

Never forget that the world is a temporary place and a test

The life of the world is nothing but a game and a diversion. The abode of the hereafter—that is truly Life if they only knew. (Surat al-'Ankabut: 64)

Never forget that everything on the face of the earth is created for a purpose. It is a most definite fact that everything you see around you serves a special purpose. There is also a purpose for which you and the rest of humanity exists:

He Who created death and life to test which of you is best in action. He is the Almighty, the Ever-Forgiving. (Surat al-Mulk: 2)

As the verse above explains, Allah placed man temporarily in this world to test him. He tests us with what we experience in life; He creates this life in order that believers may be distinguished from the non-believers, and by which they may be purified of evil, and worthy of the reward of Paradise. In other words, the world is merely a testing-ground where we can earn the good pleasure of Allah.

Allah has made clear the limits to observe, and the behaviour by which He is pleased or displeased. Accordingly, a person's temperament in this world determines his rewards or punishment in the hereafter. Therefore, every single passing moment brings us closer to either Paradise or Hell. **As such, never forget that you are being tested, even right at this moment, and that the result of this test will determine your afterlife. Also, never forget that this result is very near.** Allah reminds us of this fact in several verses and warns His servants against that day:

You who believe! Heed Allah and let each self look to what it has sent forward for Tomorrow. Heed Allah. Allah is aware of what you do. (Surat al-Hashr: 18)

Allah warns people against not being greedily attached to the temporary and alluring joys of this world. That is because, neither wealth, beauty nor social status, that is, nothing a man possesses in this world, will be of help to him in the hereafter. He will leave behind everything he had, including his body. His body will decay in the earth; the possessions of which he had been so proud will be unable to resist the irrepressible damage of time. All alone, he will be brought to the presence of his Lord to give an account of his deeds.

However, despite this apparent reality, engrossed with everyday routines, the majority of people totally forget the truth of death and the hereafter; they assume their life to be confined to this world only. This attitude is explained in the Qur'an as follows:

They say, "There is nothing but our existence in the world. We die and we live and nothing destroys us except for time." They have no knowledge of that. They are only conjecturing. (Surat al-Jathiyya: 24)

However, these people disregard one crucial fact; the life of this world is actually quite brief. Consider a man in his thirties. If he were to consider his life, it would certainly seem that it was a "fleeting." If he were asked what he thinks about those 30 years, he would simply remark that everything has passed so quickly. If he were asked to tell his story, his reminiscences would only add up to a few hours talk. This man will probably have 30 more years to experience, and which will pass as quickly as his past days. In many verses, Allah draws our attention to the brevity of this life and informs us that people will admit this fact in the hereafter:

On the day We gather them together—when it will seem if they had tarried no more than an hour of a single day... (Surah Yunus: 45)

On the Day the Last Hour arrives, the evildoers will swear they have not even tarried for an hour. That is the extent to which they are deceived. (Surat ar-Rum: 55)

To hinder man from undue attachment to this world, Allah has installed various flawed and undesirable elements into this life, and thus stressed the temporary nature of this world. This is certainly one of the subjects over which man has to reflect; anything you cherish or deem valuable in this life ages, your loved ones pass, one after another, even the most beautiful people around you grow old, become sick or fall weak... The moments you so much enjoyed, or those you had so looked forward to, are all now part of the past. That also applies to the most trying times you experienced. It will also hold true for your future experiences, the course of the rest of your life, which will seem as brief as the blink of an eye. You will continually be tested, a test that will go on until death catches up with you... Then, as every man who has ever entered this world, you will be repaid in full for what you have done, and thus your eternal life will begin.

However, man never desires anything beautiful or enjoyable to fade. Yet, in this fleeting life, such a wish cannot be fulfilled. So, how can one attain them? Paradise is the only place where they will be realized.

Never forget that the world is not the proper place to fulfil these desires. If you truly yearn for the ever-lasting favours, never forget that you must not pursue the life of this world, but seek the hereafter by preparing yourself for it.

Disbelievers who are ignorant of these facts, however, try to confine everything they desire into this temporary world. Such pursue aims founded in the perverted belief that death brings an end to this world. Thus, it is in this world that they seek to attain all blessings and pleasures. Fearing that death will deprive them of their desires, they strive to make the most of this life. However, their efforts are vain; this world is utterly deficient. The real abode of man, that is, the hereafter is the place that offers the best and incorruptible favours that man can enjoy; however, all such favours are saved only for true believers who serve Allah and no one else. The favours enjoyed by disbelievers are confined only to this world. The way in which the disbelievers will be exposed to fire is related in the Qur'an as follows:

On the Day when those who were disbelievers are exposed to the Fire: "You dissipated the good things you had in your worldly life and enjoyed yourself in it. So today you are being repaid with the punishment of humiliation for being arrogant in the earth without any right and for being deviators." (Surat al-Ahqaf: 20)

That is also why the Prophet (pbuh) drew attention to the importance of the accountability of one's self and deeds:

A wise man is the one who calls himself to account (and refrains from doing evil deeds) and does noble deeds to benefit him after death; and the foolish person is the one who subdues himself to his temptations and desires and seeks from Allah the fulfilment of his vain desires. (Tirmidhi)

As related here, nothing could be more important than the deeds done with the effort of avoiding the punishment of fire. In some cases, a student would study hard to graduate, a businessman to acquire great wealth, and yet another would sacrifice anything to attain a prestige. However, there is no guarantee these people will live long enough to attain these goals; that student may not live to see his graduation day, for instance. One thing is certain, however; he will return to his Lord and will have to give an account of his deeds on the Day of Judgment.

As for those who do not expect to meet Us and are content with the life of the world and at rest in it, and those who are heedless of Our Signs, their shelter will be the Fire because of what they earned. (Surah Yunus: 7-8)

Diseases, accidents or old age, of which we must take heed are but evidences that this world is not a place for which we are to feel attachment:

Do they not see that they are tried once or twice in every year? But still they do not turn back. They do not pay heed. (Surat at-Tawba: 126)

As is evident from the verse, "...You desire the goods of the world, whereas Allah desires the hereafter..." (Surat al-Anfal: 67), Allah repeatedly reminds us that this world is flawed so that Allah's servants can attain the better place in the hereafter:

Never disregard these reminders and keep in mind that you must please Allah to be worthy of bliss for all eternity. Allah has made clear in the Qur'an that those who are attached to the brief life of this world will lose the eternal life in the hereafter:

If anyone desires to cultivate the hereafter, We will increase him in his cultivation. If anyone desires to cultivate the world, We will give him some of it but he will have no share in the hereafter. (Surat ash-Shura: 20)

In His verses, Allah urges people to desire the hereafter, since it is better and longer lasting. (Surah Ta Ha: 131)

All the while, never forget that Allah will grant true believers, who aspire to the life of the hereafter, a good life also in this world. Believers are those who attain Allah's best favours both in this world and in the hereafter:

There is good news for them in the life of the world and in the hereafter... (Surah Yunus: 64)

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