

THE IMPORTANCE OF TIME

Have you ever heard people saying, "Time is money"? Yes? You heard it often? And did you agree? I'm sure you must have agreed – the plumber, the electrician and the mechanic all charge you for their labour according to the time they spend on the job, isn't it? But what does Islam say? What do true Muslims say?

Imaam Hasan Al-Bannaa (ra) used to say that time is not money; it's more than money. It's not gold either. It's neither diamonds nor pearls. It's more than all of that. It is life. Yes, time is life! Because man's life is nothing more than the time he spends from birth till death. Hasan Al-Basri (ra) used to say, "O son of Aadam! You are merely a few days. Every day that passes, part of you also passes. (Every day lost is a loss of part of your-self)."

Suicide

If asked whether suicide is permissible, no Muslim would reply "yes" Yet so many of us are slowly committing suicide. How often don't we waste time in futile pursuits and then we excuse our-selves saying, "We were just killing time"? *Subhaanallah!* If time is life and you are *killing* time, aren't you killing your-self?

The Oaths of Allah

The *Mufasssireen* (scholars of *Tafseer*) agree that when Allah takes an oath in the name of any of His creation, His oath is indicative of the importance of that particular item. So then imagine the importance of time if Allah swore in the name of time in more than just one *ayah* of the Qur'aan.

"I swear in the name of time."

"I swear by the glow of daybreak and the night when it is tranquil"

"I swear by the night when it enshrouds and the day when it appears bright."

"I swear by the day when it brightens the earth and the night when it covers it."

Deception

Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* said in a *hadith* which Imaam Bukhaari recorded from Sayyidina Ibn 'Abbaas (ra) that: "There are two favours from Allah in which most of the people are deceived: good health and free time."

Note:

1. The word that Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* used for deception is مغبون which is derived from غبن and غبن is generally used for deception in trade – when a person pays too much and when he sells something for too little.
2. Our life in this world could be called a business trip . . . to purchase the pleasure of Allah and Jannah. Allah Ta'aalāh said in the Qur'aan, "Surely Allah purchased from the *Mu'mineen* their lives and their wealth in exchange for Jannah." Similarly Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*

said: "Everybody leaves home in the morning. Thus he sells himself (to Allah or Shaytaan) and either frees or destroys himself."

3. In the eyes of Allah and His Rasul *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* the *dunya* (the world in which we live) is so insignificant that it has been described in one Hadith as less than one wing of a mosquito. "If the *dunya* was equal to one wing of a mosquito Allah would not have given a single disbeliever even one drop of water." (Because it is not even equal to one wing of a mosquito he does not bother giving it to the disbelievers.)
4. Therefore the meaning of the Hadith that most people are deceived regarding their health and free time is that most people do not realise that by spending so much of effort and time to acquire the *dunya*, they are paying too much.

Time Flies

"Time flies" is not unknown to us. But how fast does it fly? When the angel of death came to Nabi Nooh (as), he asked him to describe his life to him. Nabi Nooh (as) – who lived for nine hundred and fifty years replied: "My life was like a house with two doors – I entered through one of them and now I'm leaving through the other." Thus Allah Ta'aalah tells us in one *aayah* of the Qur'aan that on the Day of Qiyaamah the disbelievers will think that "they did not stay (in the *dunya*) but for one evening or morning." In another *aayah* He says that "it will seem (to them) that they did not stay (in the *dunya*) but for a short part of a day."

Lost Time Never Returns

Another aspect of time is that once lost, it never returns. Thus Hasan Al-Basri (ra) used to say, "Every day when dawn breaks the day proclaims: O son of Aadam! I am a new creation (of Allah) and I will be witness to your actions. Therefore take your share of me because when I leave, I won't return till the Day of Qiyaamah."

Two Occasions of Regret

There are two occasions when man regrets wasting his time:

1. Death
2. The Day of Qiyaamah

Concerning the first occasion Allah Ta'aalah says in the Qur'aan, "And spend from the sustenance we gave you before death comes to one of you and he says: O my Rabb, why don't you delay me until a close period of time so that I may give charity and be among the pious."

Concerning the second occasion He says, "And they (the disbelievers) will scream in it (the fire) 'O our Rabb, remove us so that we may do good actions contrary to what we used to do'. (They will be told) 'Didn't we give you a life span in which one who wanted to take heed could take heed?'"

Our *Salaf* (Pious Predecessors) and Time

Viewing the importance of time and the fact that time flies and never returns, our *Salaf* (pious predecessors) attached great importance to time. This could be gauged from the following:

- "I never regret anything as much as I regret a day in which my life became shorter but my '*amal*' (good actions) did not increase." ('Abdullah bin Mas'ood)
- "May I not be blessed in the sunrise of a day in which I don't gain more knowledge that will take me closer to Allah" (Some people attribute this statement to Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* However, Ibn-ul-Qayyim says in his book *Miftaah-us-Sa'aadah* that it is actually the statement of a Sahaabi or a Taabi'i.)
- "When a day passes and I neither draw any guidance nor do I gain any knowledge, that day is not part of my life."
- "A sign that Allah dislikes a man is that he wastes his time."
- "Time is a sword – if you don't cut (utilise) it, it will cut (destroy) you."
- "The night and day play their role in you – now you play your role in them." ('Umar bin 'Abdul 'Azeez)
- "I met people (the Sahaabah) who were more careful with their time than you are with your gold and silver coins." (Hasan Al-Basri)

Let alone valuing their time, they would always endeavour to better themselves. Thus they would commonly say: "The person whose today is the same as his yesterday is deceived and the person whose today is worse than his yesterday is accursed."

Procrastination

Like wastage of time, procrastination is another very detrimental disease. Thus Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*

said, "Treasure five things before five – life before death, health before illness, free time before occupation, youth before old age and wealth before poverty."

A man from the tribe of 'Abdul-Qays was asked for advice. He replied, "Beware of *tasweef* (using the word سوف)" (Literally سوف is translated as 'soon'. In this context it would mean: beware of procrastination, beware of saying 'not now; later'.) Another pious person said: سوف is an army from the armies of Iblees."

Hasan Al-Basri (ra) said: "Beware of procrastination because you are judged (by Allah) according to what your condition is today and not according to what your condition will be tomorrow. Therefore if there'll be a tomorrow for you, spend it like you spend today. And if there'll be no tomorrow for you, you won't regret being negligent today."

Cure

Procrastination could be cured by remembering the following points:

1. You have no guarantee that you will live till tomorrow.
2. Even if you are going to live till tomorrow, you have no guarantee that you will not be afflicted with severe illness or some other difficulty which may impede your ability to do good deeds.
3. Once 'Umar bin 'Abdul 'Azeez (ra) was told to "postpone this till tomorrow". He replied, "I can't manage one day's work; how will I manage two days work?" (Postponing

today's work till tomorrow will merely multiply tomorrow's work.")

4. Procrastination gradually leads to non-fulfilment of one's duties. For example, a person who continuously procrastinates in making *tawbah* will eventually never make *tawbah*.
5. There is a famous parable in Arabic that "Work for your *dunya* as if you are going to live forever and work for your *aakhirah* as if you are going to die tomorrow."

Moderation

Once, upon returning to his family after attending a discourse of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*, Hanzalah (ra) pondered over the change in his condition while he played with his family in comparison to his condition while he sat in the company of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*. He then went to Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* and expressed his fear that he was a hypocrite. However, Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* allayed his fear saying, "If you remain all the time in the same condition as you are while sitting in my company, the angels will shake hands with you. Instead there is a time (for '*ibaadah*') and a time (for rest, earning a livelihood and other permissible actions)." In a similar manner Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* advised the Sahaabi Abdullah bin 'Amr bin 'Aas (ra) who used to fast every day and spend the entire night in nafl salaah that "Your body has a right over you, your family has a right over you and your guests have a right over you." Thus Ali (ra) used to say, "Give your hearts a rest from time to time."

Note: The meaning of rest must be understood within the context of the *sharee'ah*. Rest does not include anything prohibited in the *sharee'ah* like listening to music, watching soap operas, playing cards, chess etc.

A few Concluding Quotations

There is a Hadith of Abu Dhar (ra) in the book of Ibn Hibbaan in which he narrates from Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* that it is mentioned in the scriptures of Nabi Ibrahim (as) that: "An intelligent man should divide his time in four parts:

1. A part for worshipping his *Rabb*
2. A part for taking reckoning of himself
3. A part for pondering over the creation of Allah
4. A part for fulfilling his needs like eating and drinking

A man of wisdom said that at any given moment, man's time is spent in one of four things:

1. Enjoying Allah's *ni'mah* (favour)
 2. Difficulty and hardship
 3. Obedience to Allah
 4. Disobedience to Allah
- A man whose time is spent enjoying Allah's bounties should be grateful to Allah
 - A man whose time is spent in difficulty and hardship should exercise patience and be content with the decree of Allah
 - A man whose time is spent in worshipping Allah should realise that Allah has favoured him by guiding him to be obedient

- A man whose time is spent in sin should engage in *tawbah* and istighfaar

Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* said, "Nobody's feet will move on the day of Qiyaamah before he is questioned about four things – how he lived his life, how he passed his youth, how he earned and spent his wealth and what he did with his knowledge."¹

May Allah guide us to value our time and utilise it in a manner that is pleasing to Him. آمين

و صلى الله على النبي برحمتك يا أرحم الراحمين

Abu Hudhaifa Muhammed Karolia

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Al-Jaami'ah Al-Mahmoodiah

Persida, Springs

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