

# PREPARING FOR THE LIFE AFTER DEATH

Transcript of Lecture Delivered by  
**Sheikh Umar Abdullah Dada Paiko**

**ABU BILAAL ABDULRAZAQ BN BELLO BN OARE**

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**Abu Bilaal Abdulrazaaq bn Bello bn Oare**

Published by

Sahaabah Publications

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Transcript of a Lecture Delivered By:

**Umar ‘Abdullah Dada Paiko**

ISBN: 978-38358-5-8

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**Al-Ma’ruf Prints**

Tel: 0803 422 4438

*Life is a mystery only Allâh can unravel  
Its twists so entangling you don't cease to marvel  
At its awe that strikes you beyond mere dazzle  
When its bedtime your sight begins to fizzle  
Beyond your control and even your limbs go nimble  
Danger may at times loom but you can't blow a whistle  
Life is a mystery only Allâh can unravel  
While asleep you could sometimes ascend the mantle  
Daring and roaring at beasts you cannot handle  
Perspiring after waking and trying in vain to tackle life's vaudeville  
with quite a wry cackle  
Shuttling at a standstill in its delirious hollow cubicle  
Eddying its circle fruitlessly searching for its middle  
Life is a mystery only Allâh can unravel  
Who gave your mind the will to blow your whistle  
Or your crotch the libido to sire from your loin onto the cradle  
Or your emotion its petrifying roar or its soothing giggle  
Why does an organ in you not have the capacity to handle  
The peculiarities of another which won't play second fiddle  
The blind, in his illusion, often sees and the deaf even poses riddles  
All in life's theater now like a shooting star but soon like a beetle*

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## Reviewers Comments

**I**n the Name of Allâh, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful. All praise is due to Allâh, and as such we praise Him. We seek His help and forgiveness. We believe in Him and on Him we put our trust. We seek refuge with Allâh from the evils of ourselves and the evil consequences of our deeds. Whosoever Allâh guides, none can misguide. And whosoever Allâh leaves to go astray, none can guide. I bear witness that none has the right to be worshipped except Allâh – He is alone and has no partner, and I bear witness that Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*<sup>1</sup>) is His servant and messenger.

I am indeed grateful to Allâh for blessing me with a brother who loves me so much so as to take this much pain to admonish me using my own words.

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<sup>1</sup> Meaning: Allâh’s blessing and peace be upon him.

This book, which I first got wind of long after it had been conceived and written, got me quite panicky initially as I was going through it. On realizing that I actually said all that was attributed to me in this pamphlet five years ago, I immediately remembered the Hadîth related by Imâm ibn katheer in his exegesis of the twenty-first verse of the second chapter of the Qur'ân, wherein Allâh (*subhâanahu wa ta'âlâ*<sup>2</sup>) says:

أَتَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبِرِّ وَتَنْسَوْنَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ تَتْلُونَ الْكِتَابَ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ

*“Do you enjoin right conduct on the people, and forget (To practice it) yourselves, and yet you study the Scripture? Have you then no sense?”<sup>3</sup>*

In the Hadîth, 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbaas (*radhiyAllâhu 'anhu*) said: “The punishment to be meted out to disobedient servants of

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<sup>2</sup> Meaning: Glory be to Him and Exalted be His Majesty

<sup>3</sup> Surah Al-Baqara (2): 44

Allâh who have some knowledge shall be 700 times that of those not so knowledgeable". Allâhul-Musta'aan!

I remain grateful to the brother, for my life has been turned around by this touching reminder. Being alive in this retrogressive, vile generation is enough reason for us to be more worried than earlier generations about our fate in the afterlife, considering the fact that the worst generation will be the one to witness the blowing of the trumpet to herald the *qiyaamah*<sup>4</sup>, and knowing that there are strong indications that we may be alive to witness all the great tribulations of those dark days.

Those of us alive today must continue to beseech Allâh to take our lives before then. This must remind us every day that living longer at this time is dangerous and, consequently, frightening!

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<sup>4</sup> Resurrection

*"Allâhumma man aamana bika wa shahida annee rasooluka, fa habbib ilaihi liqaa'aka, wa sahhil alaihi qadaa'aka, wa aqlil lahoo minad-dunyaa. wa man lam yu'min bika, wa yash had annee rasooluka, falaa tuhabbib ilaihi liqaa'aka, wa laa tusahhil alaihi qadaa'aka, wa akthir lahoo minad dunyaa".*

May Allâh elevate us to the rank of those who live each day sincerely and honestly, considering it their last. Aameen!

**Aboo Mahboob, 'Umar 'Abdullaahi Dada Paiko**

Rabee'uth thaanee, 1432AH (March, 2011)

Kaduna, Nigeria



**T**his book dwells on the concept of life after death (*al-âkhirah*) which other religions also affirm, preach about and describe in different ways. It must be noted that of all the descriptions and illustrations found in the scriptures

and teachings of other religious bodies, none is as expository and graphic as what we have in the Glorious Qur'ân and the narrations of Prophet Muhammad, blessings and peace of Allâh be upon him.

The book summarizes and simplifies the relationship between this life and the hereafter for those who hope for the Meeting with Allâh (The Creator) and the Last Day so that they can, as the saying goes, make hay while the sun shines.

When I started reading this book, I did not drop it until I completed it on account of its incisive description and appeal. In this text, it is apparent that the present life is short, so short that it ends even before it truly begins. The realization of this fact is an important requirement for our salvation in this world as well as the Hereafter.

**Mu'allim UAC Aliyu**

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## **PREFACE**

**D**ear reader, suppose you learn today that you have only one more day to live; you'll die tomorrow. How will you spend your last day?

This interview question was posed long before the age of mass media. The interviewer approached prominent scholars and people known for their virtuous lives with the idea that he would compile their answers in a book. Such a book would provide the readers with inspiration for the most important virtues.

But the most inspiring response came from the person who did not provide a wish list of virtuous deeds. He was the great *muhaddith*<sup>5</sup> Abdur-Rahman ibn Na‘um and he replied: “There is nothing that I could change in my daily schedule

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<sup>5</sup> A scholar of Hadîth (traditions of Prophet Muhammad, blessings and peace be upon him).

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learning that it is my last day. I already spend every day in my life as if it is going to be my last.”

Indeed, death is the most certain aspect of life. According to the latest statistics, six thousand one hundred and seventy-eight (6178) people die in the world every hour. These are people of all ages, dying of all causes. Some of such deaths make headlines; while a great majority dies quietly. Yet everyone will enter his grave the same way, alone, at the time appointed by God. Science and technology can neither prevent nor predict death. It is solely in the hands of the Creator.

Allâh, the Exalted in Might, says:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِن كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّنَ الْبَعْثِ فَإِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِّن نُّرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ عَلَقَةٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ مُّضْغَةٍ مُّخَلَّقَةٍ وَغَيْرِ مُخَلَّقَةٍ لِّنَبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ وَنُقَرُّ فِي الْأَرْحَامِ مَا نَشَاءُ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ثُمَّ نُخْرِجُكُمْ طِفْلًا ثُمَّ لِتَبْلُغُوا أَشُدَّكُمْ وَمِنْكُمْ مَّن يُّتَوَفَّىٰ وَمِنْكُمْ مَّن يُرَدُّ إِلَىٰ أَرْذَلِ الْعُمُرِ لِكَيْلَا يَعْلَمَ مِّن بَعْدِ عِلْمٍ سَيِّئًا

*“O mankind! If you are in doubt concerning the Resurrection, then lo! We have created you from dust, then from a drop of seed, then from a clot, then from a little lump of flesh shapely and shapeless, that We may make it clear for you. And We cause what We will to remain in the wombs for an appointed time, and afterward We bring you forth as infants, then give you growth that you attain full strength. And among you there is he who dies young, and among you there is he who is brought back to the most abject time of life, so that after knowledge he knows naught!”<sup>6</sup>*

We see it happening all the time. Yet it is amazing how we feel that it won't happen to us - at least not anytime soon. We bury our own friends and relatives but think that we'll live forever. Our attitudes about death defy all logic. In a way we recognize it and even plan for it. We take our life insurance policies. We may do estate planning. Business and

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<sup>6</sup> Al-Hajj 22:5



governments have contingency plans to carry out their operations in case of sudden loss of their leaders. But this is recognition of death as an end point of life. Where we fail is in recognizing it as the beginning of another life that will never end and where we'll reap what we sow here.

A central teaching of Islam is that it is our recognition of and preparation for that eternity that must separate those who are smart from those who are not. As the Prophet (*sall-Allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said: "Truly smart is the person who controlled his desires and prepared for life after death."

There is a moving story about Bahlūl<sup>7</sup>, who, in his innocence seems to be on the opposite end of the scale of worldly-smartness. Khalifah Hārūn Ar-Rashīd had given him access to his court probably because of his naivety, which was a source of entertainment to him. Once the Khalifah gave him

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<sup>7</sup> Bahlūl was the common name of Wāhib ibn Amr (واهب ابن امر), a companion of Musa al-Kadhim. He lived in the time of the Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd. Bahlūl was a well known judge and scholar who came from a wealthy background.

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a walking stick saying, “It is meant for the most foolish person in the world. If you find a person more deserving of it than yourself, pass it on.” Several years later, Hārūn Ar-Rashīd fell seriously ill and no medical treatment seemed to work. Bahlūl visited him and inquired about his condition. The following conversation ensued between them:

Hārūn: “No treatment is working. I see my final journey ahead of me.”

Bahlūl: “Where are you going?”

Hārūn: “I am going to the other World.”

Bahlūl: “How long will you stay there? When will you come back?”

Hārūn: “No one ever comes back from that world.”

Bahlūl: “Then you must have made special preparations for this journey. Did you send an advance troop to take care of you when you arrive?”

Hārūn: “Bahlūl, you have to go there alone. And, no, I did not make any preparations.”

Bahlūl: “Ameer-ul-mu’mineen<sup>8</sup>! You used to send troops to make extensive preparations for you for even short trips of only a few days. Now you are going to a place where you’ll live forever but you have made no preparations! I think I have found the person more deserving of the stick that you had given me some years ago.”

This story speaks to all of us. We may not be kings but we do plan our trips of even a few days very carefully. How about preparing for the journey into eternity? How about making the concern for the Hereafter the cornerstone of our lives here?

Actually, that concern can change our lives here as well. This world is an abode of deception. Here we are not punished the moment we commit a sin. This fools us into thinking that we can get away with anything. Remembering death is the anti-dote for that deception. A person who

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<sup>8</sup> Meaning: Leader of the believers.

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remembers that he will have to stand before his Creator and give account of all his actions cannot simply defy God!

In the story of Fir'aun (Pharaoh), we learnt that when he saw death approaching he declared belief in the God of Musa (Moses). Before that, he had been fooled by his apparent Power. His repentance came too late but it did show how his arrogance and intransigence evaporated when faced with the certainty of death.

It is amazing how a lot of our own “confusions”, frivolous arguments, excuses (for why we cannot do this or avoid that), or plain laziness can melt away when we visualize ourselves in our grave! Death settles lots of arguments. Remembering it can do that too before it is too late. He was indeed a very wise person who spent every day of his life as if it was going to be his last day. That certainly should be the way of life for all of us!



The book in hand is a transcription of a lecture delivered by Sheikh ‘Umar ‘Abdullah Dada Paiko at Ummatul-Islam, NNPC Housing Estate, Ekpan-Warri, titled: “After Life What Next?”<sup>9</sup>. It is a lecture I found highly spiritually edifying; hence I decided to share it in black and white with a larger audience. However, as spoken words usually take a different form from written words, it is not possible to give a literal transcription of the lecture, as that would mean presenting the book in a somewhat zigzag form. Therefore, I have made some reordering of points and statements and, where necessary, added some more information to the work to improve its readability and cogency. I have also made efforts to reference most of the verses of the Qur’ân and *Ahadîth* quoted in the lecture. In editing and modifying the soul-inspiring lecture, however, I have taken extra caution to retain its original message.

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<sup>9</sup> That was the original title of the lecture. I decided to modify it to better suit the content.

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I pray Allâh the most merciful of all who show mercy to accept this little effort as a noble service in His Divine Cause.

*“Our Lord! Give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter. And save us from the torment of the Fire!”*

*“Our Lord! Condemn us not if we forget or fall into error. Our Lord! Lay not on us a burden like that which Thou didst lay on those before us. Our Lord! Lay not on us a burden greater than we have strength to bear. Blot out our sins. And grant us forgiveness. Have mercy on us. Thou art our protector; Grant us victory over the unbelievers.”*

*“Our Lord! Let not our hearts deviate now after Thou hast guided us, but grant us mercy from Thee: For Thou art the Grantor of bounties without measure.”*

*“Our Lord! Any whom Thou dost admit to the Fire, Truly thou coverest with shame, and never will wrong-doers find any helpers! Our Lord! We have heard the call of one*

*calling (us) to faith, (saying) “Believe ye in the Lord”, and we have believed. Our Lord! Forgive us our sins, blot out from us our inequities, and take to Thy self our souls in the company of the righteous. Our Lord! Grant us what thou didst promise unto us through Thy Messengers, and save us from shame on the Day of Judgment: For Thou never breakest Thy promise.”*

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21<sup>st</sup> Rabi’ Al-Thâni, 1432 A.H. (26<sup>th</sup> March, 2011)

## **Acknowledgements**

Special thanks and praises be unto Allâh a number of times equal to the number of his creatures, to the extent of His pleasure, commensurate to the weight of His throne, and as many as His words. By His Grace and Mercy this work came to fruition. In deed I cannot praise him enough. He is as he as praised himself.

In the words of Prophet Muhammad, blessings and peace of Allâh be upon him, one who is not grateful to man is not grateful to Allâh. Therefore, I like to use this medium to also express my sincere gratitude to all who contributed to the success of this publication, including Sheikh ‘Umar ‘Abdullah Dada Paiko and Mu‘allim UAC Aliyu, for fastidiously reviewing the book and making useful contributions, and Sheikh Khalid Baig, from whose article titled “Preparing For Death” I culled a part of the preface to this book, having found it suitable and invaluable.



## **Introduction**

**A**ssalaamu-‘alaykum wa rahmatullah wa barakaatuh! Alhamdulillah! We are grateful to Allâh (*subhānahu wa ta‘āla*) for this opportunity, once again, of continuing with our series of lectures. Today is the 5<sup>th</sup> day of the Islâmic month of Rajab, 1427<sup>10</sup> years after the hijra (migration) of our noble Prophet, Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*), from Makkah to Madinah. This is the last lecture we are going to have before I leave, first thing tomorrow morning, *insha-Allâh*<sup>11</sup>. Once again we are grateful to Allâh for giving us this opportunity. However, I am quite nervous that the topic I have to treat last in the series of topics that I have

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<sup>10</sup> July/August, 2006

<sup>11</sup> Meaning: God willing

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been given is the one I find the most difficult of all. The topic is “After life, what next?”<sup>12</sup>

I remember that more than ten years ago, I had a discussion with a female colleague of mine who was very old. I guess she was probably sixty or seventy years old, or thereabout. So, if she is still alive today she would probably be about eighty years old now. In the course of our discussion, something made me mention death, or rather I said something like: “What if I die?” “What if I do not live to the time you are talking?” I have forgotten exactly what it was that we were discussing. However, her reaction was: “God forbid!” “God forbid bad thing!” “How could a young man like you talk of death?” She looked very angry as she talked. She wasn’t happy with the fact that somebody of my age was talking about death. I wasn’t too surprised at her reaction because she was not a Muslim (I do hope she is now). Her negative reaction to the mention of death only confirmed

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<sup>12</sup> That was the original topic of the lecture.

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what Allâh (*subhaanahu wa ta'ala*) says in the Glorious Qur'ân about non-Muslims:

يَوَدُّ أَحَدُهُمْ لَوْ يُعَمَّرُ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ وَمَا هُوَ بِمُرَحِّزٍ لَهُ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ أَنْ يُعَمَّرَ وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ

*“Each one of them wishes he could be given a life of a thousand years: but the grant of such life will not save him from (due) chastisement for Allâh sees well all that they do.”<sup>13</sup>*

In the above verse of the Glorious Qur'ân, Allâh (*subhaanahu wa ta'ala*) specifically referred to the Jews. But, indeed, all unbelievers are like that – they wish that they can live for a thousand years or more. For example, the president of this country<sup>14</sup> has ruled for seven years, and he is currently in his eighth year. Yet he plans what his government would do in the next twenty years. Which means his government is thinking of clinging unto power for the next twenty years, or

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<sup>13</sup> Surah al-Baqarah (2): 96

<sup>14</sup> President Olusegun Obasanjo, the then President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

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even more. That is how non-Muslims live their lives. Therefore, they do not like talking about death. And if any Muslim finds himself behaving like that, then that Muslim is actually behaving like a non-Muslim.

For the Muslim, the most important thing in life is death. This is because *Al-Jannah* (Paradise) depends on the way you die. *Jahannam* (hell fire) also depends on the way you die. Therefore, for a Muslim, continuing to live only makes him more miserable. That is why the *tâbi'ee*<sup>15</sup>, Mâlik ibn Dinar, would go out to the grave yard at night when people would be discussing and chatting after the *Ishâ Salâh*<sup>16</sup>, which was because at that time the people had started forgetting the *sunnah*<sup>17</sup> of Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) which discourages discussing or chatting after performing the night prayer. At the grave yard, he

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<sup>15</sup> It refers to the generation which immediately succeeded the companions of Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*).

<sup>16</sup> Late evening prayer.

<sup>17</sup> Apostolic traditions of Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*), which includes his sayings, deeds and tacit approvals.

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would talk to the inhabitants of the graves saying: “Once you were on earth just as we are today. But now you are beneath it. And we would soon join you. But the problem is: “How prepared are we to join you?” And when he said this he would start crying. He did this in order to remind himself everyday of the fact that he would one day meet his death, and that his whole life was about preparing for his death. He knew and fully understood that death is the most certain and important thing in a man’s life and that he is supposed to prepare for it.

## **Living a Good Life**

**M**ost of the times, when you listen to the non-Muslims speak, they say they want to live a “good life”. Some Muslims, nowadays, also speak like that. But the question is: “What is a good life?” Is it a life spent in luxury and super-comfort, but in disobedience to the Creator and contrary to the purpose of creation, or a life spent in devout service to the Almighty? Every now and then you hear some Muslims and the majority of the non-Muslims making statements like: “I want to have a car”, “I want to build my own house”, “I want to have a fat bank account”, “I want to have an estate”, “I want to own this”, and “I want to own that.” And they consider having these things as living a good life, even though they are deprived of Allâh’s guidance. It is not wrong to have a house. It is not wrong to have a car.

It is not also wrong to have a beautiful and God-fearing wife. Everybody would want all that. Even the messenger of Allâh (*sall-Allâhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) referred to a good house, at least one that will be spacious enough to shelter your wives and children, with enough space for them to conduct their activities, as one of the comforts of this worldly life. He (*sall-Allâhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) also counted a good and reliable ride as part of the luxuries of life. So, there is nothing wrong, actually, with having those things. But there is something wrong with one’s mind being focused all the time on just those material things, because such pursuit is not the purpose for which we have been created. The pursuit of the glitters and luxuries of this world should not be the thing that occupies your mind the most. It shouldn’t be at all! The thing that you should be most concerned about is your life after death and your lot therein.

## Husnul-Khatama – A Beautiful Ending

There were some people among our pious Muslim predecessors who were reported to have died while reciting the Qur'ân. An example of such is Uthman ibn Afan who was killed while he was reciting the Qur'ân. He was able to achieve such enviable end because he was given to reciting the Qur'ân often. Also, you need to know about al-Imâmu-Hafs, whose *riwaaya*<sup>18</sup> is the most popular in the world today (i.e. *riwaayatu-Hafsin*). He lived for fifty years and what he did most in his life was reciting the Qur'ân constantly. Of course, people like that died in the light of the Qur'ân. There is a *tâbi'ee* who was praying behind an Imâm and when the Imâm recited a verse of the Qur'ân that talks about the life after death he fainted from that prayer and

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<sup>18</sup> Way of reciting the Qur'ân.



never came back to it, as that was how he left this world. There is also another person who asked: “Which is the better place for one to die?” And after selecting a good place, he laid on his right side facing the Qiblah, said the *kalimah*<sup>19</sup> and died.

Another example of a person who prepared well for his death, and actually met a good end, is Al-Imâm Az-Zuhri. He prepared everyday of his life for his death and because of that he did not care about some other things that people cared about – they just came on their own. And when it was time for him to die, because of how much he had prepared and prayed to Allâh for *husnul-khatama* (a good end), he just started narrating a *Hadîth*<sup>20</sup>. After narrating the *isnaad* (chain of narrators) of the Hadîth, then he started narrating its *matn* (body/content). The Hadîth he narrated was: “*Man kaana aakhiru kalaamihi laa ilaaha illa-llah...* (Meaning:

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<sup>19</sup> Literally: words. It used to refer to the words of testimony of faith.

<sup>20</sup> Collections of the apostolic traditions of Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*).

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Whosoever has his last words as *laa ilaaha, illa-llah...*), before he could complete the Hadîth with the words “*Dakhalal-Jannah*” (meaning: he will enter Paradise), he died. He could not finish the Hadîth. So, his last words (*kalimah*) also were “*Laa ilaaha illa-llah*”

Similarly, at the time of the death of Sheikhu-Islâm, Ibn Taymiyah, what he recited was: “*Innal-muttaqeena fiy Jannaatin wa nahar. Fiy maq‘adi sidqin ‘inda malîkin muqtadir*”. (Meaning: As to the Righteous, they will be in the midst of gardens and rivers, in a sure abode with a Sovereign Omnipotent)<sup>21</sup>. When he finished reciting this he died.

Lastly and most importantly, at the time of the death of the messenger of Allâh (*sall-Allâhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*), he recited “*Ila rafeeqil a‘la*” (to the highest station).

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<sup>21</sup> Surah al-Qamar (54): 55

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These people were able to end their lives in such righteous ways because they had prepared seriously for their death and their afterlife.

Now the dreadful questions arise: “How will you end your life? What are you going to say at the time of your death?” Some people have died calling money, some calling their children, and some muttering words of regret about having to leave their wives. I was told about a man who had three wives. Of the three, there was one that he loved so much and was so particular about. At the time he was to die, he wrote in his will that nobody should marry that particular wife of his that he so much loved. This was what occupied his mind at the time of his death. After all the days of his life, there was nothing that was of greater concern to him than the wife he was leaving behind. He had forgotten, or he did not know, that it is possible that after his death, even if he is granted *Al-Jannah* (Paradise) by Allâh, that beloved wife of his may not join him there. She may be in hell-fire to abide therein forever. If that were the case, how could a husband

going to Paradise be so concerned about his wife that is bound for hell-fire? Before the great companion of the Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*), Abu Darda (*radhiyAllâhu 'anh*)<sup>22</sup> died, his wife was sitting with him one day, and she told him that she wanted him to be her husband in the hereafter (i.e. in Paradise). In response, Abu Darda told her that if she truly wanted to be his spouse in Paradise then she had to stay the rest of her life without a husband, should he die before her. That way, he would be her last husband on earth, and when they get to Paradise they will be together. But if she remarries after him, then she will not be his wife in Paradise. This is because the messenger of Allâh (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said: “*Al-mar'atu li aakhiri azwaajih*” (meaning: A woman belongs to her last husband on earth.” That is to say, a woman will have as her husband in Paradise, the man that was her last husband on earth. Because Abu Darda’s wife was preparing for her life after death and she knew what she wanted, as her husband was a

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<sup>22</sup>Meaning: Allâh’s pleasure be upon him.

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noble man and she wanted him to be her spouse in Paradise, she remained the rest of her life without remarrying, after the death of her husband. But as for the other man, he said nobody should marry his wife after his death, not because he wanted to have her in Paradise, but because he had enjoyed his stay with her and he wanted her for himself alone. In his own case he was being possessive over the things of this world, not thinking about his everlasting abode.

## **The Way of the Pious Believers**

**G**ood people always think about what will happen to them after their death. One day, Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) was with Abdullah ibn Mas‘ud<sup>23</sup> and he said to him: “Recite the Qur’ân to me”. Ibn Mas‘ud asked: “O Messenger of Allâh! Would I recite to you though on you it has been divinely revealed?” He (*sall-Allâhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) replied:” I like to listen to it from someone other than me. Then ibn Mas‘ud started reciting Surah an-Nisaa, until he came to Allâh’s saying: “How then (will it be) if we brought from each people a witness, and we brought you (O Muhammad-*sall-Allâhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) as a witness against these people”.<sup>24</sup> Then Ibn Mas‘ud lifted his head and found

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<sup>23</sup> One of the eminent disciples of Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*)

<sup>24</sup> Surah an-Nisa (4): 41

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the Prophet's eyes flowing with tears.<sup>25</sup> The Prophet wept for no other reason but the things he knew were awaiting him after his death. It is said that after the Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) received some particular revelations of the Qur'ân (i.e. some verses and chapters) his hair turned grey immediately. That was because he was thinking seriously about what was awaiting him – how he would answer questions on behalf of this *ummah*, how he would stand for this *ummah* despite all the evils he knew this *ummah* would perpetrate. He worried so much about the life hereafter. This is how every *mu'min* (believer) is supposed to live his life. A *mu'min* lives his life believing, knowing and realising that this life is just a borrowed property. He borrowed it and one day the owner will take it. And for the *mu'min* death is an opportunity to rest and rest forever. He spends all his life preparing and waiting for the day that the owner will come for it.

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<sup>25</sup> The Hadîth was recorded by Muslim.

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## Rumaysa bintu Milhan – an Exemplary Believer

There is an authentic Hadîth which is almost *mutawatir*<sup>26</sup>; the Hadîth of a woman known as Rumaysa bintu Milhan Ummu Sulaym, the mother of Anas bin Maalik, and Al-Barra bin Maalik. She had a husband<sup>27</sup>, who loved her so much, and Allâh, the Exalted and Most High, blessed them with a son. Her husband loved the son as much as he loved her. Rumaysa's husband used to go to the Prophet (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) and sit in his *majlis* (gathering). One day when his son was ill, he left home to attend the Prophet's *majlis* as usual. When he returned home, he met his wife, Rumaysa, waiting for him well

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<sup>26</sup> Reported by a large number of narrators so much so that the report could not have been weak or forged.

<sup>27</sup> The name of Rumaysa's husband was Zayd ibn Sahl, popularly known as Abu Talha



dressed and looking very attractive. The man then asked after his son and his wife told him he was quieter than ever, the best state of rest in which he could ever be. The man was comfortable with the answer, thinking that his wife meant that the son was well. As Allâh (*subhāanahu wa ta'āla*) would have it, he did not ask her to bring the son. She entertained him well, gave him food, and kept attracting him to herself until one thing led to another and he slept with her that night. After their intercourse, the wife asked the husband: “If somebody borrow a particular thing from some other person, and they had an agreement that at so and so day the owner would come for what he had lent them, when the time comes for the owner to take back his property and he comes for it, should the borrower refuse to give back what he/she had borrowed?” The man said no, as that would be unfair. The borrower has to give back to the lender whatever he/she borrowed as they agreed. Then the woman said: “Allâh (*subhāanahu wa ta'āla*) lent us a son and today it has pleased Him to take him back”. The man got angry and asked his

wife why she allowed him do what he did before informing him about what happened. She said: “And the borrower was angry when the owner came to collect his property.” Then the husband said, “No, I am not angry”. He realized then that what he was doing was wrong; that he was not supposed to react in that manner because, actually, each life that is given was borrowed from Allâh (*subhaanahu wa ta’ala*) and whenever it pleases Him He takes back his belonging, which He lent to whoever he wished. So, if you are a sensible person, when you receive a loan (e.g. from a bank etc.) you pay back when it is due. If you are supposed to pay back in monthly installments, make sure that in your monthly budget there is provision for that. That is how a wise man behaves. He never forgets his debts; rather he works out a good plan on how to offset them. That also is how a Muslim is supposed to live his life.

## **Why Does A Muslim Plan For Death?**

**W**hy does a Muslim live his life always thinking about death and death, not life, when the vogue now is that people plan for a “good life” in this world? The answer to this question is not farfetched. In defining the word “*Ad-Dunya*” (life on earth), our ‘*ulamaa* (scholars) say it has a number of meanings. The first meaning is that Ad-Dunya (in another word, Al-Adna) simply means the lower of two things. That is to say, if two things are placed one above the other, the one down (i.e. the lower one) is referred to as Ad-Dunya. Another meaning of Ad-Dunya is Al-Haqeerah (i.e. the insignificant). That is, something not valuable, not prestigious, and, in fact, useless. That is the meaning of Ad-Dunya. Allâh’s Messenger (*sall-Allâhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) defines it thus: “Alaa inna-ddunyaa mal‘unatun, mal‘unun maa fiyhaa, illa dhikra-llahi ta’ala wa maa waalah, wa

‘aliman, wa muta‘alliman.” (meaning: the world is cursed and so is all that is in it, save only the remembrance of Allâh and that which pleases Allâh, and the learned and those who seek knowledge).<sup>28</sup>

Ad-Dunya that the Prophet (*sall-Allâhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) referred to in the above *Hadîth* is anything material, which will end in this world without benefiting you in the Hereafter. All of those things are cursed by Allâh (*subhaanahu wa ta‘ala*). That is to say, they do not have Allâh’s blessings. Not only is the world cursed by Allâh, but everything within it is also cursed by Allâh; except, of course, the remembrance of Allâh and everything surrounding it. So, for example, the *mus’haf*<sup>29</sup> of the Qur’ân is not cursed, the *Ahadîth* are not cursed, the *tasbih*<sup>30</sup> and other forms of *dhikr*<sup>31</sup> are not cursed, the *masaajid*<sup>32</sup> in which

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<sup>28</sup> The *Hadîth* was related by Abu Hurayrah and recorded by at-Tirmidhi.

<sup>29</sup> Hard copy of the Qur’ân.

<sup>30</sup> Glorification of Allâh (*subhaanahu wa ta‘ala*).

<sup>31</sup> Remembrance of Allâh (*subhaanahu wa ta‘ala*).

<sup>32</sup> Singular: *Masjid* – Meaning: Mosque.

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Allâh (*subhaanahu wa ta'ala*) is remembered are not cursed, and anything that leads to Al-Jannah (i.e. anything that will be your *waseelah*<sup>33</sup> to al-Jannah) is not cursed. Also, a learned person (i.e., somebody who knows Allâh and His Messenger, and knows the *Ahkaam* (Islâmic rulings) and puts them to practice) is excluded from the curse of Allâh (*subhaanahu wa ta'ala*). Finally, the third exemption from the curse of Allâh (*subhaanahu wa ta'ala*) in this world is the *Muta'allim* (i.e. a person who seeks knowledge).

Importantly, if you look carefully at the things mentioned above that are not cursed by Allâh (*subhaanahu wa ta'ala*), you will discover that they are all the things that prepare one for Paradise. Every other thing besides them in this world is devoid of Allâh's blessing. Therefore, they do not deserve your attention. Even though Allâh's Messenger (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said that a good wife, a spacious house, and a reliable ride (means of transport) are part of the luxuries of

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<sup>33</sup> Means of intercession.

this world, he did not say that they are part of the things that necessarily take one to Paradise. No, he did not say so at all. He only said that they are the luxuries of this world. But he did not refer to them as things that one necessarily needs in order to achieve Paradise and have a blissful life in the Hereafter.

Some companions of Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) lived their lives and died without having clothes to wear. Khubaib ibn Arat, may Allâh be pleased with him, related a Hadîth in which he said:

*“We migrated with the Messenger of Allâh (sall-Allâhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) seeking the pleasure of Allâh and looking only to Him for our reward. Some of us died without enjoying any reward of it (here). One of such was Mus‘ab ibn Umayr, who was killed in the battle of Uhud, leaving only a small sheet (to shroud him). If we covered his head with it, his feet were exposed, and if we covered his feet his head was left uncovered. So*

*Allâh's Messenger (sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam) told us to cover his head and to put some fragrant grass over his feet. Others of us are reaping the ripe fruits of our reward.*"<sup>34</sup>

That was the poor state (in terms of materials) in which Mus'ab ibn Umayr died, and he is "*min as'haabul-Jannah*" (among the Companions of Paradise).

So, those things that people live for in this world today and devote their utmost attention to are actually not the things that will benefit them before Allâh (*subhaanahu wa ta'ala*). That is why a Muslim does not concentrate on them (i.e. the adornments of this worldly life). Rather, he concentrates on the things that will benefit him in the Hereafter where wealth and social status will be of no value.

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<sup>34</sup> Recorded by Bukhâri and Muslim

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## **The Life of This World is But Play And Pastime**

**D**ear brothers and sisters, know that there is no place in the Qur'ân where Allâh (*subhāanahu wa ta'āla*) praises any material thing of the world. He, Exalted be His Majesty, never talks about this worldly life in the Glorious Qur'ân except in a derogatory manner. For example, Allâh (*subhāanahu wa ta'āla*), says:

زُيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ حُبُّ الشَّهَوَاتِ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ وَالْبَنِينَ وَالْقَنَاطِيرِ الْمُقَنْطَرَةِ مِنَ الذَّهَبِ وَالْفِضَّةِ  
وَالْخَيْلِ الْمُسَوَّمَةِ وَالْأَنْعَامِ وَالْحَرْثِ ذَلِكَ مَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ حُسْنُ الْمَالِ

*“Fair in eyes of men is the love of things they covet:  
women and sons: heaped-up hoards of gold and silver;  
horses branded (for blood and excellence); and  
(wealth of) cattle and well-tilled land. Such are the*



*possessions of this world's life; but with Allâh is the best of the goals (to return to). ”<sup>35</sup>*

Allâh (*subhaanahu wa ta'ala*) ends the above verse with the words “*Dhaalikal-hayaatud-dunyaa*” (meaning: such is the fleeting life of this world). But one may ask: “What is derogatory about the phrase “*al-hayaatud-dunyaa*”? The answer to that question is in another verse of the Qur’ân in which Allâh (*subhaanahu wa ta'ala*) says:

اعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَلَهُمْ زِينَةٌ وَتَفَاخُرٌ بَيْنَكُمْ وَتَكَاثُرٌ فِي الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ

*“Know ye (all), that al-hayaatu-ddunyaa (the life of this world) is but play and a pastime, adornment and mutual boasting and multiplying (in rivalry) among yourselves, riches and children. ”<sup>36</sup>*

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<sup>35</sup> Surah aal-Imran (3): 14

<sup>36</sup> Surah al-Hadid (57): 20

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That is how Allâh (*subhaanahu wa ta'ala*) describes the life of this world. He, Exalted be His Majesty, says that we should all realize that the life of this world is nothing but play and pastime (waste of time). If you say that somebody is just playing and wasting his time are you, in that way, praising the person? Similarly, if you say, for example, that the university is nothing but play and a waste of time, are you praising the university by that? No, you are not. But Allâh (*subhaanahu wa ta'ala*) says that is what this worldly life is. So, you see people bragging and boasting about how much wealth they have, how many children they have sired, how many wives they have married, the number of cars they have, the amount of money they have in their bank accounts, etc. Also, people are carried away with fashion parades, obsessed about decorations, adornments and glitters (e.g. how to make beautiful hair styles, buy expensive cosmetics, import grasses from London and Paris to make beautiful orchards etc.). These are the things that people are most concerned about in the world today, and they are the things

that make up al-hayatud-dunya (the inconsequential life of this world). But the things that endure, good deeds, are best in the sight of our Lord as rewards, and best as (the foundation for hope) with Allâh (*subhaanahu wa ta'ala*). And with Allâh (*subhaanahu wa ta'ala*) lies the ultimate victory and success.

In explaining the fleeting nature of life on earth, Allâh, the Exalted and Most High, says:

كَمْثَلٍ غَيْثٍ أَعْجَبَ الْكَفَّارَ نَبَاتُهُ ثُمَّ يَهِيجُ فَتَرَاهُ مُصْفَرًّا ثُمَّ يَكُونُ حُطَامًا

*“Here is a similitude (of the life of this world): how rain and the growth which it brings forth delight (the hearts of) the tillers: soon it withers, thou wilt see it grow yellow then it becomes dry and crumbles away.”<sup>37</sup>*

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<sup>37</sup> Surah al-Hadid (57): 20

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The above similitude of how a plant grows fresh and soon after withers, turns yellow and crumbles away is exactly how the life of this world is. For the plants, their crumbling away marks the end of it all; but not so for the human beings. As for you the human being, after living your life wastefully like that, you will be transited into a more important and more lasting life in which your state will be determined by how you lived in this worldly life. That is why Allâh (*subhaanahu wa ta'ala*) says in the concluding part of the verse quoted earlier:

وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانٌ وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْعُرُورِ

*“But in the hereafter is a sever chastisement (for the devotees of wrong), and forgiveness from Allâh and (His) good pleasure (for the devotees of Allâh). And what is the life of this world, but good and chattels of deception?”<sup>38</sup>*

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<sup>38</sup> Surah al-Hadid (57): 20

Allâh, the All-Mighty and All-Wise, also says in the Glorious Qur'ân:

وَاصْرَبْ لَهُمْ مَثَلٌ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا كَمَاءٍ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ فَاخْتَلَطَ بِهِ نَبَاتُ الْأَرْضِ فَأَصْبَحَ هَشِيمًا تَذْرُوهُ الرِّيَّاحُ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُقْتَدِرًا الْمَالُ وَالْبَنُونَ زِينَةُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَالْبَاقِيَاتُ الصَّالِحَاتُ خَيْرٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ثَوَابًا وَخَيْرٌ أَمَلًا

*“Set forth to them the similitude of the life of this world: It is like the rain which we send down from the skies: the earth’s vegetation absorbs it, but soon it becomes dry stubble, which the winds do scatter: Allâh prevails over all things. Wealth and sons are the allurements of the life of this world: But the things that endure, good deeds, are best in the sight of thy Lord, as rewards, and best as (the foundation for hopes).”<sup>39</sup>*

The verse is similar to the one quoted earlier from Surah al-Hadid. They convey the same message, and that is exactly how life is. Therefore, brothers and sisters, you should not

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<sup>39</sup> Surah al-Kahf (18) : 45-46

live your lives just for this world which is so fleeting and inconsequential. Just when you think the life is looking beautiful, it turns very ugly, and there is nothing special about it again. Therefore, that which has no promise and no guarantee does not deserve all your time. In fact, if it deserves your time, it is only a little of it. You should use the most part of your life preparing for a life that is better than the one you are living here, and longer lasting. And that is the life in Paradise.

Allâh, the Blessed and Most High, says in the Glorious Qur'ân:

بَلْ تُؤْتِرُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى

*“Nay (behold), you prefer the life of this world; but the hereafter is better and more enduring. And this is in*

*the books of the earliest (Revelations)<sup>40</sup>, - the books of Abraham and Moses.”<sup>41</sup>*

There is a Hadîth narrated on the authority of ‘Abdullah bin ‘Umar, may Allâh be pleased with him, wherein he said: The Messenger of Allâh (blessings and peace of Allâh be upon him) took me by the shoulder and said:

*“Be in this world as though you were a stranger or a wayfarer.”*

And Ibn ‘Umar, may Allâh be pleased with him, used to say:

*“In the evening do not expect (to live until) the morning, and in the morning do not expect (to live until) the evening. Take (advantage of) your health*

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<sup>40</sup> The commentary of Abdullah Yusuf Ali on this point says: “The law of righteousness and godliness is not a new law, nor are the vanity and short duration of this world preached here for the first time. But spiritual truths have to be renewed and reiterated again and again.” – *Abu Bilaal*

<sup>41</sup> Surah al-‘A’la (87): 16-19

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*before the time of sickness, and (take advantage of) your life before your death.”<sup>42</sup>*

Man prefers the life of this world and is carried away by its glitter and embellishment. He prefers the things he can immediately behold – the things he can see with his eyes, and the things he can taste with his tongue. So, for example, he likes delicious foods and tasty drinks – he wants to eat this, he wants to drink that, he wants to wear designer clothing and designer shoes, he wants to live in deluxe houses, he wants to ride posh cars, and so on and so forth, in an endless list of material wants. And he seems to prefer all of these to the pleasurable and blissful life of Paradise. But Allâh (*subhâanahu wa ta’ala*) says, “The hereafter is better and more enduring”. This is because if you enter into Paradise there will be nothing like death for you again. In Paradise there is no envy, there is no hatred, there is no sadness, and there is no sickness. But on the contrary, the life of this

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<sup>42</sup> Related by Al-Bukhâri

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world is full of frustration, bitterness and unhappiness. If you live for seventy years in this world, and you were to calculate very well, forty of the seventy years you lived on earth you were not happy. You were just hanging on to life. You were always thinking of one problem or the other, and how to put bits and pieces together to make ends meet. You suffered mental depression because of the frustrations in the world and as a result you grew grey hairs before your normal time. In fact, you would realize that you lived most of your life to make some other people happy but you were actually not happy. You lost sleep so that your children could sleep. You toiled hard so that you could bring food home to feed your wife and children. And you suffered great depression and worries over your cars so that they could be in good condition. Indeed you would realize that you actually did not live your own life but the life of your cars, your pets, your houses, your wives, your children, etc. Your own life, in reality, was sold and the life you lived was not yours but others'. The only life you will live and it will be yours is the

investment that you make in the hereafter. If you end up in your entire life making a hundred million naira, a careful analysis will reveal that what you actually enjoyed out of that hundred million naira was not up to ten million naira. The rest you spent on nonsense. The Messenger of Allâh, Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*), said that there is nothing that you have owned in this world that actually belongs to you except one, i.e., the set of things that your body consumed. That is to say the clothes you wore, the food you ate, the water you drank etc. are actually the things that are yours as they are the things you benefited from. As for the car that you drove; the time that you drove it and the part of it on which you sat are the ones that belong to you, not the entire car. You probably never used the passenger seat of the car throughout your life. So, those parts were not yours even though you paid for them. You only labored for other people.

Concerning the food you eat, ibn Al-Qayim wrote in one of his books that there were some *salaf*<sup>43</sup> who used to say to the people: “Do you want to see the wealth and the things you have earned in your life?” When the people would answer in the affirmative, they would take them to their toilets and ask them to look at the toilet and see the mess in it. They would say to them: “The beautiful food you ate, this is where it is, and this is what it has become”. That is to say, no matter how delicious the food you eat and no matter how tasty the drinks you consumed, they will all end up in the toilet as waste and the sight of them, alone, is repulsive.

Similarly, the clothes you wear; the one you killed a human being to acquire; the one you turned away from Allâh (*subhānahu wa ta‘āla*) and did terrible things in order to earn money to buy; after a short time, if you were to be given those same clothes to wear, you would not like to wear them again, no matter how beautiful and expensive they were

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<sup>43</sup> The pious Muslim predecessors.

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when you bought them. In fact, if you were to give them out to someone else, the person may reject them because they would have lost their value and become non-presentable. Simply put, they were all vanities.

Concerning your money, Abdullah ibn Abbas (*radhiyAllâhu ‘anhu*) said that if you have money and you keep it in the bank then you have kept it where termites can eat it. The bank is not safe for your money. Your room is not safe for your money. Your bag is also not safe for your money. There is only one place where your money is safe and safe forever. That place is *Al-Jannah* (Paradise).

## Saving For the Morrow

As we have said earlier, the safest place to keep your money is Paradise. Therein there is no thief, no termite, and no fire. You don't even have to cook the food you eat therein. So, it is the safest place for you to keep your money. Therefore, everything you have in this world should be channeled towards deeds that will earn you Paradise. Such is the best form of banking and investment. Allâh, the Exalted and Majestic, says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلْتَنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَتَمَتْ يَدُهَا وَأَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ  
وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَأَنْسَاهُمْ أَنْفُسَهُمْ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ لَا يَسْتَوِي أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ  
وَأَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ هُمُ الْفَائِزُونَ

*“O ye who believe! Fear Allâh and let every soul look to what (provision) he has sent forth for the morrow (the hereafter). Yea, fear Allâh: for Allâh is well*

*acquainted with all that ye do. And be ye not like those who forget Allâh: He (Allâh) made them forget themselves! Such are the rebellious transgressors! Not equal are the companions of the fire and the companions of Paradise. It is the companions of the Paradise that will achieve felicity.”<sup>44</sup>*

If you live your life not sending anything forth for the morrow, i.e., not storing up righteous deeds for the hereafter, when you die you will be among the losers. May Allâh save us from such fate! Such people will be given their books of records in their left hands on the day of reckoning, and they will say:

يَا لَيْتَنِي لَمْ أُوتَ كِتَابِيهِ وَلَمْ أَدْرِ مَا حِسَابِيهِ يَا لَيْتَهَا كَانَتِ الْقَاضِيَةَ مَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنِّي  
مَالِيهِ هَٰذَاكَ عَنِّي سُلْطَانِيهِ

*“Ah! Would that my record had not been given to me!  
That I had never realized how my account (stood)! Ah!*

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<sup>44</sup> Surah al-Hashr (59): 18-20

*Would that death had made end of me! Of no profit to me has been my wealth! My power has perished from me!...*<sup>45</sup>

Upon this lamentation and deep regrets, the stern command from Allâh will be:

خُذُوهُ فَغُلُّوهُ ثُمَّ الْجَحِيمَ صَلُّوهُ

*“Seize him and bind him; then throw him in the blazing fire.”*<sup>46</sup>

Sinners and evildoers will find on the Day of Judgment that their wealth will be of no use to them. Similarly, the power and authority they had on earth which intoxicated and made them arrogant, thereby forgetting Allâh (*subhaanahu wa ta'ala*) will avail them nothing on that Great Inevitable Day. May Allâh save us!

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<sup>45</sup> Surah al-Haqqah (69): 25-29

<sup>46</sup> Surah al-Haqqah (69): 30-31

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## **Recognizing Allâh's Favors**

**W**hen you ask some people how they achieved all that they have achieved in life, they will say: “HARD WORK”!!! They forget Allâh (*subhaanahu wa ta'ala*) completely and, instead, they say it is hard work that has earned them all that they have achieved. That is not how a Muslim should live. A Muslim should always acknowledge the favors of Allâh (*subhaanahu wa ta'ala*) upon him. He should remind himself everyday of the fact that all that he has, including wealth, children, position, and status, are from Allâh (*subhaanahu wa ta'ala*) and they are all going back to Him. He should always bear in mind that he will give account of everything he earned and owned before Allâh (*subhaanahu wa ta'ala*). He will even give account of the things he lost – how he lost them, and how he behaved when he lost



them. So, you can see now that this life is not worth living for. It should rather be seen as a cultivating ground where one sows, while the Hereafter is the place to reap and savour one's harvest which Allâh (*subhaanahu wa ta'ala*) describes as "better and more lasting".<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Surah al-‘A’la (87): 17

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## 10

### **The Short and Transient Nature of the Life of This World**

**B**eloved brothers and sisters, nobody living now hopes to live for five hundred years – not even for one hundred and fifty years. In fact, for quite some time now, the oldest person in the world is hardly above one hundred and thirty-five years old. After some time, you will hardly even hear of anybody living up to seventy years old. That is to say, at that time, when you hear that somebody is seventy years old you will exclaim, “O very old man! Why has he refused to die?” The maximum lifespan of human beings will continue to decrease until a time when it will be recorded that the oldest person on earth is just fifty years old. SubhaanAllâh! See how short the life of this world is!

Our pious Muslim predecessors understood the short and transient nature of this worldly life; hence they were saved

from being caught-up in the web of materialism and vanity. Most of them hardly kept anything of this world. Our noble Prophet Muhammad (*Sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) had a bed on which he used to sleep; and his bed was sand heaped up in his room. His pillow was a heap of date palm leaves. He used to say that he had nothing to do with this world, and that if he were to have two pieces of gold, rather than allow them spend the night with him he would give them out.

According to the *sahabee*, Abu Dhar (*radhiyAllâhu 'anhu*), a *mu'min* (believer) will never allow a penny to stay with him till the next day as long as there is somebody that needs it. So, if at the end of the day, after fulfilling his daily needs, he still has some money left, he would go around looking for somebody who is in need of it. He would consider anyone who kept such extra money till the next day as among the people that Allâh (*subhâanahu wa ta'ala*) has described as niggardly, and the people that Allâh (*subhâanahu wa ta'ala*) will punish in hell-fire. Allâh, the Exalted in Might, says:

وَالَّذِينَ يَكْنِزُونَ الذَّهَبَ وَالْفِضَّةَ وَلَا يَنْفِقُونَهَا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ

*“And those who hoard up gold and silver and spend them not in the way of Allâh announce unto them a painful torment.”<sup>48</sup>*

Therefore to Abu Dhar (*radhiyAllâhu ‘anhû*), the way life is supposed to be is that you live everyday for that day. That is, what you earn in a day is for that day, and you do not expect to live till the next day. That was also the way the great *sahabee*, Abdur-Rahman ibn Auf (*radhiyAllâhu ‘anhû*) lived his life. He was a very wealthy person. The more he gave out to the poor and the needy, the more he earned. And that kept happening until he died. And he died leaving behind lots of money, which means that giving out to the poor and needy for the sake of Allâh (*subhaanahu wa ta’ala*) does not make one die a pauper. If you are destined to die leaving behind a million dollars, so it shall be, no matter how generous and

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<sup>48</sup> Surah at-Tawbah (9):34

philanthropic you may be. Such was Abdur-Rahman ibn Auf. There was an occasion on which he was served his food, but when he sat down to eat he remembered Mus'ab ibn Umayr (*radhiyAllâhu 'anhû*). Mus'ab ibn Umayr was born with golden spoon. His mother was very wealthy and she spoilt him with her money. As a young man, he had the best of horses, the best of clothes, the most glowing skin, and so on and so forth. However, at a time he embraced Islâm and lost all of that because his mother rejected him for embracing Islâm. But even after losing everything he had, Mus'ab ibn Umayr still was not deterred. He died without having anything. So, when Abdur-Rahman ibn Auf remembered Mus'ab, he could no longer eat his food, which he had gotten with his *halaal* (lawful) money. He started weeping and he stood up and left without eating. Such were the people who were not concerned about this life, but the hereafter.

## **Recommended Things to Do In Preparation for the Life after Death**

❑ **Waseeyah (will)** – In preparing for death, one of the things you should always do is to write your *waseeyah* (will) before going to bed. Do that every day if you can. Write in your *waseeyah* the amount of wealth you have, those whom you owe, the amount you owe them and your intention to pay back, those who owe you and your intention to forgive them the debt should you die before they pay back, those who you have offended and intend to apologize to in order to seek their forgiveness, those who offended you and you have forgiven, etc. Doing this regularly before you retire to bed at night will constantly remind you of death and will make you always repentant and humble. There is always a new thing to add to your *waseeyah*, so keep writing. Abdullah ibn Umar

(radhiyAllâhu ‘anhû) related that the Messenger of Allâh (sall-Allâhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said:

*“It is not right for a Muslim who has something to bequeath to pass two nights without having it in writing in his possession”*<sup>49</sup>

❑ ***Living between fear and hope*** – Everyday of your life, always ask yourself: “The life that I have lived, will it earn me Paradise or hell-fire?” If you keep assessing your life like that, you will find yourself living between two things: fear and hope. And Allâh’s Messenger (sall-Allâhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said:

*“Wherever this two (fear and hope come together in the heart of a slave (of Allâh), in such a situation,*

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<sup>49</sup> Reported by Ibn ‘Umar and collected in all of the six books of Hadîth. Sahih Al-Bukhârî, vol.4, p.1, no.1, Sahih Muslim, vol.3, p.863, no.3987, Sunan Abu Dawud, vol.2, p.805, no.2856, Mishkat Al-Masabih, vol.1, p.656, and Muwatta Imam Malik, p.329, no.1449

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*Allâh gives him what he hopes for and protects him from what he fears”<sup>50</sup>.*

That is to say, you should look at the enormity of your sins and fear the punishment of Allâh (*subhaanahu wa ta’ala*), and look at the mercy and forgiveness of Allâh (*subhaanahu wa ta’ala*) and hope for His Paradise. That way you will not be boastful and arrogant, and Allâh (*subhaanahu wa ta’ala*) will save you from that which you fear (i.e. hell-fire) and grant you that which you crave for (i.e. Paradise).

❑ ***Constantly enjoining righteous acts*** – Always engage in the activities that you will like to die on. All your life, never allow yourself to spend five minutes discussing nonsense<sup>51</sup>. Whatever you open your mouth to say, remind yourself of the fact that you could die saying that thing. For example, some people died while discussing women, some

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<sup>50</sup> Recorded by Tirmidhi and ibn Majah.

<sup>51</sup> Allâh says in Surah Qâf (50): 18 – “Not a word does he (or she) utter but there is a watcher by him ready (to record it)”.

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died while discussing football, some died while mocking the sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*), and some others died while insulting him. Such people have ended their lives in utter ruin. Their recompense will be severe chastisement.

Similarly, whatever you do, remind yourself that you could die doing that thing. So, be quick to avoid evil deeds and flee to Allâh (*subhâanahu wa ta'âla*) with sincere repentance.

The way you will die depends on, first of all, what your heart craves for at the time of your death. Somebody once asked the Messenger of Allâh (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*), “why do we (humans) still work, perform *Salâh*, pay the *Zakâh*, go for *Hajj*, and perform other acts of *ibaadah* (worship) since everything that will happen to man has already been decreed or pre-ordained?”. Why don’t we just wait for what Allâh (*subhâanahu wa ta'âla*) has prepared for us? The Messenger of Allâh, blessings and peace of Allâh be on him, answered him that it is true everything has been decreed but that everyone

will find the things that have been decreed for him easy to do. So, for example, if what you enjoy most is to drink beer and watch football, then whatever the abode of alcoholics and footballers will be in the hereafter is probably what has been decreed for you. So, ponder over it! Take a careful look at the life of the alcoholics. If you think the kind of life they live is okay and they shall be rewarded with good in the hereafter, then continue in their path. If not, then return to the path of the righteous. Similarly, look at the lives of the so-called football lovers; those who when they see even *kufar*<sup>52</sup> footballers running aimlessly on the pitch, they scream: “Allâhu Akbar!” “O, see my favorite player!” “Look at Pele!” “Look at Ronaldinho!” “Allâhu-Akbar!” Those whose craze for football has made them love infidels, even though Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) has said that in the hereafter everyone will be in the company of those whom he loves. If you think that they shall have a good life in the hereafter and you are comfortable with that,

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<sup>52</sup> Disbeliever.

then continue on their footsteps. If not, and you do not think that such a behavior is a sign that one is going to Paradise, then turn a new leaf and return to your Lord with sincere repentance. Then make sure you do only those things which if you die on, *insha-Allâh*, you would meet a good end in this world and a felicitous life in the hereafter in the company of the righteous.

❑ ***Buying your own shroud*** – Another very important thing that will always remind you of the life after death and help you prepare for it is to, if you can, buy the cloth in which you will be shrouded when you die, and keep it close to you where you can always see it. Ensure that you buy a cheap material, not an expensive one, and look at it every day before you sleep at night and when you wake-up in the morning. That will keep you ever humble, dutiful and obedient to your Creator. Remember that if you keep the cloth far from where you can always see it, then the aim may be defeated. So, always have it nearby if you can.

❑ ***Constantly remind yourself of the punishment in the grave and the hell-fire*** – On a daily basis, read the *surahs*<sup>53</sup> and *ahadîth*<sup>54</sup> that talk about the life after death and the punishment in the grave and the hell-fire. Learn about the things that cause one to end up in eternal damnation so that you can know them and try as much as you can to avoid them. There was a companion of Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) called Hudhaifa Bn Al-Yaman, who always asked him about *fitnah* (trials) and evil. He never asked the Prophet (*sall-Allâhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) about good things. And the reason why he was always asking about these things was that he wanted to know them so that he could avoid them. He kept on asking such questions until Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) departed this world. The man was actually able to avoid evil after the

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<sup>53</sup> Chapters of the Glorious Qur’ân.

<sup>54</sup> Singular: Hadîth – Collections of the apostolic traditions of Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*).

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Prophet's demise because he had learnt so much about them and he could easily recognize and avoid them.

However, know that asking about what will happen to you after your life is not the important thing. What is important is how such asking is able to improve your life and help you prepare for the inevitable journey to eternity.

❑ ***Watching your heart's inclination*** – If you find your heart inclined to sin and disposed to the life of this world; if you are afraid of dying; if you hate to talk about death; then know you are, most probably, heading towards hell-fire. If it pleases you, continue like that. But as we said earlier, one of the signs that one is actually preparing for a good life in the hereafter is that he never forgets about his death and he never stops thinking and worrying about what awaits him in the life after death. Therefore, it is important for one to always be mindful of the state of his heart. Wabisah bin Ma'bad (*radhiyAllâhu 'anhu*) said:

*"I came to the Messenger of Allâh, sallAllâhu 'alayhi wa sallam, and he said: "You have come to ask about righteousness?" "Yes," I answered. He said: "Consult your heart. Righteousness is that about which the soul feels tranquil and the heart feels tranquil, and sin is what creates restlessness in the soul and moves to and fro in the heart, even though people give you their opinion (in your favour) and continue to do so."<sup>55</sup>*

In a similar Hadîth reported by An-Nawwas bin Sam'an (radiyAllâhu 'anhû) the Prophet (sallAllâhu 'alayhi wa sallam) said:

*"Righteousness is good character, and sin is that which wavers in your heart and which you do not want people to know about."<sup>56</sup>*

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<sup>55</sup> A good hadîth transmitted from the Musnads of the two Imams, Ahmad bin Hanbal and Al-Darimi

<sup>56</sup> Recorded by Muslim

Also, as part of a fairly lengthy hadīth, the Prophet, (salī-Allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam) said:

*“Beware, in the body there is a flesh; if it is sound, the whole body is sound, and if it is corrupt, the whole body is corrupt, and behold, it is the heart.”<sup>57</sup>*

If you keep thinking and worrying about the state of your heart, striving to make sure it is free of sins and attachment to this world, you will die a very good death.

❑ ***Learning religious knowledge*** – Ignorant people, i.e., people who live their lives not knowing Allāh, the Exalted and Most High, hardly go to Paradise. There are many verses of the Glorious Qur’ān and traditions of Prophet Muhammad (salī-Allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam) that emphasize the importance of knowledge. Allāh says:

إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ

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<sup>57</sup> Recorded by Bukhārī and Muslim

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*“Verily! Those who fear Allâh among His servants are the knowledgeable.”<sup>58</sup>*

And the Prophet (*sall-Allâhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) said:

*“When Allâh wishes good for someone, He bestows upon him the understanding of Deen.”<sup>59</sup>*

❑ ***Crying more and laughing less*** – Also, a person who laughs more than he cries hardly go to Paradise. It is the disbelievers, mostly, who laugh more than they cry. Muslims should live their lives crying more (over their sins and the uncertainty of the hereafter), rather than laughing. It is reported that Allâh’s Messenger (*sall-Allâhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) stopped laughing after some time in his life, and was never seen even smiling again because of some verses that had been revealed to him and the thought of the hereafter. He was reported to have said to his companions in the course of

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<sup>58</sup> Surah al-Faatir (35): 28

<sup>59</sup> Al-Bukhâri and Muslim



a *khutbah*<sup>60</sup>: “If you knew what I know, you would laugh little and weep much.”<sup>61</sup>

And Allâh (*subhaanahu wa ta’ala*) says:

أَفَسْ هَذَا الْحَدِيثُ تَعْجَبُونَ وَتَضْحَكُونَ وَلَا تَبْكُونَ وَأَنْتُمْ سَامِدُونَ فَاسْجُدُوا  
لِلَّهِ وَاعْبُدُوا

*“Do you then wonder at this recitation (the Qur’ân)?  
And you laugh at it and weep not, Wasting your  
(precious) lifetime in pastime and amusements. So, fall  
you down in prostration to Allâh and worship Him  
(Alone).”*<sup>62</sup>

Some of the pious Muslim predecessors were reported to have expressed surprise to have seen people laughing, and they would say “Did Allâh show you that you will go to

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<sup>60</sup> Khutbah serves as the primary formal occasion for public preaching in the Islâmic tradition.

<sup>61</sup> Al-Bukhâri and Muslim

<sup>62</sup> Surah An-Najm (53): 59 - 62

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Paradise?” “How is it that I see you laughing all the time?”  
“Don’t you ever remember Hell-fire?”

We should look at the lives of people like Abu Bakr As-Siddiq and Umar ibn Al-Khattab who would recite the Qur’ân in *salâh* and cry out of fear of Allâh (*subhâanahu wa ta’âla*) so much so that people could hear them crying.

❑ ***Performing ghusl before sleeping after sexual intercourse*** – Always make sure you perform *ghuslu-janâbah*<sup>63</sup> before you sleep at night after having sexual intercourse with your spouse (husband or wife). If you cannot do that, then perform *wudhu* (ablution); if you still cannot do that, then, at least, perform *tayammum* (dry ablution). Why? Because you are preparing for your death, and a person who sleeps in a state of ritual impurity is one of the people the angels of *rahmah* (mercy) do not come near. So if you die like that, the angels will dislike your corpse.

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<sup>63</sup> A complete bath to remove ritual impurity resulting from sexual intercourse.

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Therefore, if you truly wish for a blissful life after death, always perform *ghusl* after cohabiting with your wife or husband. And when you want to sleep, do so in the way a Muslim should (i.e. on your right side, facing the Qiblah). Also, you should sleep thinking that you will never wake-up again. Allâh's Messenger (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said:

*"Be in this world as though you were a stranger or a passerby"*<sup>64</sup>

And ibn 'Umar, the great companion of Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi was sallam*), used to say:

*"If you are alive in the evening, do not expect to be alive till the morning, and if you are alive in the morning, do not expect to be alive till the evening. And use your health to prepare for your sickness, and use your life to prepare for your death"*<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Recorded by Al-Bukhâri.

<sup>65</sup> Recorded by Al-Bukhâri.

❑ **Waking up for Worship at Night (Tahajjud)** – One major characteristic of the people who tread the path of Paradise is that they are always uncomfortable to sleep through the night. Allâh, the Blessed and Most High, says concerning the righteous:

تَنَجَّاهُمْ عَنْ جُنُوبِهِمْ عَنِ الْمَضَاجِعِ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ

*“Their sides forsake their beds to invoke their Lord in fear and hope and they spend (in charity in Allâh’s cause) out of what We have bestowed on them.”<sup>66</sup>*

He (*subhaanahu wa ta’ala*) also says:

وَمِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَاسْجُدْ لَهُ وَسَبِّحْهُ لَيْلًا طَوِيلًا

*“And during the night, prostrate yourself to Him, and glorify Him a long night through (i.e. Tahajjud prayer).”<sup>67</sup>*

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<sup>66</sup> Surah As-Sajdah (32): 16.

<sup>67</sup> Surah Al-Insan (76): 026

❑ ***Substituting materialism with asceticism*** – Another very important sacrifice to be made in pursuit of a blissful life after death is renunciation of this world for the hereafter. The way to achieve this is for one to be charitable and avoid piling up wealth. One of the characteristics of the people of Paradise is that they do not go to bed with filled stomachs while their neighbors are hungry, because if they do so and die like that, then they did not die as believers, according to the teachings of our noble Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*). I can remember I once mentioned to a brother that there is something I did which scares me each time I remember it, and I do not know whether Allâh will forgive me for it. He asked me what it was and I told him that at one time in my life I had up to five pairs of clothes to myself, and there were some people who did not have up to three pairs. He asked me to repeat what I said and I did. The brother was very surprised. I think he told me he had more than thirty pairs and he was still buying more.

That is what materialism has led many people to. When you look at some people's wardrobes you will find up to twenty pairs of shoes. I wonder what one person will be doing with twenty pairs of shoes. Are they going to be buried along with him when he dies? When you ask him what he is doing with that much number of shoes he says: "I want to live a good life". "How can I be wearing the same pair of shoes every day?" Yet he lives in the same society in which some people cannot afford two meals in a day.

There was an umbrella repairer who was interviewed on radio. He was asked how much he earned in a day. He answered that he earned two hundred naira (₦200) in a day, and from that earning he fed himself and his family. When he was asked what he wanted the government to do for him, he said he wanted the government to give him some capital to boost his business of umbrella repairing. And surprisingly, when he was asked how much capital he wanted the government to give him he said he wanted just eight

thousand naira (₦8000), and that if he got that he would be comfortable.

There is also the story of somebody who said that in his entire life he had never owned up to five thousand naira (₦5000), and that person was a full grown adult. Yet there are people in this country who spend over thrice that amount on their dogs monthly. I was told that there was a Nigerian businessman who had up to thirty billion U.S. dollars. I was quite surprised because I did not expect that there was anybody in the world who had that much. I wonder how he is going to account for all of that on the Day of Judgment. Muslims should not live their lives like that; piling up wealth instead of spending them in the Cause of Allâh (*subhaanahu wa ta'ala*). Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*), the one in whom we have a perfect example to emulate, did not live his life like that. He, Allâh's blessing and peace be upon him, used to supplicate:

*“Allâhumma ahyini miskin, wa amitni miskin,  
wahshurni fi zumratil-masaakin”*

Meaning: O Allâh! Make me live as a poor person, die as a poor person, and be resurrected on the Day of Judgment in the group of the poor.

That was the supplication of the Prophet of Allâh. But can you say *ameen* to that if it was said for you? Why did the Prophet (*sall-Allâhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) make such supplication? The reason is that the less people have in this world, the more they will have in Paradise. And many who are among the rich in this world will be among the poorest in the hereafter. According to teachings of the Messenger of Allâh (*sall-Allâhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*), those people who feed fat until their necks can no longer be distinguished from their cheeks because they would have become one, even though others around them are languishing in penury, on the Day of Judgment a mosquito will be heavier on the scale than them. They would lose all their weight on that Great Inevitable



Day because they would not be able to account for the things they enjoyed in the world. Their wealth will avail them naught before Allâh (*subhaanahu wa ta'ala*), the Supreme Judge. They will be questioned about their wealth – how they made it and how they spent it; and they will not be able to answer. Al-Imâm Al-Mundhir recorded a hadîth in his book, *At-Targheeb wat-Tarheeb*, in which Prophet Muhammad (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said that on the Day of Reckoning, the poor among the Muslims (i.e. those who lived with little or nothing, not because they did not have but because they were more interested in what lies await in Paradise than piling up wealth) will enter Paradise and spend forty years therein before the rich people who will not go to Hell-fire will enter Paradise, even though their wealth was pure and lawful. So, if you long for Paradise, then spend more in the Cause of Allâh (*subhaanahu wa ta'ala*) and have less piled up. I am not saying that you should strip yourself of everything you have. Rather, I am saying that you should make sure it is not piling and piling that you do more, but

spending and spending in the Cause of Allâh (*subḥaanahu wa ta'ala*) and his noble Messenger, (*sall-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*). That is one beautiful way of preparing for the life after death. And know that no matter how much you spend in the Cause of Allâh (*subḥaanahu wa ta'ala*), if He has decreed that you will die leaving a lot for your children to inherit, you will surely die leaving that much, as we saw in the lives of Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas, Abdur-Rahman ibn Auf, and many others. So, spending in the Cause of Allâh (*subḥaanahu wa ta'ala*), seeking only His pleasure, does not make you poor. It makes you richer in Paradise, because you would have saved enough to benefit you therein.

May Allâh make it possible for us to live our lives for the hereafter, and not for this world! Indeed, anyone who lives his life just for this world will be among the losers in the hereafter. We seek Allâh's refuge from that.

*“O Allâh! Save us from the misery of this world; save us from the torment of death; and save us from hell-fire on the Day of Judgment.*

*O Allâh! Forgive us our sins with Your Mercy and admit us into Paradise, the final home of eternity filled with Your blessings – the home of peace; the home of security; and the home of happiness.*

*Ameen!*