

Lesson 11

4-22-10 The Open School Class: Explanation of Forty *Ahadith* Text: Jalali, Sayyid Muhammad Husayn. Sharh al-Arba'in al-Nabawwiyah. Arabic edition 1987, pages 438-439.)

Summary

The duty of an individual is not only to acquire *ilm* (knowledge) but to also act upon the *ilm*. *Amal* (practice) is an essential factor. What is the point of knowing something if you do not follow or use that knowledge? For example, if you know that a specific substance in front of you is or contains poison, it would not make sense for you to ignore that knowledge and drink the substance anyway.

One can be the smartest person, but if he does not act upon the knowledge acquired, he is nothing or something worse than nothing. Even if you have great religious knowledge, you can go astray if you do not practice what you know. Look at *Shaytan* (Satan)! Practice is a second factor (knowledge being the first) when evaluating a society and/or the individuals thereof. (Jalali, page 438). The **Qur'an (16:97)** states, *inter alia*,

“Whoever does good whether male or female and he is a believer, We will most certainly make him live a happy life.”¹

Accordingly, one who has faith and performs good deeds will live a happy life. What does this mean? I have seen pious people that do many good deeds, but they are still poor and do not have big houses or fancy cars. Why? A happy life does not mean just having material possessions or achieving worldly goals. A happy life is when one is truly content. For example, a rich person may always be worried about his money, and when someone comes to talk to him, he may be thinking that this person is here for only money (always worrying). You can have everything in this world and still not be happy. Allah (the All-Wise) says to do good deeds while having faith to be truly happy. Whether you are rich or poor, the feeling of true contentment is a great achievement.²

¹⁴ Please note that the truths of science do not contradict Islam. Man may discover the beauty of the Universe, but only Allah (the All-Merciful) can create such a Universe. The truthful discoveries of science

actually reinforce the power and greatness of God, the Almighty.

Furthermore, the wise **Qur'an (9:105)** states, *inter alia*,

“And say, „Go on working: Allah will see your conduct, and His Apostle and the faithful [as well].”

These three are watching you, and so believe and do good work. Work, as opposed to laziness, is a duty upon each individual to bring blessings to his or her society. Islam strongly condemns laziness. If you do not work and just eat, you are not better than an animal. Please note that “work” has a broad meaning and does not only mean going to a modern job. Mothers that stay home and raise children may “work” harder than their husbands that go out to make money.

Nevertheless, the long lasting success of a nation generally depends on the hard work of its people. For example, the societies that discovered and utilized natural principles and laws (such as in physics and chemistry) benefitted greatly from the hard work of their scientists.³ The **Qur'an (18:30)** states,

“As for those who have faith and do righteous deeds – indeed We do not waste the reward of those who are good in deeds.”

Also, the **Qur'an (53:39-40)** states,

“[A]nd that nothing belongs to man except what he strives for, and that he will soon be shown his endeavour.”

The **Qur'an (99:7-8)** further states,

“So whoever does an atom’s weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom’s weight of evil will see it.” (See Jalali, page 439).

Accordingly, everyone has to strive to work and do good deeds with faith. Of course, the striving and the work are relative to an individual’s capabilities and situation. For example, no one expects a layman to perform life saving medical procedures or deduce Islamic rules like a *mujtahid* (an expert given permission to interpret the Qur’an and the traditions to form Islamic rulings). Everyone should strive to work based on their own level. Of course, one should educate themselves and acquire knowledge to reach higher levels. You see, *ilm* and *amal* are tied together.

1. The translation is based on The Qur’an. Trans. M. H. Shakir. Elmhurst, New York: Tahrike Tarsile Qur’an, Inc., 1999. I chose to use this translation instead of the translation of Ali Quli Qara’i because he translates the verse as, “Whoever acts righteously, [whether] male or female, should he be faithful, – We shall revive him with a good life.” The word “revive” may give the impression that the “good life” concerns only the afterlife, but the “good life” includes the life of this world.

2. It is important to note that Shaykh Nasir Makarim Shirazi indicates that the “good life” or “clean life” mainly refers to the afterlife, based on the online version of the Quran, Translation, and Commentary in Brief. Trans. Mansoor Aminy, volume 3 (viewed on April 21, 2010 at <http://www.makaremshirazi.org/english/compilation/book.php?bcc=2362&itg=...> [1]).

Apparently, Shaykh Shirazi says that the verses ninety-five to ninety-seven were revealed after a man came to complain to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) about a neighbor, Amr al-Ghais, who stole some land. In this context, the commentary states, "When faith and righteous deeds are accompanied in a man or a woman, God's Grace will revive them to a new clean life which is of course eternal." However, the commentary goes on to state, "The advantages of such a life in terms of the life to come is immense, while its very good consequences in this pres[en]t life too, is evident in the believer's clean, pure, sure, and comfortable living." This last part conforms with the analysis above.

3. Please note that the truths of science do not contradict Islam. Man may discover the beauty of the Universe, but only Allah (the All-Merciful) can create such a Universe. The truthful discoveries of science actually reinforce the power and greatness of God, the Almighty.

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