

Optimum Use of Allah's Blessings

From: *Provisions of the Journey Vol.1*, by Ayatollah Muhammad Taqi Misbah Yazdi

O Abu Dharr! Act upon my advice so that you may become prosperous in both worlds. O Abu Dharr! The majority of people are defrauded of two graces and they do not appreciate them: one is the blessing of health and the other is the grace of leisure (and ease).

“O Abu Dharr! Make the most of five things before five [other] things befall you: make the most of your youth before your old age, your health before your illness, your ability before inability, your leisure before your toil and your life before death.

O Abu Dharr! Most people are robbed of two graces: leisure and health.

Health and leisure, two unknown Favors

Health and leisure are two priceless blessings which Allah, the Exalted, has granted to mankind, but most people do not appreciate its value and easily lose it. It is for this reason that the Noble Prophet (S) advises Abu Dharr to appreciate the value of these two blessings and not to easily lose them like most people. Allah, the Exalted, has placed countless and priceless graces at man's disposal but man easily loses them, perhaps owing to the fact that he expended no effort at acquiring them. Not only does he not discharge their right, but also uses them in an iniquitous way; a manner which not only does not benefit him, but harms him as well.

Health is one of the priceless blessings which a man in good condition pays no heed to and only knows its worth once he gets afflicted by illness, like the fish which swims in water and does not appreciate its value until it is removed from the water.

Man rarely meditates upon Allah's graces; blessings such as the power of speech, and hardly thanks Allah for that blessing. He only reflects about it the moment that his voice is lost and he no longer has the power to speak. All too often, he is ready to give up all his wealth at that moment of need. For a moment we ought to reflect about health and meditate over what blessing is higher than being healthy and free from a thousand diseases which threaten our bodies and that we are not even afflicted by any one of them. For that reason, we are enjoying the benefits of enormous wealth at every moment, even though this health is not stable and permanent and is likely to be lost at every moment.

Leisure is the second blessing which the Noble Prophet (S) has hinted at, and it denotes ease and the lack of trouble. Man is faced with different conditions and situations in his life. He spends some of those opportunities at leisure and ease and he can contemplate about himself and perceive the concealed aspects of his being and more often than not it happens that he intends to remedy his ethical and psychological deviations. He plans to meditate about his destiny and to sit in solitude in a secluded corner to embark upon worship and/or study with peace of mind. For

every reason, physical and psychological tranquility reigns over his entire being and this peace has presented a golden opportunity for him to derive the utmost advantage from opportunities and make use of every moment in the direction of his perfection. In contrast, it is possible that man gets confronted by a period in his life which, for different reasons, he is deprived of leisure and ease and regrets every moment of it, but what benefit is there in such regret because time lost is never regained. With regard to making the most of opportunities, Imam ‘Ali (‘a) says: “Opportunities and life pass like a cloud, therefore perceive good opportunities.

In contrast, some people are always pursuing vain amusements, and do not even know how to make use of the time of their invaluable lives. They do not know whether they should solve the crossword puzzle in the newspaper or they should spend the hours of the night watching television films? Or should they sit watching sports news? Or get busy with playing chess? They are like a person who has amassed a lot of wealth and searches for a place where he can set it on fire bit by bit, and derive pleasure from watching that. If we encountered such a man, we would surely say that he were mad, heedless of the fact that many of us are afflicted by this same insanity and are busy burning the capital of our lives, life itself, which is by no means comparable to the wealth of this world, in the fire of sensual desire.

This World’s Life Is A Ground Of Choices, Growth And Spiritual Ascension

Man ought to make the most of life before the arrival of death. The blessing of life is a comprehensive and complete favor which has been mentioned after the rest of the graces. In reality, all the other blessings are affixed to the gift of life. If there were no life, there would remain no room for the other graces. For this reason, the root and fountainhead of the rest of the gifts is the blessing of the life of this world, which has freely been given by Allah to his slaves and even if man enjoys the life of the hereafter after death, but still he gets deprived of the ability to perform volitional deeds, to freely choose and to make decisions. It is there that he regrets his past life, losing opportunities and making bad choices, and he requests to return to the world in order to make up for past vices, but his petition will not be granted.

Some of the great men used to recommend that at the time of sleeping, you ought to imagine that this sleep may possibly not have an awakening and the Angel of Death will seize your soul in the state of sleep. The soul almost gets separated from the body during sleep, and if the hour of man’s death arrives, it gets completely detached from his body.

In reality, man travels half the journey towards death when he sleeps; that is why great men have advised that at the time of sleeping, imagine that after the soul has been separated from the body, it will never again return, and when you wake up, you must thank Allah that He has granted existence to your body once again and He has granted you life once more.

To put it another way, you should imagine that you have gone to purgatory (the interval between life and death), and that your unworthy deeds have become apparent, and that you are being called to account for them and you are under admonition, and at that time you ask the angels which are residing in the proximity of Allah to let you return to the world and as per your request they grant you the permission; now that you have returned to the world and you have once again got the chance to perform works, what are you going to do and how are you going to be?

We ought to appreciate the value of this second chance and make the most of every moment of it.