

Discourse 38: The Best Of People

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ: يَا عَلِيُّ، ثَلَاثٌ مَنْ لَقِيَ اللَّهَ بِهِنَّ فَهُوَ مِنْ أَفْضَلِ النَّاسِ: مَنْ أَتَى اللَّهَ بِمَا افْتَرَضَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ فَهُوَ مِنْ أَعْبَدِ النَّاسِ، وَمَنْ وَرَعَ عَنْ مَحَارِمِ اللَّهِ فَهُوَ مِنْ أَوْرَعِ النَّاسِ وَ مَنْ قَنَعَ بِمَا رَزَقَهُ اللَّهُ فَهُوَ مِنْ أَغْنَى النَّاسِ.

The Prophet Muhammad (S) said, “O ‘Ali! If a person meets Allah with three traits, he will be considered as being from the greatest of people: the person who comes to Allah with that which He has made obligatory upon him will be of the most worshipping of people; the person who kept away from the prohibited of Allah will be of the most safeguarded of people; the person who is content with that which Allah provided to him for sustenance will be the richest of people.”

The phrase, 'لقاء الله' as has been mentioned in this tradition, is a reference to the level of 'witnessing' which people will be given on the Resurrection. On that Day, the effects of the actions of Allah (SwT) will be shown to everyone to such an extent that not a single person shall have any doubts in regards to Allah (SwT):

لَا تُدْرِكُهُ الْعُيُونُ فِي مُشَاهَدَةِ الْأَبْصَارِ وَ لَكِنْ رَأَتْهُ الْقُلُوبُ بِحَقَائِقِ الْإِيمَانِ.

“The physical eyes do not see Allah, rather the heart sees Him through the true faith (which it possesses).”²

Thus on that Day, everyone shall accept Allah (SwT) with true faith.

If we wish to present this belief in an, albeit imperfect and partial analogy, it can be compared to Prophet Yusuf (as). As we know, he had a special distinction over his brothers. However they refused to humble

themselves in the face of the status which he possessed. Actually, a group of them out-right denied his excellence and were surprised why their father, Prophet Ya'qub (as), would actually grant Yusuf (as) a higher merit than what they possessed!

Nonetheless, when Prophet Yusuf (as), who possessed the strategy and wisdom which he had, reached to the status of the 'Aziz' of Egypt and was blessed by the many graces of Allah (SwT), at this point when his brothers saw what their actions had produced, they all spoke out and said:

فَاللَّهُ لَقَدْ أَثَرَكَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْنَا

“I swear by Allah! Allah has made him superior over all of us!”

This shall also be the exact state of the disbelievers – both in the life of this world and the next life as well! While in the transient world, they had veils over their sight which blocked their vision and thus, did not submit to the Truth. However in the next life, the affair shall be clear and easy to see that just as the brothers of Yusuf (as) were forced to concede, the disbelievers too shall have to concede to the reality of Allah (SwT)!

In summary, on the Day of Resurrection, Allah (SwT) will be manifest everywhere and thus, one of the reasons why the Day of Resurrection is referred to as “يوم لقاء الله” or “The Day of Meeting Allah” is that on that Day, the effects of His greatness will be manifest such that there shall be no room for error in comprehending Him!

In addition, this phrase “لقاء الله” means that each person shall see himself in the presence of Allah (SwT). This point is very important to keep in mind since the worst form of punishment for the servants on that Day shall be the state of embarrassment which they will feel due to their despicable actions. It is this embarrassment that will actually burn them more than the fire of hell since that Day is also known as “يوم تبلى السرائر” or “The Day when all of the actions of all individuals will be plain and manifest to see (for everyone).”

The Prophet (S) has thus told us that, “On that Day, if a person was to be one who does not possess three characteristics, then he has truly given up a great capital.”

1. The first part of the tradition reads: “...the person who comes to Allah with that which Allah had made obligatory upon him will be of the most worshipping of people...”

It is amazing to see people run after the recommended actions (mustahabat), however they leave aside the obligatory actions (wajibat) and such people are numerous in number!

For example, they will stay up until the middle of the night beating their chests in mourning (‘Azadari) or

will spend the night in recommended worship and studying, however when the time for Salatul Fajr comes, they are fast asleep and thus, end up missing their Salat!

It is important to mention that we must know that not a single person – whether in the life of this world or the next life – shall ever be successful, except if he wakes up in the morning (for his Salat).

Everyone whom I have seen who has been a victorious in life has been so due to his waking in the morning for the prayers.

The narrators of the traditions have given us numerous accounts from the infallible A`immah (as) in regards to the greatness of the morning time and have referred to that time as “ساعة غفلة” or the time of negligence (for those who do not wake at that time and engage in worship).

Thus, it is highly meritorious that at that time of the day, the servant of Allah (SwT) makes the choice leave his slumber and get up and protect himself from sleeping which would only lead to remorse and grief!

Congratulations to that lucky person who, during the time when others are deep in negligence, is awake and observant and cognizant of that sleep which is punished so that he shall be considered as one of those who is, as the Qur’an puts it, (أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ) – 'Surely it is they who are the successful ones...' and is one of those fortunate people.

How beautifully the poet has stated it when he said:

چشم صاحب دولتان هوشیار باشد صبحدم
عاشقان را ناله های
زار باشد صبحدم

The chief of the narrators of traditions, Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. 'Ali b. Babawayiah (Shaykh Saduq), in his work, Man La Yahdhirul Faqih, has related from the inner and outer Imam, Muhammad b. 'Ali al-Baqir (as) a tradition in which the Imam has offered the following lofty words:

نَوْمُ الْغَدَاةِ يَمْنَعُ الرِّزْقَ، وَيَصْفَرُّ اللَّوْنَ وَتُغَيِّرُهُ وَتُقَبِّحُهُ وَهُوَ نَوْمٌ كُلُّ مَشْوُومٍ، إِنَّ
اللَّهَ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى يُقَسِّمُ الْأَرْزَاقَ مَا بَيْنَ طُلُوعِ الْفَجْرِ إِلَى طُلُوعِ الشَّمْسِ، فَأَيَّاكُمْ
وَتِلْكَ النَّوْمَةُ.

“Sleeping at the time of Fajr prevents the sustenance (from reaching the person); makes the color of the face, yellow; changes the appearance of the person and makes his face unattractive and this is the

sleep of every of every unfortunate and ill person. Allah, Blessed and the Most High divides the sustenance between the time of Fajr and the rising of the sun. Thus, I advise you to keep aware of that time and not to sleep during that time.”³

In addition, Shaykh Saduq has also narrated from the 8th Imam Abul Hasan ‘Ali b. Musa al-Riza (as) in regards to the commentary of the verse which reads:

فَالْمُقَسَّمَاتِ أَمْرًا

“I swear by those (Angels who) distribute blessings by Our command”⁴

that:

إِنَّ الْمَلَائِكَةَ تُقَسِّمُ أَرْزَاقَ بَنِي آدَمَ مَا بَيْنَ طُلُوعِ الْفَجْرِ إِلَى طُلُوعِ الشَّمْسِ فَمَنْ نَامَ مَا بَيْنَهُمَا نَامَ عَنْ رِزْقِهِ.

“Surely the Angels distribute the sustenance of the progeny of Adam between the time of the Fajr and the sunrise. Thus, the person who is asleep during this time period has actually slept on his own sustenance (meaning that he has prevented himself from attaining the sustenance which was guaranteed for him.)”⁵

Therefore, the successful person is the one who wakes up at Fajr time, as the sleep at Fajr time is one of the greatest disasters for a person and leads to him being left behind in life.

Just imagine if the person was to go to sleep one hour earlier and instead of wasting those worthless hours of the nate light in which one's mind does not work and in which that one hour of work (at night) in which he might not even benefit ten minutes, is transformed into one hour of benefit and profit through sleeping early. Through this, rather than waking up one hour later from his sleep and missing his prayers or praying them late, the believer would be able to wake up on time for his Salat!

Thus, with this said, we see that one must not perform the recommended actions if this would cause any danger to the obligatory deeds!

Even the act of performing the hajj to the House of Allah (SwT) with all the greatness that it has should not lead a person to neglect an obligatory act which would be much more important than the performance of a recommended hajj (any hajj performed after the person has performed his first and obligatory pilgrimage to the House of Allah (SwT)).

There are people who work hard to perform all the recommended actions, however become lazy when it comes to the obligatory deeds! Such people are those whom we can refer to as 'ostensibly holy' people and nothing more!

2. The second point mentioned in the tradition is that "...the person who keeps away from the prohibited of Allah will be of the most spiritually safeguarded of people..."

The level of Wara' is even higher than Taqwa as the first spiritual level which a person can reach to is that of Taqwa. Once that level has been perfected, the next is that of Wara'. In summary, the reality of Wara' is that a person reaches to such a station that he refrains from all sorts of sins.

There are some people who are very punctual when it comes to refraining from the discouraged acts (Makruhat) of Islam and make sure that they perform the recommended (Mustahabat). However, they do not pay any attention when it comes to refraining from the prohibited (Muharramat) such as back-biting, jealousy, showing off, etc...

Sometimes a mere inappropriate and mistaken look at a person of the opposite sex may lead to disbelief (Kufr) and the destruction of a person. This can be seen in what happened to Barsisa, the famous worshipper ('Abid) who, after a lifetime spent in the worship of Allah (SwT) made one inappropriate glance at one whom he was not permitted to look at! Through this act, he ended up following Satan and in the end, this small act of his led to a life of sin and disbelief and he ended up leaving the world in this state!

The story of Barsisa, the Worshipper ('Abid)

Amongst the Children of Israel, there was a devout worshipper named Barsisa. He had been engaged in worship for a very long period of time and through this, reached to such a close spiritual proximity to Allah (SwT) that anytime a person who had a psychological illness was brought to him, through his prayers and supplications, they were immediately cured.

One day, a young woman who came from a very noble and well-known family was brought to him by her brothers. After speaking with him, Barsisa agreed that he would try and cure her illness. The family of the young woman went home and Barsisa was left alone with her. At this point, Satan began his act of evil-whispers into the worshippers heart and was able to get the 'Abid to have illicit sexual relations with the young woman!

After a short time, it was noted that the young woman was become pregnant and since it has always been the case that one sin (such as having illicit relations as in this case) always leads to a much greater sin, she was killed and buried on the side of the road.

Some time later, her brothers realized that it was Barsisa who was responsible for having illicit relations with their sister. The news of this spread through the city and eventually, found its way to the governor.

Along with a group of his associates, the Governor made his way to the city centre to find out exactly what had transpired.

When the crimes of the 'Abid were confirmed and it was proven that he was indeed guilty of fornication, he was immediately removed from the house of worship in which he was residing.

Once he himself attested to committing the sin, he was tied to gallows to be hung to death.

When he was taken up on the gallows, Satan manifested himself in front of the 'Abid and said to him, "It is I who was responsible for leading you to the state which you see yourself in. However, if you listen to me, I will save you and get you out of this predicament!"

The 'Abid said, "What do you want me to do?"

Satan said, "Just one Sajdah is enough for me!"

The 'Abid retorted, "I can't prostrate while I am hanging on the gallows!"

To this, Satan replied, "Even if you make a gesture that you are performing prostration, that too is enough for me."

The 'Abid made a sign out of the corner of his eyes or with his hands that he was prostrating and through this act, submitted himself and prostrated to Satan. Through this, he ended up becoming a disbeliever and left the world as such!⁶

There are many such examples seen in the course of history that with the mere look of the eyes, a person's entire outcome changes – we seek refuge in Allah (SwT) from such a bad outcome!

If a person's eyes happen to fall upon a non-Mahram and one sees something which brings pleasure, however lowers the eyes from that, we are told that at that exact moment in time, that believer's heart becomes filled with true faith!

If a person turns away from the scene of a sin, then he shall definitely be able to feel his heart filled with the Celestial Illumination and he shall be able to actually perceive and feel this within himself!

Thus, this is something of great importance, since on one side we have Paradise while on the other side, there is the Hellfire...

3. The third part of the tradition tells us that, "...the one who is content with what Allah has provided him from His sustenance is the richest of people."

Being content is the opposite end of the spectrum of gluttony and greed and the trait of greed is one of the greatest disasters for a person to have!

It is not due to the material needs of life which cause the difficulties in life to come about. Although there

are difficulties in attaining the material needs and there are untold inconveniences which people must face, however providing the necessities of life is not that important that it would cause these difficulties to come about – rather, what is important to watch over are the traits of greed and gluttony. It is these two traits which lead a person to adversity and misfortune and the more that he runs towards fulfilling his greed, the more that this trait grows within him!

There are many dishonorable traits which stem from greed of wealth including the acts of bribery, indulging in acts of corruption to gain more money, embezzlement and other things and none of these stem from the need to fulfill one's needs and requirements in life – rather they all stem from the traits of greed, gluttony and wanting more!

All of this can be summarized in the fact that a person who has this greed is actually not happy with the sustenance of Allah (SwT).

Embezzlement and theft which take place and the other acts of greed which we see written about in the newspapers show us that some people, due to their greed, take possession of such large amounts of wealth and money that even if they themselves, their children and their grandchildren were to use that amount of money that it still would not run out. Thus, is there any other reason for all of this other than greed?

In regards to money and wealth, there are various views which exist which range from showing extravagance to being extremely miserly.

There are some people who give so much importance to wealth that they consider wealth to be the key to solving all of their difficulties! It is not a surprise to see these people incessantly run after gathering more wealth and can not sit peacefully in one spot! It is these same people who do not believe in any limits or restrictions when it comes to gaining wealth and for such people, the permissible and forbidden are one and the same.

The opposite of these people are individuals who do not give the slightest importance to money. They actually look for poverty and consider it to be the true worth of a person and assume that money is an obstacle in attaining Taqwa and closeness to Allah (SwT)!

In the face of these two beliefs of extravagance and miserliness, that which the Noble Qur'an and the Islamic traditions show us is that wealth is good to have, however with the following conditions:

1. It should be a means (to something much more noble and sacred) and not the goal of life;
2. It should not make a person a captive and slave, rather, the person should be the leader (Amir) of his wealth and not the captive (Asir) of it;
3. It must be gained through the permitted means and spent in the ways which would earn the pleasure of Allah (SwT).

Having an attraction to such forms of wealth is not only not considered as worship of the transient world, rather, it is actually proof of an attraction and pull towards the next life!

It is for this reason that we read in a tradition from Imam Ja'far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (as) that when the Imam 'apparently' sent his curse upon gold and silver, one of his companions became surprised and in reply to this companion, the Imam (as) said:

لَيْسَ حَيْثُ تَذْهَبُ إِلَيْهِ إِلَّا الذَّهَبَ الَّتِي زَهَبَ بِالدِّينِ وَالْفِضَّةَ الَّتِي أَفَاضَتْ
الكُفْرَ...

“The meaning of gold is that thing which removes the religion (which a person has) while the meaning of silver is that thing which is source of disbelief and lack of faith.”⁷

In addition, in a tradition narrated in Bihar al-Anwar from the Commander of the Faithful, ‘Ali b. Abi Talib (as) we read that:

السُّكْرُ أَرْبَعُ سَكْرَاتٍ: سُكْرُ الشَّرَابِ، وَسُكْرُ الْمَالِ، وَسُكْرُ النَّوْمِ، وَسُكْرُ الْمُلْكِ.

“Intoxication is of four types: intoxication of alcohol, intoxication of wealth, intoxication of sleep and intoxication of power.”⁸

There are many people who, up until the end of their life are busy gathering wealth and end up leaving it for other people through the rules of inheritance. However the deceased must give account and be answerable to Allah (SwT) for the wealth which they had, while those who inherit it are the ones who will make use of it!

It is for this reason that we read in the traditions that the Commander of the Faithful, ‘Ali b. Abi Talib (as) was once asked:

مَنْ أَعْظَمَ النَّاسِ حَسْرَةً؟

“Who will show the greatest remorse?”

He then answered his own question and stated:

مَنْ رَأَى مَالَهُ فِي مِيزَانٍ غَيْرِهِ، وَأَدْخَلَهُ اللَّهُ بِهِ النَّارَ، وَأَدْخَلَ وَارِثُهُ بِهِ الْجَنَّةَ.

“The person (who shall show the greatest remorse) is the one who will see his wealth (and the good which it brought) in the scales of someone other than himself, while Allah will make him enter into the hell-fire and will cause his inheritors to enter into Paradise!”⁹

In a tradition from Imam Ja'far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (as) in regards to the commentary of the verse which reads:

كَذَلِكَ يُرِيهِمُ اللَّهُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ حَسَرَاتٍ عَلَيْهِمْ ...

“Thus will Allah show them their deeds to be intense regret to them...”¹⁰

he stated:

هُوَ الرَّجُلُ يَدْعُ الْمَالَ لَا يَنْفَقُهُ فِي طَاعَةِ اللَّهِ بُخْلًا، ثُمَّ يَمُوتُ فَيَدْعُهُ لِمَنْ يَعْمَلُ بِهِ فِي طَاعَةِ اللَّهِ أَوْ فِي مَعْصِيَتِهِ.

“This is in regards to the person who saved his wealth and due to his stinginess, did not spend it in the obedience of Allah and then dies and leaves that wealth behind (for his heirs) who may spend it either in the obedience of Allah or in His disobedience and transgression.”¹¹

The Imam continued and said:

فَإِذَا صَرَفَهُ فِي طَرِيقِ إِطَاعَةِ اللَّهِ سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى فَسَيَرَاهُ صَاحِبُهُ فِي مِيزَانِ أَعْمَالِ غَيْرِهِ وَيَتَحَسَّرُ عَلَيْهِ لِأَنَّ الْمَالَ كَانَ مَالَهُ، وَإِذَا صَرَفَهُ فِي مَعْصِيَةِ اللَّهِ فَسَيَكُونُ سَبَبًا لِتَقْوِيَتِهِ عَلَى الذَّنْبِ وَتَكُونُ الْعُقُوبَةُ وَالْحَسْرَةُ نَصِيبَهُ أَيْضًا.

“If the person (who inherits the wealth) spends it in the way of obedience of Allah, Glory and Greatness be to Him, then the person whose wealth it was (who died and left it for inheritance) shall see the reward of that in the scales of another person. He will show remorse since that wealth was his wealth (which he gave up to his inheritors who have done good with it).

However if he (the person who inherits the money) spends that wealth in disobedience to Allah and that

wealth gave the person (who inherited it) the ability and strength to sin, then that person (who died and left the money in inheritance to others) will also show remorse and it will also be a punishment for him (since in this instance the person who left the money behind in inheritance will be punished as it was his to start out with and through leaving it for others, he helped them perform sins).”¹²

Contentment in the Islamic Narrations

1. It has been narrated that Imam ‘Ali b. Abi Talib (as) has said:

أَلْقِنَاعَةٌ مَالٌ لَا يَنْفَدُ.

“Contentment is a wealth which shall not diminish”¹³

2. It has been narrated that Imam ‘Ali b. Husayn al-Sajjad (as) said:

مَنْ قَنَعَ شَبَعَ وَ مَنْ لَمْ يَقْنَعْ لَا يَشْبَعُ.

“Whoever shows contentment will be satiated and whoever does not show contentment (with what he has) will never become satiated (no matter how much he gets).”¹⁴

3. Imam Ja’far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (as) has stated the Messenger of Allah (S) said:

طُوبَى لِمَنْ أَسْلَمَ وَكَانَ عَيْشُهُ كَفَافًا.

“Congratulations be upon the person who submits himself and who leads his life according to his needs (and is not extravagant).”¹⁵

4. The final Messenger of Allah (S) has said:

فَقِيرٌ كُلٌّ وَمَنْ يَطْمَعُ، غَنِيٌّ كُلٌّ وَمَنْ يَقْنَعُ.

“The person who always desires more is (truly) the neediest of people while the person who is content (with what he has) is (truly) the richest of people.”¹⁶

1. Summary in regards to “Meeting with Allah” (لقاء الله): This phrase which has been mentioned in the Noble Qur’an is usually in regards to the Resurrection, however since there is no meaning associated with witnessing Allah (SwT) with the (five) senses due to the fact that He has no body or physical presence, thus what does this mean?

Some of the commentators of the Quran have been forced to state that this phrase actually has something appended to it however it is taken as being understood and not expressly mentioned. Thus, they claim that this phrase actually means 'لقاء' أو 'تؤاب الله' or 'Meeting (or attaining) the reward of Allah' or 'Meeting the Angels of Allah'.

However, we can take the word “لقاء” in this tradition to refer to the true meaning of 'meeting', however with the eyes of the heart since on the Resurrection, all of the veils (which exist between a person and His creator) shall be removed and the greatness of Allah (SwT) and His signs shall be made manifest and clearer than at all other times for the people to see.

Mankind shall reach to the status of an 'inner witnessing' and 'sight with the heart' and each person's cognizance and righteous actions shall permit him to reach to higher stations of this 'inner witnessing' on the plain of Resurrection.

In his Tafsir of the Quran under verse 44 of Surat al-Ahzab, Fakhrud Din Razi, has a very interesting explanation which can be combined with our explanation given. He states, “Due to being drowned in the material and physical affairs of the transient world and the struggles to provide for his life, the human being is usually negligent of Allah (SwT).

However, on the Resurrection when all of the mental diversions are removed from the person, he will go towards the Lord of the Universe with all of his presence and composure – and this is the meaning of “لقاء الله.” (Tafsir-e-Namuna, vol. 17, pg. 358 to 359)

2. Usulul Kafi, vol. 1 pg. 97

3. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 13, pg. 182

4. Surat al-Dharyat (51), verse 4

5. Shaykh Bahai, Mitahul Falah, Translated by Ali b. taifur Bastami, pp. 11 to 13.

6. Tafsir-e-Namuna, vol. 23, pg. 544 to 545 as related in Majma al-Bayan, vol. 9, pg. 265.

7. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 73, pg. 141, no. 17. [It should be noted that the meaning of 'ذهب' is gold while the verb 'ذهب' in Arabic means to go or leave and similarly, the word 'فضة' is silver while the verb “فاض” refers to an overflow or an abundance and thus, the Imam has actually done a play on words and used these two words in a very interesting and yet truthful manner. – Tr.]

8. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 73, pg. 182

9. Ibid., vol. 73, pg. 20

10. Surat al-Baqarah (2), verse 176

11. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 73, pg. 142

12. Tafsir-e-Namuna, vol. 27, pp. 319 to 322

13. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 71, pg. 344

14. Ibid., vol. 8, pg. 135

15. al-Kafi, vol. 2, pg. 140

16. Jami al-Akhbar, pg. 126

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/ethical-discourses-vol2-makarim-shirazi/discourse-38-best-people>