:

‘Renunciation (*Zuhd*) is that you leave that which is of no use to you, and piety (*wara*’) is that you leave what is harmful to you.’

Renunciation means to make the heart free from the world; it does not mean that your hands are empty. Its opposites are avarice and greed.

Renunciation is of three kinds: renunciation of the prohibited, aversion to doubtful and undesirable matters, and disinterest in surplus. The first one is obligatory, the second is a merit and the third is between these two, in accordance with the degree of doubt; if it is strong it is joined with the first category, otherwise it goes to the third. Sometimes the third kind becomes compulsory. This applies mainly to a man who embarks on the path of reaching Allah and the Hereafter. In his case, the renunciation of surplus becomes necessary because the desire for the world is damaging to the desire for the Hereafter. A person cannot reach his goal or employ his will (*Iradah*), unless he makes his search in such a way that the search and the goal are not divided.

The reason for singling out the goal is that his search and his will be exclusively for the sake of Allah and for matters that bring him close to Him.

The singularity of his search will uproot any tendencies towards desire, and the charms of the lust, and that his will takes root in every corner of his soul, completely occupying it, and leaving no room for any other attraction but Allah, the Most Honourable and Mighty. The will becomes purely for Him, and when this happens, renunciation becomes necessary for him.

He empties his soul to fill his time and focus his mind on eradicating the causes of greed, which are most destructive for the heart. In fact, greed is the cause of all sins, corruption and immorality. Renunciation cuts off its source, frees the heart, fills it with good thoughts and stimulates the body. It removes the barriers between the servant and his Lord, creates an intimacy with Him and strengthens the desire to receive His reward, in case he fails to create the desire of getting close to Him, and enjoying the taste of recognizing and loving Him.

The pious *Zahid* man is the most comfortable person, both physically and mentally. If his piety and disinterest in the world are a source of support for him in the search of Allah and the Hereafter, and he has fully devoted his heart to Allah and made it his mission to be near to Him, and he does not engage in anything other than what is pleasing Allah, the Almighty, then he is living the most pleasant life and enjoying true happiness. His soul is relaxed and his heart comfortable. Interest in the world disperses the heart and tempers the union, and results in continual worry, distress and concern. It is an ever-present torment leading to an awaited torment that is even more severe. It causes a man to miss many enjoyable matters –far more than he intended to receive by showing an interest in the world.

Tawus reported that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“Disinterest in the world generates comfort to the body and the heart, while interest in the world prolongs worry and distress.”¹

Worry and grief come from two sources: interest in the world and the desire to acquire its materials; and negligence of good and righteous deeds.

Al-Hakam reported that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“When a person fails to do good deeds, Allah puts him to trial through worries.”²

Worldly desire, apart from being the cause of the most obvious sins, is also a source for sins of the heart. These include anger, jealousy, arrogance, pride, boasting and greed. All these appear because the heart is engaged with a desire for the world, even though the person may not possess any material means. Having the heart fully engaged with these thoughts contradicts gratitude. Indeed, the root of true gratitude lies in emptying the heart of such thoughts.

1 *Az-Zuhd* (16), see also *al-Da'ifah* (1291)

2 *Ibid*

24 An increase in wealth is like an increase in lifespan and rank. The best of you in the world is he who had a long life and did good deeds. Similarly, the one who has plenty of wealth and is doing good deeds through it is better than others. This man is excellent and his wealth and rank are superb. Wealth can raise a man to higher degrees or brings him down to the lowest level.

The secret of the whole issue is that the path of poverty and want is the path of safety, if accompanied with patience, while the path of wealth and affluence is usually the path of ruin. Nevertheless, if a rich man is conscious of Allah concerning his wealth, helps his relatives and takes out of it the dues of Allah, then his path is that of gain. The dues of Allah are not confined to paying *Zakat*; they extend to providing food to the hungry, clothing to the naked, helping people in trouble and giving support to the needy and destitute. It is the path of gain that is above safety. A poor man is like a sick person who has been delayed, by his sickness, from achieving his objectives. He is rewarded for exercising patience at this delay.

The rich man, on the other hand, is at a big risk when accumulating wealth, earning and dispensing it. If his earning is safe and he has accumulated it from lawful sources, and dispensed it in the right places, it will be a cause of comfort to him. The poor man is like a devotee, who is cut off from the people, and the rich man, who spends his money in the good causes, is like a helper, a teacher and a *Mujahid*. For this reason, the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) made him the counterpart of the one whom Allah gave wisdom, and he judges by it, and teaches it to others. He is one of the two most envied persons. The ignorant people envy the man who is isolated and retired, and whose benefit is limited to him. They regard him as more deserving of envy than the rich who spend, and the learned who are engaged in teaching.

However, which of them is better? He who prefers to be rich and give out charity and spends his money in good causes, or he who chooses poverty and want, in order to keep away from sedition, avoid trouble and turns his heart to prepare for the hereafter, and not to be engaged in worldly affairs? Or he who selects neither of the two, but accepts what Allah decides for him; he does not prefer either of the other two positions by his choice?

The answer is that this is an issue about which the opinions of the early scholars differ. Some of them chose wealth, to take part in *Jihad* and spending, and giving out in charitable causes, like Abd al-Rahman bin 'Awf and other rich Companions. Qays bin Sa'd used to pray:

'O Allah, I am one of those devoted people to you who will not be in order without wealth.'

Others preferred poverty and want, like Abu Dharr and a group of the Companions (may Allah be pleased with them all) with him. They looked at the damage caused by the world and were afraid of being tempted by it. The first group looked at the benefits of spending and its present and future outcomes.

A third group did not make its choice, but left the matter in the hands of Allah and was content with what He decided for them.

The situation is the same with living a long life in the world with the intention of promoting the cause of the religion of Allah, and devoting oneself to His worship. One group preferred it and wished to have a long lifespan; others wished to die and meet Allah, and get rid of the world. A third group's choice was neither; rather they liked what Allah chose for them. They did not have any specific desire. This was the case of Abu Bakr as-Siddeeq (may Allah be pleased with him). The people asked him on his death bed:

'Would you like us to call a doctor?'

'He has already seen me', he replied.

'What did he tell you?' they asked.

'He told me: 'I am going to do what I wish', he replied.

The first is the case of Moses. When the angel of death visited him, he slapped and gouged out his eye. He did not do it because he loved the world and wished to live in it, but to be able to carry out the command of Allah in propagating His religion, and to engage in struggle against the enemies of Allah. It is as though he said to the angel of death:

'You are a servant charged with a task and I am a servant with a similar duty. I am here to carry out the orders of my Lord and to spread His religion.' However, when a long life was offered to him and he realized that he was going to die after that, he submitted to what his Lord decided for him.¹

The case of our Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was different. The Lord sent His angel to him to give him the choice. He was the most knowledgeable of all the creatures about Allah; he knew that His Lord, the Exalted, wished to meet him and to bring him to Him and so he chose to meet Allah. Had he known that Allah wanted him to stay in the world to implement His orders and establish His religion, he would

¹ See Al-Bukhaari (1339, 3407), and Muslim (6148)

not have chosen other than that. His choice was in line with the choice of his Lord exactly, just as when he was given the option of being a prophet king or a slave prophet, and he knew that his Lord wanted him to be a slave prophet, he preferred what He wanted. In all these matters, his choice was subject to the choice of Allah, the Exalted.

For this reason, he endured with patience all that happened on the day of Hdaybiyah and fulfilled his duty completely there. No one else stood firm in that place except Abu Bakr as-Siddeeq (may Allah be pleased with him). The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) had no option, beyond what Allah had chosen for him and for his Companions, for the matter to be concluded the way it was. Therefore, he was content with it, accepted it and agreed with the decision of his Lord. This is the highest degree of devotion, which was appreciated by Allah, and He manifested this appreciation by giving him the glad tidings of victory in the beginning of Chapter 48. The Companions congratulated him,¹ and he deserved to be congratulated in the highest way a human being has ever been congratulated, may the blessings and greeting of Allah be upon him!

Note

One should know that Allah, the Most High, placed His Messenger (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) on the highest level of every noble quality, and singled him out for the highest position. Whenever there is a group of the Muslims arguing about any subject and competing with each other, some will argue one way, while their opponents will argue another, but sometimes both will argue from the same standpoint.

For instance, if the warriors and those engaged in *Jihad* put forth their claim that they are the best people, the learned people and scholars may put forth a similar claim.

Similarly, if the pious and those who are not interested in the world argue that they are superior taking the example of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), those who are involved in the worldly affairs and in administering and governing the people in order to establish the religion of Allah and to implement His orders, will do the same.

If the poor people who exercise patience advance their argument on the basis of the Prophet's condition, the rich who express gratitude can do the same.

1 Al-Bukhaari (4172)

If the people devoted to performing voluntary acts try to show the merit of their acts, those with knowledge will argue in favour of the merit of knowledge, giving the example of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), as mentioned in the text.

If the humble and forbearing people relate their actions to him, the people of power and might, and those who are engaged in controlling the corrupt, tackling the wicked and dealing with them ruthlessly, will do the same.

If the people who possess the quality of sobriety, seriousness and dignity claim to be like him, the people of good conduct and those who are involved in permissible entertainment, that does not go beyond the limit, and is meant for the good treatment of the family and friends, can make a similar claim.

If the people who come out openly with the truth, and speak out for it openly and secretly, made a claim of following the way of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), those who feel courteous, shy and reluctant to confront a man with what he would not like, can make the same claim.

If those who follow, strictly, the path of piety, argue in their favour on the grounds of his behaviour, those who take matters easily, without going out of what the *Sharee'ah* has stipulated, can argue in their favour on the same grounds.

If a person, who has turned his attention to reforming his heart and his religion claims to follow the example of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), he who is paying attention to the reform of his body, his life and his worldly affairs, can also claim the same. The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was sent to reform both the world and the religion.

If a man who is not concerned with the means but does not rely on them, makes a claim to be like him, then the one who uses means and puts them in their right places, and makes use of them properly, will make the similar claim.

If a person who is continually hungry and endures the pain of hunger patiently wants to show that this is the way of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), he who eats his fill and gives thanks to his Lord for providing him with sustenance, can say the same.

If someone adopts the way of forgiving and ignoring evil actions on the grounds that it was the way of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), he will encounter similar claims from the one who

takes revenge where it is appropriate.

If one gives for the sake of Allah and makes friends seeking the pleasure of Allah and considers it the practice of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), the one who withholds and shows enmity for the sake of Allah, can consider it to be his way.

If someone does not store anything for tomorrow taking the practice of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as his basis, the one who preserves the provision of a year for his family will do the same. If a person eats rough food, like barley bread and vinegar, tries to prove that this is what the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did, he who eats delicious food like roasted meat, sweet, fruits, melon, etc. will say the same.

If a man, who keeps fasting without a break uses the way of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) for his argument, he who goes on for days without fasting will do the same. The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to fast continuously to the extent the people around him thought that he was not going to stop; and used to miss fasting to give impression that he would never fast.

If a person turns away from the desirable good things of life on the grounds that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did, so can the one who loves the most enjoyable things of the world, namely perfume and the women, use the Prophet's acts to justify his own actions. If a person treats his wives kindly and shows leniency to them thinks that he is following the practice of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), another man who adopts the methods of discipline, punishment, divorce, and boycott and gives them the option of staying with him or leaving, can make a similar claim.

If a man who has abandoned earning his living by himself takes the Prophet's way as model for him, he who uses hiring, renting, selling and buying, lending and borrowing, and becoming involved in mortgages, as his method of earning, can do the same.

When a man keeps away from women during their period of menstruation and fasting puts forth as his case what the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did, another man who intimately touches his wife without having intercourse during her menses, and kisses her while fasting, can also base his action on his deed.

If a person who is kind to criminals on the grounds that it is their fate justifies his actions by the practice of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), he who applies the prescribed punishments of the

Sharee'ah on such people, and cuts off the hand of a thief, stones to death a married adulterer and lashes the person who drinks wine can justify his actions on the same grounds.

If those who pass judgement on the basis of external evidence support their behaviour by the example of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), those who act fairly on the basis of clear indications can present examples from him as well. He, as a matter of fact, detained people on the basis of suspicion and punished them on the grounds of accusation; and told us that the Prophet of Allah. Sulayman (peace be upon him) decided the case of a child in favour of a woman on the grounds of a clear indication, despite her confession that the child belonged to her contestant. He did not base his judgement on the admission, the falsehood of which was obvious to him, but on this indication.¹

Abu Abd al-Rahman an-Nasa'i² cited the story under two headings:

1. To give power to the ruler to ask the accused to do something which he will not do to do, in order to find out the truth
2. Judgement against the confession of the sentenced when it becomes clear the truth is other than what he admits.

The Companions operated on the basis of such indications during the lifetime of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and after his demise.

For instance, Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) said to the woman who was carrying the letter of Hatib to the people of Makkah:

'Take out the letter or I will strip you.'³

Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) applied the punishment for adultery on the ground of pregnancy,⁴ and the punishment of drinking wine on the basis of smell.⁵

Allah, the Exalted, cited the witness of a person in the case of Joseph in an approving manner when he gave the judgment of innocence to Joseph because his shirt was torn from the back.

1 Al-Bukhaari (6769) and Muslim (4495)

2 See (3/472-473)

3 Al-Bukhaari (3081)

4 Ibid (6830)

5 *Al-Mu'atta* (2/842) and Abd al-Razzaq (9/228)

The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said to Ibn Abi al-Huqayq, who claimed that the treasure of Huyayy bin Akhtab was consumed by expenses:

“It was just recently and the money was more than that.”¹

He considered the two indications for the existence of money, and had him punished until he confessed.

He gave the right to the relatives of a murdered person to swear a particular man was the killer, and to kill him in retaliation, on the basis of the indications supporting their claim.²

Allah has ruled that the woman, who is accused by her husband of having committed adultery in the act of *Li'an* (invoking curse) and she refuses to testify, that she be stoned to death, because the indication is that the husband is telling the truth.

The rules of the *Sharee'ah* offer many examples. If a person looks carefully, he will find many cases that are judged on the basis of clear indications. These cases are evidences for just judges and straightforward rulers, as they are proof against unjust judges and unfair rulers.

And Allah's help is sought.

The objective of this chapter is to make clear that the patient poor are not closer to the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) than the thankful rich. The closest person to him is he that who knows his *Sunnah* best, and follows it the most.

And with Allah is all support.



1 Ibn Hibban (5199), and al-Bayhaqi (9/137)
2 Al-Bukhaari (3173) and Muslim (4342)

Chapter

Twenty-Five

Matters which are contradictory to patience and which cause harm and damage it

Since patience means controlling the tongue from complaining to anyone other than Allah, preventing the heart from feeling unhappy and restraining parts of the body from striking the face, tearing the dress and so on, any act which fails to achieve this falls under the category of things contradictory to patience. This includes complaining to other people.

When a servant complains about his Lord to a creature like himself, he is, in fact, complaining about the One who is Compassionate to him to someone who is unable to show mercy to him. Complaining to Allah is not in contradiction to patience, as it has been explained in the case of Yaqoob (Jacob) (peace be upon him), who spoke of his grievance to Allah and said (what means): **“Goodly patience is the option.”** (12/18, 83)

To tell others about the unfortunate condition, with the intention of seeking help, through advice or seeking their support to find the means of

overcoming the existing problem, is not against patience. It is like a sick person who tells the doctor about his suffering, or the oppressed person who speaks of his grievance to someone to get his support, or a person who is in distress and mentions it to a man whom he hopes will help him get out of his trouble.

When the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) visited a sick man, he would ask him about his condition and say: "How do you feel?"¹

This question is meant to find out his condition.

As for moaning [in pain], is that against patience? Here are two views, reported from Imam Ahmad (may Allah have mercy upon him):

Abu al-Husayn said: 'The correct view is that it is reprehensible.' It is reported that Tawus disliked moaning during illness.

Mujahid said: 'Every word that the son of Adam utters is recorded, even his moaning during his illness.'

In the view of these scholars, moaning, when coupled with body language, is incompatible with patience.

Abdullah bin Imam Ahmad related:

'My father asked me during his illness in which he passed away to bring him the book of Abdullah bin Idris.

I brought it to him. He then asked me to open it to the part that included the traditions reported by Layth bin Abu Sulaym. I did so, and then he asked me to read them (the traditions included the following report);

Layth said:

'I said to Talhah: Tawus disliked moaning during illness; afterwards, there was no sound of moaning noticed from him until he died.'

Abdullah said:

'I did not hear my father moaning during his illness till he passed away.'

The second view is that it is not reprehensible and does not affect patience. Imam Ahmad (may Allah have mercy upon him) was asked about a sick man who complains about the pain he suffers and whether there was any report about it from the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

Imam Ahmad (may Allah have mercy upon him) replied:

'Yes, the report of 'Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) when she complained saying: 'Oh, my head!'²

1 At-Tirmithi (983) and Ibn Majah (4261)

2 Al-Bukhaari (5666)

He appreciated it.

Al-Marrudhi said:

‘I visited Abu Abdullah (Imam Ahmad) during his illness and asked him about his condition. His eyes were filled with tears and he told me about the agony he went through the previous night.

The correct view is that moaning is of two kinds: Moaning of complaint, which is undesirable, and moaning for relaxation and relief, which is permissible.

And Allah knows best.

It is narrated in a tradition that when a sick person begins with the praise of Allah, then speaks of his condition, it is not regarded as a complaint.

Shaqiq al-Balkhi said:

‘Whoever complains about a misfortune with which he is afflicted to anyone other than Allah, will never get in his heart the sweetness of the obedience of Allah.’¹

SECTION

Complaints are made in two ways: By spoken words and by means of action. Perhaps the latter is the greater of the two. It is supported by the *Hadeeth* in which the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) commanded those who have received favours from Allah to show it to the people. The most serious complaint is that which comes from a man who is well off and yet complains about his Lord. He is the most hateful person to his Lord.

Imam Ahmad related that Ka’b al-Akbar said:

‘Among the good deeds is to speak of the glory of Allah, and among the evil deeds is to omit it.’

Abdullah was asked: What does ‘speaking of glory’ mean?

He replied: To say ‘Glory be to Allah, and praise be to Him’ during conversation.

‘And what is omission?, he was asked.

He replied:

‘People begin the day in a good state and when asked they start complaining that they are in a bad condition.’

1 Su’ab al-Iman (10074)

SECTION

Other actions, which are in contradiction with patience, are tearing clothes at the time of mishap, striking the face, striking one hand on the other, shaving the hair and to call for woe. The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) declared himself free from the one who yells, shaves his head and tears his clothes;¹

Weeping and expressing grief are not against patience. Allah, the Most High, said about Yaqoob (peace be upon him) (what means):

“His eyes became white because of grief and he was filled with sadness.”
(12/84)

Qatadah explained the last phrase saying:

‘He was filled with grief but did not speak but good words.’²

Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“What comes from the eyes and from the heart is from Allah and a sign of compassion, and what comes out from the tongue and from the hand is from the devil.”³

In another narration, the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“The one who speaks out lacks patience.”

Khalid bin Abu Uthman said:

‘One of my sons died and Sa’id bin Jubayr saw me covering my face with a veil. He said to me:

‘Avoid wearing a veil because it is a sign of passivity.’

Bakr bin Abdullah al-Muzani said:

It was said that sitting in the house after a calamity is being miserable.

Ubayd bin ‘Umair said:

‘Anguish is not when the eyes shed tears and the heart is grieved, but anguish is bad words and evil thoughts.’

Al-Qasim bin Muhammad was asked about anguish and he said:

‘It is bad words and evil thoughts.’

A judge of Basrah lost his son and the religious scholars and jurists gathered at his house. They discussed the matters that make clear whether a man is perturbed or patient.

1 See Al-Bukhaari (1296) and Muslim (287)

2 Tafseer at-Tabari (19677)

3 Ahmad (1/237)

They came to the conclusion that if he leaves his normal routine then he is perturbed.

Al-Hasan bin Abd al-Aziz al-Jarwi said:

‘A beloved son of mine died. I said to his mother: Fear Allah, consider him a source of reward and have patience.’

She replied: ‘My suffering by him is dearer to me, than for it to be spoiled by worries.’

Abdullah bin al-Mubarak said:

‘A man dropped in on Yazid bin Yazid and found him engaged in prayer while his son was about to die. He said to him:

‘Your son is dying and you are praying?’

He said:

‘When a person is used to doing a work and abandons it for one day it ruins his work.’

Thabit reported:

‘Abdullah bin Mutarrif was afflicted by a calamity and I saw him in a beautiful appearance wearing a pleasant perfume. I spoke to him about it and he said:

‘Abu Muhammad, are you asking me to surrender to Satan and show him that something bad has befallen me? By Allah, Abu Muhammad, if I were to possess the whole world then Allah took it from me, and He gave me on the Day of Judgement in its place a drink, I would not regard that whole world a price for that drink.’

Another matter that affects patience adversely is to speak about the calamity and mention it to everyone. Keeping it secret is the apex of patience.

Ibn Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“Piety is to keep misfortune, illness and charity secret.”

He also said:

“He, who speaks out about his patience, is not patient.”¹

Al-Hasan also reported the same tradition in the following words:

“Part of piety is to conceal calamities and he who speaks out is not patient.”

One of the eyes of ‘Ata’ was affected by an ailment and he remained in this state for 20 days without his family knowing of it. One day, his son approached him from the afflicted side and it was only then that he realized that the old man was afflicted.

1 Al-Hilya (8/197) and Su'ab al-Iman (7/214)

A man called on Daawood al-Ta'i and saw him shaking in his bed. He said: "Surely we belong to Allah and surely we are going to return to Him."

Daawood said to him:

'Keep quiet! Don't let anyone know it.'

He was confined in bed for over four months and nobody knew it.

Mughirah said:

'Al-Ahnaf complained to his uncle about the pain in his molar tooth, and mentioned it repeatedly. His uncle said:

'What are you complaining about again and again? I lost my eyesight for forty years and never complained to any one.'

SECTION

One of the opposites of patience is restlessness. It means to worry when calamity befalls and to withhold when favour comes. Allah, the Exalted, says (what means):

"The human being has been created restless. If evil touches him, he worries, and if good comes to him, he withholds." (60/19-21)

Restlessness has been explained in the verse; however, al-Jawhari explained it further, by saying that restlessness is the worst type of worry. A statement of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) has the following:

"The worst thing in a servant is restless avarice and dislocating cowardliness."¹

I say: There are two issues here: stylistic and semantic (one pertaining to the word and the second pertaining to the meaning).

The first one, which is connected with the words, is that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) described the avarice as restless while it is the avaricious who are restless. This can be explained in two ways:

First, that it is so said on the grounds of relationship. The Arabs say: sleeping night, hiding secret, fasting day and raging sleep. All these, according to Sibwayh are spoken on the basis of relationship, to mean 'of so and so.'

The second explanation is that the word restless was used to match 'dislocating'. There are other examples of this type of usage.

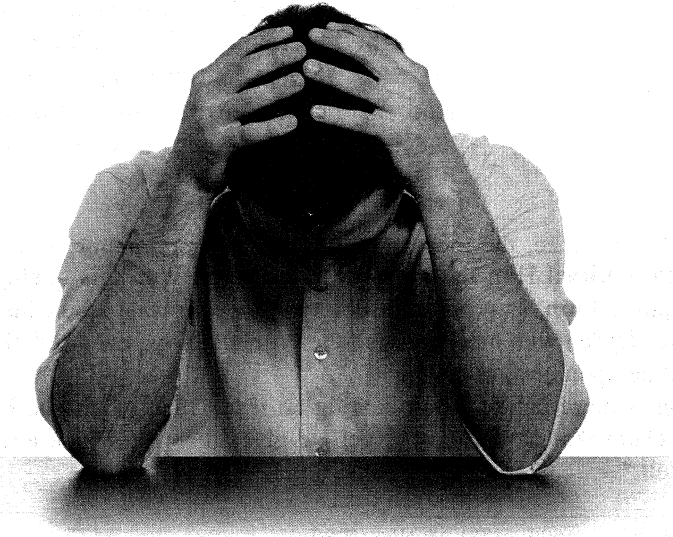
1 Ahmad (2/302, 320), Abu Daawood (2511) and Ibn Hibban (3250)

The point pertaining to the meaning is that avarice and cowardice are the worst qualities in a person, especially when his avarice reaches the point of restlessness and his cowardice dislocates his heart from its place. Such a person shows no generosity or and there is no benefit received by the body or the money of such a person. It is said in a proverb: 'neither a blow nor a dish.'

Avarice, fear, greed and worry have subdued, demeaned and humiliated him and brought him down.

If you are interested in knowing the real character of the restless, then he is a man who, when hungry, shows it and wants to get food immediately. When he suffers from pain, he quickly speaks about it and complains. When he is under pressure, he demonstrates weakness and submissiveness; when he feels hungry, he promptly falls to the ground and starts complaining. If he notices an opportunity to satisfy his greed, he rushes to it and holds on to it for dear life, showing no favour or obligation toward others. All this is a result of paltriness and lowness of the soul that is secretly rooted within him.

And Allah's support is sought.



The point pertaining to the meaning is that avarice and cowardice are the worst qualities in a person, especially when his avarice reaches the point of testlessness and his cowardice dislocates his heart from his place. Such a person shows no generosity or nobility. He is not generous to anybody or the money of such a person is not worth anything. He is not a dishonor.

Avarice, fear, greed and worry have subdued, debased and humiliated him and brought him to the lowest level. If you are interested in the character of the restorer, then he is a man who, when hungry, shows it and wants to get food immediately. When he suffers from pain, he quickly speaks about it and complains. When he is under pressure, he demonstrates weakness and subservience; when he feels hungry, he promptly falls to the ground and starts complaining. He notices an opportunity to satisfy his greed, he rushes to it and holds on to it for dear life, showing no favour or obligation toward others. All this is a reflection of the fact that he is a person who is secretly rooted within

Twenty-Six

Sabr as one of the attributes of the Lord, as He is called al-Sabur and al-Shakur

The inclusion of the qualities of patience and thankfulness in the attributes of the Lord Almighty, as amongst His beautiful names are the Most Patient and the Most Responsive. Had there been no other merit for patience and thankfulness except this, it would have been enough.

AS for patience, the most knowledgeable person about Him and the one who glorified Him the most, described Him with this quality in an exaggerative form, as reported in the two *Saheehs*¹ that Abu Musa (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as saying:

“No one is more patient upon hearing an insult than Allah, the Exalted. People claim that He has a son, yet He gives them provision and keeps them well.”

1 Al-Bukhaari (6099, 7378), Muslim (7080)

Amongst His beautiful Names is *as-Sabur*, the Most Patient, which is an exaggerative form more forceful than *as-Saabir* and *as-Sabbaar*. The patience of Allah, The Exalted, is different and unlike the patience of humankind in various ways, some which are mentioned below:

1. It emanates from absolute power.
2. He has no need of support, while a man is driven by a fear of support.
3. He is not affected by pain or grief, or any other defect, by His patience.

The impact of this quality is well known and is as obvious to the world as His attribute of clemency. The difference between patience and clemency is that the former is the result and the effect of the latter. The patience of a man is in proportion to the degree of his clemency. Clemency, therefore, as an attribute of the Lord Almighty has a wider scope than patience. That explains the reason why the name 'the Clement' has been cited in the Qur'an in many places. Because of its wider scope, Allah mentioned it along with the attribute 'the All-Knowing' for example, in the following verses (which mean):

- **"Allah is the All-Knowing, the Clement." (33/51)**
- **"Allah is All-Knowing, Clement." (4/12)**

It is said in a narration: 'The bearers of the Throne are four angels. Two of them say: 'Glory to You, O Allah, and praise to You! To You belongs the praise for Your clemency after Your knowledge.'

The other two say: 'Glory be to You, O Allah, and praise is due to You! To You belongs the praise for Your pardon after Your power.'

The clemency of humankind emerges from ignorance and its forgiveness from inability. The Lord Almighty, on the other hand, shows clemency having full knowledge, and forgives having complete power. There is no more beautiful addition of one quality to another than the addition of clemency to knowledge, and forgiveness to power. That is why, in the supplication¹ to be said when in distress, He is described with clemency along with greatness. Clemency is an inseparable attribute of His essence.

The patience of Allah, the Almighty is shown even in the context of disbelief in Him, ascribing partners to Him, and vilification of His majesty by the unbelievers. They are involved in the violation of His orders and various sinful acts, but this does not disturb Him or prompt Him to punish

¹ See Al-Bukhaari (6345) and Muslim (6921)

them immediately. He shows patience and gives respite to His servants for correcting their behaviour. He shows kindness to them and treats them with clemency, until there remains no point in showing any further kindness, when the servants do not appear to be taking advantage of the respite, clemency and kindness, and do not return to their Lord and try to approach Him, either by favour and kindness, or by trial and affliction. Only then does He deal with them severely, as a mighty and powerful person does. This happens only after every attempt to induce them to make an apology, offering them advice, and inviting them to change their attitudes, fails. All this is the effect of His clemency, which is an inseparable personal attribute of the Lord Almighty.

When the factors and causes calling for patience are removed, it becomes like other acts, which are brought about by certain causative factors and disappear when the causes are removed. Pay attention to the difference between patience and clemency. It is a very fine difference, about which even the skilful learned ones hardly understand even one tenth. Very few people realise it and draw attention to it and many of them find it difficult to understand this attribute completely.

They said that this attribute i.e. *as-Sabur*, does not occur in the Qur'an. Therefore, they turn away from discussing it but engage in talking about the patience of humankind and its different categories. Had they given this attribute its rightful due, they would have realized that the Creator is more entitled of this name than all others, as He is more deserving of the other attributes, like 'All-Knowing, Merciful, Most Powerful, All-Hearing, All-Seeing, Living and His other beautiful Names. The difference between His patience and the patience of humankind is like the difference between His life and their lives, His knowledge and their knowledge, His hearing and their hearing and His other attributes which are shared by His creatures. Since this was known to the person who knew Him best, he (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:
"No one shows patience upon hearing an insult, more than Allah Almighty."

The people of discernment know His patience in the same way, as they understand His mercy, His forgiveness, and His covering the mistakes of the people. It is patience with perfect knowledge, power, greatness and might. It is certainly the greatest patience. Making the comparison of the Greatest of the greats, the King of the kings, the Noblest of the nobles and the One whose favours are above all other favours, with others is reprehensible and belongs to the ranks of the greatest immorality and the

biggest abomination. To ascribe to Him that which does not befit Him, to undermine His quality of perfection and degrade His Names and Attributes, digress from His signs, reject His Messengers and discourage them with abuse, vilification and insult; to burn His devoted servants, to murder and humiliate them, are matters which only *as-Sabur*, the Most Patient One, can endure. There is no one who is more patient than Him. There is no comparison between the patience of the entire human race, from the first to the last, and the patience of the Creator, glory is to Him.

If you are interested in understanding the patience and the clemency of Allah, the Exalted, and knowing the difference between the two, then pay attention to the following verses of the Qur'an (which mean):

- ***“Surely Allah sustains the heavens and the earth lest they cease (to function); and if they should fail, there is none – no one – who can sustain them thereafter. He is Most for bearing, Oft-Forgiving.”*** (35/41)
- ***“They say: Allah, the Most Gracious has begotten a son. Indeed you have put forth a thing most monstrous! At it the skies are ready to burst, the earth to split asunder and the mountains to fall down in utter ruin, that they should invoke a son for the Most Gracious.”*** (19/88-91)
- ***“Their plots were such as to shake the hills.”*** (14/46)

In these verses, Allah, the Almighty stated that His clemency and forgiveness prevent the annihilation of the heavens and the earth. The quality that holds Him from annihilating them is patience. Due to His clemency, He refrains from dealing swiftly with His enemies. The verse (19/90), also indicates that the heavens and the earth intend and seek permission to split asunder, due to the seriousness of what the people are doing; but Allah controls them by His clemency and forgiveness. He withholds His punishment from them. This is the real essence of patience, and the quality that makes Him hold back is clemency. Restraint is patience and this is demonstrated by withholding punishment. There is a difference between holding back the punishment and the cause of this holding back.

Consider it carefully.

Imam Ahmad (may Allah have mercy upon him) reported in his *Musnad* ¹that the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “There is no day but the sea asks its Lord for permission to drown the

1 (1/43)

children of Adam.” This is a law of nature, because the sphere of water is above the sphere of earth. However, Allah holds water by His power, clemency and patience. The same applies to the mountains falling down and the splitting of the heavens. Allah, the Almighty controls them by His patience and clemency; otherwise the actions of the polytheists and unbelievers in violation of the Divine greatness, might and honour, requires that the system of the universe come to an end. The Almighty, however, counters these causes with other reasons, as He wishes and is fully pleased with. These reasons counter the causes that require the annihilation and destruction of the world. This is the result of His mercy, which overwhelms and dominates His anger. This is why the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to seek refuge in the quality of pleasure from the quality of anger, and in the act of forgiveness from the act of punishment. He put these two qualities together in His essence because their existence depends on it, He prayed: “I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and I seek refuge in Your forgiveness from Your punishment and I seek refuge in You from You.”¹

The object in which refuge is sought comes from His will, and is created by His permission and decree. It is He who allows the existence of causes from which refuge is sought. From Him come both the cause and the effect. It is He who moves the spirit and the bodies, and creates in them the power of effect. It is He who brought them about, prepared and supported them, and gave them power over whatever He willed; and it is He holds them back whenever He wishes, and controls their powers and impact.

Consider carefully, what lies behind the narration of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him): “*I seek refuge in You from You*”. It is a pure confession of the unity of the Lord, which cuts off all attention to anyone beside Him. It is a declaration of full confidence in Him, seeking help only from Him. It also includes the sense of attaching hope and fear to Him alone, and that He alone is capable of removing harm and bringing benefit. He causes harm by His will and He removes it by His will. Hence, He is called upon to provide refuge in His will from His will. It is He who gives protection by His act from His act. He has created things toward which he shows patience and things He is pleased with. When the sins of the people, their rejection of His orders, association of other beings with Him, and involvement in wrongdoing make Him angry,

1 Muslim (486)

the glorification of the angels and His sincere devoted servants, their praise of Him and their submission to His will, make Him pleased. His pleasure gives refuge against His anger.

Abdullah bin Mas'ood (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

“There is no day or night with your Lord. The light of the heavens and the earth is from the light of His Face. The length of a day of your days to Him is 12 hours with Him. Your deeds of the previous day are presented to Him in the morning of today; He looks at them for three hours. When He comes across deeds which He does not like, He gets angry. The first people to notice His anger are the bearers of the Throne. They notice that the Throne has become heavier, and they, together with the pavilions of the Throne, the favourite angels and the rest of the angels, start glorifying Him. Then Gabriel blows the horn, everyone hears its sound and all of them engage in glorifying the Most Beneficent for three hours, until the Most Beneficent is overwhelmed by mercy. It takes six hours.”

He went on:

“Then wombs are brought to Him, and He looks in them for three hours. This is what He says (what means):

- **“He is the one who forms you in the wombs the way He wishes.”**

(3/6)

- **“He gives female to whoever He wishes, and gives male to whoever He wills, or gives mixed males and female and makes whoever He wills barren. Surely He is All-Knowing, All-Powerful.”** (41/49, 50)

This takes nine hours.

Then provisions are produced before Him and He deals with them for three hours. He says in His Book (what means):

- **“He expands the provision for whoever He wishes and straitens (for whomever He wills).”** (13/26)
- **“Every day He is bringing about a matter.”** (55/29)

This is how your position and the state of your Lord are.”

This report is recorded by At-Tabarani, Uthman bin Sa'id al-Darimi, Shaykh al-Islam al-Ansari, Ibn Mandah, Ibn Khuzaymah and some other scholars.¹

When Allah, glory be to Him, mentions His enemies and their involvement in disbelief, association of other beings with Him and rejection of His

¹ See al-Tabarani (9/179) and *al-Hilya* (1/137).

Messengers in the Chapter *An'am* (6), He cites the case of His chosen friend Ibraaheem (Abraham) (peace be upon him) to whom He showed the realm of the heavens and the earth, and his argument with his people in order to explain the religion of Allah and His oneness. Then He cited the Prophets who came from his progeny whom He had guided and gave the Book, wisdom and the Prophethood. Then He said (what means):

"If these people reject these signs, we have appointed for them a people who will not disbelieve in them." (6/89)

The Lord Almighty informed us that as He created on the earth such people who disbelieve in Him, reject His unity and deny His Messengers, so He has also created those who believe in what the former rejected, accept as true what they had denied, and preserve the inviolability of things they destroyed. In this way, the upper and lower spheres are held together. Otherwise, if the truth were to follow the desire of His enemies, the heavens, the earth and all those who are in them would have been spoiled, and the world would have been ruined. Allah, the Almighty has attached the ruin of the world to the removal from the earth of those matters that hold the system, which are His Book, His House, His religion and the people who are dedicated to it. Once these things are removed there will remain nothing which can stop the ruin of the world.

Since the name 'the Clement' is more appropriate in the realm of quality and the name 'the Patient' in the field of action, and that clemency is the origin of patience, there was no need to mention 'the Patient' after 'the Clement' was cited in the Qur'an.

SECTION

As for Allah's name '*ash-Shakur*' (the Responsive), it has been mentioned in the report of Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him)¹ (which gives the list of the beautiful Names of Allah.)

The Qur'an has mentioned Him as *ash-Shaakir*.

"Allah was the Responsive, All-Knowing." (4/147)

The Name *ash-Shakoor* is also cited:

"Allah is Responsive, Forbearing." (64/17)

Allah, the Exalted, also said concerning the rewards of good people (what means):

1 See at-Tirmithi (3507), Ibn Majah (3860), Ibn Hibban (808) and al-Hakim (1/16)

“This is a reward for you and your effort was appreciated.” (76/22)

Here Allah, the Most High, combined two things for these people: appreciation of their efforts and giving them their reward. Allah, the Almighty appreciates and rewards His servant’s efforts when he obeys Him sincerely, and He forgives him when he returns to Him in repentance. Thus, He combines His appreciation of good deeds and His forgiveness of bad deeds. He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Responsive.

The essence of the thankfulness of humankind, and its various categories and ways, was discussed in Chapter 20.

The appreciation of the Lord Almighty is of a different nature, like His patience. He deserves the quality of thankfulness more than anyone else does. Indeed, He is the truly Appreciative One. He gives to a person and guides him to do deeds that He appreciates. He appreciates even the smallest amount of work and charity, and does not consider it too small to be appreciated. He rewards a good deed tenfold or more. He shows appreciation of His servant by praising him before His angels and the heavenly hosts. He makes people praise this sincere servant. He also appreciates his efforts, so if he abandons something for Him, He grants him something better. If he spends his money to attain His pleasure, He returns it to him many times over. It is He who supports him to abandon and to spend in charity, and it is He who appreciates all his deeds.

When the Prophet Sulayman (peace be upon him) slaughtered his horses to express his anger because they kept him busy and turned him from the remembrance of Allah, and he did not want it to happen another time, Allah subjugated the wind for him instead.

When the Companions of the Prophet left their homes and emigrated from their lands, He gave them in return the kingdom of the world and granted them the power to conquer it.

When Yusuf (Joseph) (peace be upon him), endured with patience the constraints of his prison, He appreciated his action by giving him power over the earth to choose to settle wherever he wished. When the martyrs sacrificed their bodies for Him and their enemies tore them apart, He appreciated their sacrifice by turning them in the form of green birds, and placed their souls in them. He made them drink from the rivers of Heaven and eat its fruits until the Day of Resurrection, when He will bring them back in their earlier forms, in the best and most beautiful of shapes.

When His Messengers sacrificed their honour for His pleasure to their enemies who abused them and insulted them, He compensated them by giving His blessing and the blessing of His angels. He granted them the

most beautiful praise in the heavens and among the creatures, and the means of pure thought, and the remembrance of the (final) abode. One aspect of the appreciation of Allah, the Almighty is that He gives good rewards to His enemy for doing good and righteous deeds in the world, and will make his suffering easy on the Day of Judgement. He will not destroy his righteous deeds although he is the most hateful person to Him.

To manifest His appreciation of good deeds, He forgave the adulterous woman who supplied water to a dog, which was licking the mud because of extreme thirst.¹ He pardoned another person who removed a thorn from the path of the Muslims.² He, the Blessed One, appreciates the act of a man for himself while the creature appreciates the act of a man who does a good deed for them.

More than that, it is Allah, the Exalted, who has given man the means to do good for himself, yet He appreciates his little work with multiple rewards, which are far greater than the work of the man. He is the one who grants favours by giving the power to do good deeds and by showing His appreciation for it. Who else then can be more entitled to the name *ash-Shakur* than Him? Exalted is He!

Contemplate on His saying (what means): ***“What concern does Allah have with your punishment if you give thanks and believe? Allah is Appreciative, All-Knowing.”*** (4/147) You will notice that giving thanks to Allah, the Almighty wards off the punishment of His servants. He does not want to punish them without an offence, as He dislikes destroying their efforts. The Appreciative does not destroy the reward of a person who does good righteous deeds and does not punish a man who has not done a wrong act. This refutes the claim by some people that the Lord Almighty assigns duties beyond the capability of a man, and punishes him for not carrying them out. He is free from this false claim and is above this wrong assumption. The appreciation of Allah, the Exalted, requires that He should not punish a thankful believer or destroy his deeds. It is an inseparable aspect of this Divine attribute. He is free from anything contrary to this quality as He is above all defects and faults that are in contradiction to His perfection, His sufficiency and His praise.

Another aspect of His appreciation is that He, the Most Powerful, takes a

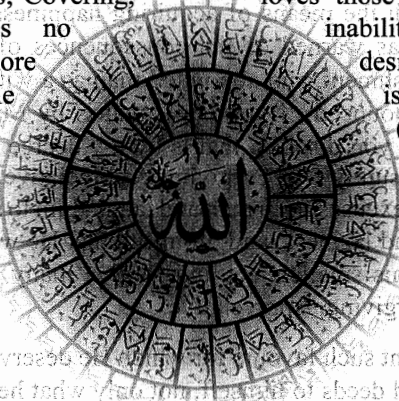
¹ See Al-Bukhaari (3321, 3467) and Muslim (5860)
² Al-Bukhaari (652, 2472) and Muslim (4940, 6669)

person out of the Fire because of an atom's weight of good work, because He does not like to suffer from its loss.

Another manifestation of His appreciation is that when one of His servants performs a duty that pleases the people, the Almighty appreciates it, commends him, and mentions it to His angels and His devoted servants, as He appreciated the act of the believing member of the family of Pharaoh. He praised him and spoke highly of him to His servants. Another example is the man mentioned in Chapter 'Ya-Seen' (36), whose action and call were appreciated by Him. His appreciation and forgiveness are so overwhelming that only a person, who is doomed to perdition, will perish. He is Oft-Forgiving, Appreciative with reward; He forgives many mistakes and appreciates even a little work with reward.

Since Allah, Almighty is the truly Appreciative One, the most beloved person to Him is he who has the quality of giving thanks. On the other hand, the most hateful person to Him is he who neglects this quality and adopts the opposite of it. This is the case with all His beautiful names. The dearest man to Him is he who is marked by the essence of them, and the most hated is the one who is known by their opposites. That is why He hates the ungrateful, unjust, ignorant, merciless, niggardly, cowardly, despicable and the mean.

He, the Exalted, is beautiful, loves beauty; All-Knowing, loves the people of knowledge; Merciful, loves the merciful; Kind, loves the charitable ones; Appreciative, loves the thankful, Patient, loves the patient; Generous, loves the generous; Covering, loves those who cover; Most Powerful, blames no inability. The strong believer is more desirable to Him than a weak believer. He is Forgiving, loves to forgive; *Witr* (singular; odd) and loves the *Witr*. Everything He loves results from His attributes; His names and belongs to what and all He dislikes contrary to them. is opposite and



CONCLUSION

O he who has made up his mind to travel to Allah and the Hereafter, a banner has been raised for you, so get ready as the time has come. Embark on your journey between the Almighty's favour and His observation of the shortcomings of your soul, your evil actions and negligence. This vision of favour and sin does not leave a person of knowledge to claim any good for himself; He is my redeemer from the punishment of Hell. Ultimately, we can rely only on His pardon and forgiveness. Everyone is in need of these two, and one has to plead: *I acknowledge your favours to me, and I confess my sins; therefore forgive me. I am the wretched sinner and you are the Merciful, Oft-Forgiving.*

Your deeds, even if they remain safe from destructive elements, cannot equal the smallest favour of your Lord to you. You are pledged to give thanks for these favours from the time He bestowed them upon you. Did you take care of them as required, when you had power and control over them? Hold on to the rope of hope and enter through the gate of repentance and good deeds. Certainly, He is Oft-Forgiving, Appreciative.

He has set the path of salvation for the servant and opened its gates, and acquainted him with the means of acquiring happiness and granted him its resources. He has warned of the consequences of disobedience, its evil result and punishment, and appointed man as a witness upon himself and others, and announced: if you obey, that is by My grace and I will appreciate it; and if you disobey, that is by my decree and I will forgive. Indeed, our Lord is surely Oft-Forgiving, Appreciative.

He has removed all excuses from man and taught him to seek refuge in Him from incapability and laziness; and promised that He would acknowledge with appreciation, his smallest act and forgive many faults. Surely, our Lord is the Most forgiving, Appreciative.

He grants His servant such favours for which He deserves thanks, then He appreciates his good deeds to himself, not only what he does for Him. He has promised, for the good deeds that he has done for himself, to give a

handsome reward and bring him closer to Him, and forgive his mistakes, if he turns in repentance to Him, and to cause him no humiliation. Certainly, our Lord is Oft-Forgiving, Appreciative.

The sinners who lapse place their confidence in His forgiveness, and it suffices them, and the hopes of the righteous people are pinned to His generosity and it does not disappoint them. The supplications of the repentant and imploring people ascend through the seven layers of the heavens and He responds to them. His pardon, forgiveness and provision surrounds all creatures. ***“There is no beast on earth but its sustenance is on Allah, He knows its habituation and repository.”*** (11/6)
Surely, our Lord is Oft-Forgiving, Appreciative.

He grants His servants generously before they ask, and gives those who ask Him, and attach their hopes to Him more than what they expect. He forgives the one who returns to Him in repentance even though his sins reach the number of waves, pebbles, dust and sand. Surely, our Lord is Most Forgiving, Appreciative.

He is more compassionate to His servants than a mother to her child, and more pleased with the repentance of a sinner who turns to Him, than a person who loses his camel with his food and drink on it in a dangerous land, and later finds it. He appreciates the smallest amount of work from every one. If someone seeks to gain His favour with an atom’s weight of good, He acknowledges it and appreciates it. Our Lord is certainly Most Forgiving, Appreciative.

He becomes known to His servants by His Names and Attributes and He endears Himself to them by His forbearance and His bounty. Their offences do not stop Him from bestowing His favours on them. He has promised to forgive the sins of the person who turns to Him in repentance and does good righteous deeds, on the day he meets Him. Our Lord is definitely Oft-Forgiving, Appreciative.

Complete happiness lies in obeying Him and all benefits depend on Him. Conversely, all calamities and afflictions are caused by disobeying Him and violating His commandments. There is nothing more advantageous for a man than being thankful to Him and turning to Him in repentance. Our Lord is surely Most Forgiving, Responsive.

He pours forth His favours upon His creation and prescribes mercy

for Himself. He inserted, in the Book He has written, that His mercy overwhelms His wrath. Certainly, our Lord is Oft-Forgiving, Appreciative.

When He is obeyed, He acknowledges it, although obedience issues from His support and favour; and when He is disobeyed, He tolerates it, even as He knows that disobedience emanates from the ignorance and oppression of the servant. When a person who commits shameful deeds turns to Him in repentance, He forgives him as though he has never done anything wrong. Surely, our Lord is Forgiving, Responsive.

He rewards a good deed tenfold or He increases the reward without limit, while an evil act is counted as one and ends in pardon and forgiveness. His gate of penitence has been open since He created the heavens and the earth, and will remain so until the end of the time. Our Lord is definitely Oft-Forgiving, Appreciative.

His noble door is the station of hope and the place for shedding sins. The sky of His gifts does not stop pouring forth, but continues to shower abundantly. His right hand is full, spending throughout the day and the night, but spending does not cause it to decrease. Our Lord is certainly Most Forgiving, Appreciative.

Only the steadfast people meet His commandments and only the thankful ones win His favour. Those who are doomed to perdition are the only people who perish, and it is only the rebellious ones who suffer from His torment. Our Lord is certainly Oft-Forgiving, Appreciative.

Beware, O rebellious man, of His sudden grasp! When you persist in your offences and find Him showing His favour to you, be careful, because He is not ignoring you, but He is dealing with you with patience. Glad tidings of forgiveness and mercy are for the one who turns to Him in penitence. He is indeed Forgiving Appreciative.

He who realizes that the Lord is Appreciative deals with Him in different ways, and those who know that His forgiveness is vast hold on to His mercy. He who knows that His mercy overwhelms His anger never loses hope. Our Lord is surely Most Forgiving, Appreciative.

He takes whoever adheres to any of His Attributes and summons him before Himself. He who approaches Him through His beautiful Names will surely reach Him. Those who love Him, His Names and His Attributes, will become the dearest of creation to him.

The life of the heart lies in knowing Him and loving Him, and the perfection of the body is attained by approaching Him, obeying Him, and fulfilling the duty of the worship. The beauty of the tongue is in remembering Him and praising Him for His praiseworthy Attributes. Those who give thanks to Him receive ever-increasing favours from Him. Those who remember Him are those who enjoy His companionship. Those who obey Him win His honour. Those who are involved in the violation of His commands, He does not let them despair of His mercy. If they repent, He is their Beloved, and if they persist, He is their Physician. He places them in various afflictions in order to wipe out their sins and purify them of their faults. He is certainly Forgiving, Appreciative.

All praise is for Allah, the Lord of the Universe, for Him is the best of praise and blessings, as befitting what our Lord loves and is pleased with, and as suits His Noble Face and the glory of His honour. Praise unto Him, Who abundantly filled the heavens and the earth and that which is between, as our Lord willed. All praise unto Him, for what we know and that which we do not know, for His favours which we know and for those which we do not know. May Allah send His blessings and salutatuions upon our master Muhammad, his family and his Companions, all of them, as well as the rest of the Prophets and the Messengers.

May Allah be pleased with those who follow them in excellence until the Day of Judgement!

