

Understanding the Hereafter

From *Provisions of the Journey Vol.1* by Ayatullah Misbah Yazdi

The previous discourse was concerned with the fact that if man commits sin and becomes regretful and fearful afterwards, Allah grants him forgiveness as a result of that regret and anxiety. It is likely to falsely imagine that every person who commits sin and repents afterwards will be forgiven and this in itself gives birth to more sin and contamination. In order to put an end to this false illusion, the Noble Prophet states that a smart and clever person is one who is always contemplating about the best way of making use of his life and performing commendable works. He tramples the carnal desires of the soul underfoot and does not act according to the dictates of his appetitive heart, which consequently leads to getting afflicted by negligence:

“O Abu Dharr! Smart and wise is a man who disciplines his soul and strives for the life after death and stupid is a person who follows his soul and its carnal cravings and in spite of that has hope in Allah.”

Man has an intellect and an appetitive soul; sometimes his intellect is triumphant over his craving soul and at other times the longing heart is victorious over his reason. Both types have been portrayed in this section. At times, the soul becomes weak and its yearnings do not have [any] influence on the intellect. This is in regard to a sagacious man who is on the path of edification of character and unceasingly reflects upon the everlasting life after death. In contrast, from time to time the soul and its carnal desires triumph over reason and man becomes weak in the face of the appetitive soul and cannot resist the animal instincts [of the flesh].

This interpretation is based on the copy of “*Bihar al-Anwar*” in which has been recorded “whoever debases his soul”, [*man dana nafsah*] that is to say wise is a man whose carnal desires have become weak but the other copies have recorded “whoever disciplines his soul” [*man adabba nafsah*]. Perhaps, the second expression is better than the first, and in this case the denotation of the sentence will be thus: wise is a person who endeavors to discipline his soul. In other words, a sagacious man undertakes edification of character and does not indulge his soul in its every whim and desire. Such a person can think rationally and close his eyes to the marginal material world and set them on the infinite horizon and the perpetuity of the final abode and stop them from short-sightedness and limited perceptions. He discharges his works for the everlasting life after the Resurrection.

Insignificance of the world

To explain the frivolity of the world and reproach materialism, the Noble Prophet (S) states in the following sentences:

“O Abu Dharr! I swear upon Allah in whose hands lies Muhammad’s soul [or life] that if the world had the value of one fly’s wing and mosquito’s wing before Allah, He would not have given even one drop of water to an infidel.”

Love of the world is a misfortune which more or less affects all of us. If we are presently not affected by it, there is [still] the probability of our getting afflicted by it in the future. It is therefore

worthwhile to pay more attention to this explication of the Noble Prophet (S) and try to derive benefit from it for the edification of souls [and characters].

Pleasures of the flesh are the criterion of value for us, therefore we accord value to whatever pleases us more and that is more desirable for us. But Islam introduces another standard and that is conformity with the wish of Allah; that is to say, a thing has value once it is valuable before Allah. The reason why you see the Muslim and infidel are equal in the derivation of pleasure from the world is because it has no essential value and is a means of trial. Allah states in the Qur'an:

إِنَّمَا أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَأَوْلَادُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ ...

“Your possessions and your children are only a trial (64:15)

Elsewhere, He states:

أَلْمَالُ وَالْبَنُونَ زِينَةُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَالْبَاقِيَاتُ الصَّالِحَاتُ خَيْرٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ثَوَابًا وَخَيْرٌ أَمَلًا

“Wealth and children are an adornment of the life of this world; and the ever abiding, the good works, are better with your Lord in reward and are better in expectation. (18:46)

The truth is that the world is a means of trials and man is an object of Allah's testing, whether he is granted of the blessings of this world or deprived of them. Neither is derivation of benefit from the world a sign of superiority nor is poverty and destitution an indication of lowliness. Therefore, because the world is worthless in Allah's point of view, He does not deprive an unbeliever of its blessings. In contrast, the Garden of eternal bliss and its graces have value before Allah; that is why He deprives man of it.

As has been mentioned frequently, censure of this world does not mean that man ought to give up work and earning and endeavor in the various aspects of social life and not to pursue wealth and possessions; on the contrary, criticism [of the world] denotes not getting attached to it and not setting it as a goal. In reality, this is the intention and motivation which gives direction to man's works and becomes the cause of that work being considered as a commendable or abhorred and foul act. According to the verses of the Noble Qur'an, man arrives at the hereafter by means of the world and the world is a preparatory field for the next world. Therefore, man ought to work and make effort. If his endeavors and worldly activities are meant for the good pleasure of Allah, he attains prosperity and if his activities are intended for acquiring the world and its pleasures, he will be impelled to commit sin whether he likes or not, and that is the path leading to the eternal fire and divine retribution.

Using the world for the Hereafter

In order to stop the believers from getting enamoured with the world and its pleasures, like the medical officers, try by various means to caution the patients from things which are harmful to them, the saints [*awliya*'] of Allah too have tried with different elucidations to make the world abhorred in the believer's point of view, one of those explanations is a saying which will be pointed at in this discourse: “O Abu Dharr! The world and all that is in it has been cursed, except that which is a means of attaining Allah's pleasure.”

It is evident from the contents of this *hadith* that the curse which has been cast on the blessings of the world has not been directed at things like the ground, trees and the sky because a thing which can be a means of attaining the good pleasure of Allah is not only blessed but is also desirable; therefore, the curse has been cast on setting it as a goal and giving primacy to the world, for the reason that the creation of the world and its blessings are meant to make it a channel in the direction of man's proximity to Allah. The world has been placed at the disposal of the man so that he may reach Allah by means of it.

Now, if this man perceives the world as means of arriving at Allah, the mercy of Allah will always descend upon him because he is pursuing the [right] goal and is proceeding in the correct direction. An intelligent man never gets heedless of the goal and always sets his eyes on the destination and selects the path which makes him draw nigh to the destination. In other than this case, the merciful look of Allah is withdrawn from man because he has turned his heels and back against his goal and the aim of the world's creation. Instead of trudging the course of prosperity, he has traversed the course of misery and wretchedness.

A companion of one of the Imams was sad because of the largeness of his income and occupation. The Imam ('a) met him and asked, "Why are you unhappy?" The companion answered, "Your Highness, my wealth has increased, [and] I have become a victim of the world." The Imam asked, "Why do you go after wealth and the acquisition of possessions?" The companion answered, "In order for me and my children not to be a burden to other people and so that I may manage to help my believing brothers." His Holiness the Imam stated, "This is otherworldliness and is not materialism, and there is no need to be worried about it. You ought to be worried when you get enamoured with the gratifications of the world and be sad once you covet the world.

Some points about the Hereafter from *The Hereafter (Ma'ad)* by Ayatullah Dastghaib Shirazi (<https://www.al-islam.org/the-hereafter-maad-ayatullah-dastghaib-shirazi>)

Paradise, the Greatest and Everlasting Bounty

The Lord of the universe has reserved a place in the Hereafter for those people who leave this world with fear of God in their heart. There, God has kept innumerable and unimaginably tasteful things for the righteous befitting that highest host. To get an idea of those comforts, tastes and pleasures of that place in the Hereafter is as difficult for the residents of this world now as are the things in this world for an unborn child. That is why, it is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an: "So no soul knows what is hidden for them of that which will refresh the eyes; a reward for what they did." (32:17) It is also said as a general hint about the heavenly bounties: "They have therein what they wish and with Us is more yet." (50:35) It means, in paradise, there are all those things, which they (the people of paradise) will desire and what is with Us is even more than what they can wish. At yet another place it is said: "They will not hear its faintest sound, and they shall abide in that which their souls long for." (21:102)

In brief, paradise is the place wherein there will be no sign of failure, grief, sorrow, difficulty, hardship, trouble, weakness, old aged, illness, tiredness and idleness. There will be safety and security in every sense. That is why it is named the abode of peace (Darus Salaam). It is the real kingdom, in a sense that man has so much power that whatever he wishes will be available at once. It is available only to the people of paradise. “And when you see there, you shall see blessings and a great kingdom. “(76:20)

There also will be various kinds of spiritual bounties to imagine which, is beyond our power of understanding. One of them is that veils will be lifted off the eyes, that is, eyes will here witness what we had only known to exist. What one had wished to know from Divine Truths, one would gain it here, especially the sight of and meeting with Muhammad and Aale Muhammad (a.s.). In Tafsir Safi, in explanation of the Holy verse: “Then shall some of them advance to others, questioning each other. “(37:50) It is mentioned that the people of paradise will discuss matters about knowledge and Grace of God and the Holy Prophet with one another.

Among all other bounties will also be the respect and honour granted by God. For example, everyone who will be fortunate to enter paradise will, by his intercession, keep his parents, wives and children with him, provided they had died with faith and were entitled for paradise. This will be as a respect to the true faithful, though his parents and wives and children etc were not entitled to the high status. Hence the Lord of the universe says in the Holy Qur’an: **“The gardens of perpetual abode which they will enter along with those who do good from among their parents and their spouses and their offspring; “(13:23)**

The highest honour available to the faithful will be the honour of communicating with the Lord of the universe. There are many narrations in this respect. But what the Lord in Surah Yasin mentions is sufficient: “Peace! A word from a Merciful Lord.” “(36:58)

Among all other bounties of paradise is the neighbourhood of Muhammad and Aale Muhammad (a.s.) and meeting with them. The Holy Prophet has said, “O ‘Ali! Your Shi’as will be sitting with bright faces on the pulpits of light and all of them will be my neighbours in paradise.” Also among the said bounties is permanent dwelling in paradise. When the faithful will know that these highly precious bounties will never end (nor will they be diminished) they will experience a wonderful delight in their hearts, which is indescribable.

One of the spiritual bounties is that one will be meeting frequently with the messengers, the righteous and faithful persons. Almighty God says in the Holy Qur’an:

“On thrones, facing each other. “(37:44)

Meaning they will be sitting on thrones facing one another happily.

It is mentioned that the people of paradise will be going to visit a Messenger (a.s.) daily and they will be their guests. Of course, on every Thursday, they will be the guests of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.), the Last Prophet. On every Friday they will be invited to the nearness of the Highest One.