

Parables of the Qur'an

PodSeries - Vol 370



Achieve Noble Character

Parables of the Quran

ShaykhPod Books

Published by ShaykhPod Books, 2023

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Parables of the Quran

First edition. May 1, 2023.

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Acknowledgements

All praises are for Allah, the Exalted, Lord of the worlds, who has given us the inspiration, opportunity and strength to complete this volume. Blessings and peace be upon the Holy Prophet Muhammad whose path has been chosen by Allah, the Exalted, for the salvation of mankind.

We would like to express our deepest appreciation to the entire ShaykhPod family, especially our little star, Yusuf, whose continued support and advice has inspired the development of ShaykhPod Books.

We pray that Allah, the Exalted, completes His favour on us and accepts each letter of this book in His august court and allows it to testify on our behalf on the Last Day.

All praise to Allah, the Exalted, Lord of the worlds and endless blessings and peace be upon the Holy Prophet Muhammad, on his blessed Household and Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all.

Compiler's Notes

We have tried diligently to do justice in this volume however if there are any short falls found then the compiler is personally and solely responsible for them.

We accept the possibility of faults and shortcomings in an effort to complete such a difficult task. We might have unconsciously stumbled and committed errors for which we ask for indulgence and forgiveness of our readers and the drawing of our attention thereto will be appreciated. We earnestly invite constructive suggestions which can be made to ShaykhPod.Books@gmail.com.

Introduction

The following short book discusses some of the Parables of the Holy Quran.

Implementing the lessons discussed will aid a Muslim to Achieve Noble Character. According to the Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2003, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has advised that the heaviest thing in the Scales of Judgment Day will be Noble Character. It is one of qualities of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, which Allah, the Exalted, complimented in Chapter 68 Al Qalam, Verse 4 of the Holy Quran:

“And indeed, you are of a great moral character.”

Therefore, it is a duty on all Muslims to gain and act on the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in order to Achieve Noble Character.

Parables of the Quran

Parable 1

Chapter 2 - Al Baqarah, Verses 17-18

مَثَلُهُمْ كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي اسْتَوْقَدَ نَارًا فَلَمَّا أَضَاءَتْ مَا حَوْلَهُ ذَهَبَ اللَّهُ بِنُورِهِمْ وَتَرَكَهُمْ فِي
ظُلْمَةٍ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ ﴿١٧﴾

صُمُّ بُكْمٌ عُمَىٰ فَهُمْ لَا يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿١٨﴾

“Their example is that of one who kindled a fire, but when it illuminated what was around him, Allah took away their light and left them in darkness [so] they could not see. Deaf, dumb and blind - so they will not return [to the right path].”

“Their example is that of one who kindled a fire, but when it illuminated what was around him, Allah took away their light and left them in darkness [so] they could not see. Deaf, dumb and blind - so they will not return [to the right path].”

This parable describes the non-Muslims and their misguidance. The one who kindled a fire on a dark night could be the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, who through the Holy Quran and his traditions illuminated the age of darkness and misguidance so that the people could find their way to success in both worlds. But because the non-Muslims persisted on sins and the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted, their spiritual hearts became so veiled with a thick coat of darkness that they could not make use of the illumination of guidance. So even though their physical eyes were functioning fine their spiritual eyes, which are needed to observe and accept guidance, became blind so that they failed to make use of the light of guidance. This is similar to blind person who cannot make use of the Sun's bright light. Even though their hearing was functioning fine but as they had been submerged in darkness any call towards guidance would not be heard correctly nor could the advice be acted upon.

Muslims must avoid this outcome by firstly adopting the correct intention in all their affairs namely, to please Allah, the Exalted. Secondly, they must strive to gain and act on Islamic knowledge so that it prevents their spiritual hearts, eyes and ears from becoming veiled from the truth. Only with this method will a Muslim benefit from the guidance of Islam in both worlds.

“Their example is that of one who kindled a fire, but when it illuminated what was around him, Allah took away their light and left them in darkness [so] they could not see. Deaf, dumb and blind - so they will not return [to the right path].”

This verse indicates the importance of striving to obtain and act on useful knowledge in order to strengthen one's faith. A Muslim should not adopt laziness as weak faith will not benefit them during tests and trials. In fact, these Muslims are in danger of losing their faith before leaving this world. When a Muslim fails to obtain and act on useful knowledge they have in fact exchanged guidance for misguidance. This is because knowledge will never truly profit its bearer if they fail to act on it. It is important to understand acting on knowledge encourages one to fulfil the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refrain from His prohibitions and face destiny with patience. Knowledge by itself does not achieve these vital goals.

The one who gains knowledge but fails to act on it is like the one who lights a fire on a very cold night yet does not derive benefit from it by utilizing its heat. Or they are like the one who obtains knowledge which illuminates the path of success in both worlds yet fails to utilise this illumination by physically journeying down the correct path. When one acts in this way Allah, the Exalted, will extinguish the benefit one can derive from their knowledge so that they become like an empty shell. In this case, the knowledge they possess will not help them in this world and it will testify against them in the hereafter. Muslims will only benefit from knowledge when they act on it. This has been indicated in the following verse: Chapter 13 Ar Ra'd, verse 11:

“...Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves...”

Muslims must understand that possessing worldly knowledge will not help them in the material world if they fail to act on it. For example, a doctor will not help others or gain a salary if they fail to practically implement their medical knowledge by treating the sick. Unfortunately, many Muslims believe they can either remain ignorant or fail to act on their religious knowledge and still gain benefit from it in both worlds. This is simply absurd.

When a person does not gain or act on useful knowledge they behave as those who do not possess the ability to gain and act on knowledge. A person who has the ability to see yet does not use this blessing in the correct way is equivalent to a blind person. This has been indicated in verse 18. Those who refuse to use the knowledge they have been granted will not find the correct path. They will not observe the right path nor will hearing useful knowledge benefit them nor will their knowledge benefit them in their speech. This is like the one who has been described in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2314. This type of person utters a word without understanding its consequences and as a result will plunge into Hell on Judgement Day.

“Their example is that of one who kindled a fire, but when it illuminated what was around him, Allah took away their light and left them in darkness [so] they could not see. Deaf, dumb and blind - so they will not return [to the right path].”

Muslims must avoid following in the footsteps of the non-Muslims by making use of the light of faith they have been offered. If one fails to do so they run the risk of losing this light forever.

Even though there is no doubt that the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, is infinite and can overcome all sins. And giving up hope in the infinite mercy of Allah, the Exalted, is defined as unbelief in chapter 12 Yusuf, verse 87:

“...Indeed, no one despairs of relief from Allah except the disbelieving people.”

Yet, none the less it is extremely important for Muslims to understand a fact. Namely, a Muslim has not been guaranteed to leave this world with their faith meaning, a Muslim is in danger of dying as a non-Muslim. This is the greatest loss. If this happens it does not take a scholar to conclude where this person will reside in the hereafter. This can occur when a Muslim persists on sins especially, major sins, such as drinking alcohol and failing to offer their obligatory prayers and reaches their end without sincerely repenting from their sins. This is the reason why Muslims must sincerely repent from all their sins and strive to fulfil all their obligatory

duties as this is a task they can undoubtedly fulfil. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 286:

“Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity...”

They should not be fooled into believing they possess hope in the mercy of Allah, the Exalted. As true hope in the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, is supported by obedience to Allah, the Exalted, through actions. This involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience. Failing to do this and then expecting the mercy and forgiveness of Allah, the Exalted, is not hope in His mercy it is merely wishful thinking which has no weight or significance. This has been clearly warned by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2459.

“...Deaf...so they will not return [to the right path].”

Muslims must avoid this outcome by using their hearing in the correct way.

Even though, the number of preachers has increased over time and accessing information has become easier yet the strength of Muslims has only weakened. One of the reasons is that many Muslims have adopted a mentality which has hindered them from learning and acting on Islamic knowledge namely, they believe merely listening to Islamic knowledge is good enough to succeed. This is a trap of the Devil and completely contradicts the attitude of the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, and the righteous predecessors. They not only listened to religious knowledge but they fully intended and fulfilled this intention by acting on the knowledge they heard. Failing to act in this way has caused the faith of Muslims to weaken. It is the reason why some Muslims have spent decades attending religious gatherings and talks yet have not changed for the better at all. The danger of this attitude is that eventually people will fall lower by believing that they can simply declare Islam with their tongues without the need to listen or act on religious teachings. Muslims will be left with ignorance as their guide which will only lead them to destruction.

“...dumb...so they will not return [to the right path].”

Muslims must avoid this outcome by using their ability to learn in the correct way.

A great distraction which prevents one from submitting to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, is ignorance. It can be argued that it is the origin of every sin as the one who truly knows the consequences of sins would never commit them. This refers to true beneficial knowledge which is knowledge that is acted upon. In reality, all knowledge which is not acted on is not beneficial knowledge. The example of the one who behaves in this manner is described in the Holy Quran as a donkey which carries books of knowledge which do not benefit it. Chapter 62 Al Jumu'ah, verse 5:

“...and then did not take it on (did not act upon knowledge) is like that of a donkey who carries volumes [of books]...”

A person who acts on their knowledge rarely slips up and commits sins intentionally. In fact, when this occurs it is only caused by a moment of ignorance where a person forgets to act on their knowledge which results in them sinning.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, once highlighted the seriousness of ignorance in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2322. He declared that everything in the material world is cursed except for the remembrance of Allah, the Exalted, whatever is connected to this remembrance, the scholar and the student of knowledge. This means that all the blessings in the material world will become a curse for the one who is ignorant as they will misuse them thereby committing sins.

In fact, ignorance can be considered a person's worse enemy as it prevents them from protecting themselves from harm and gaining benefit all of which can only be achieved through acting on knowledge. The ignorant commits sins without being aware of them. How can one avoid a sin if they do not know what is considered a sin? Ignorance causes one to neglect their obligatory duties. How can one fulfil their duties if they are unaware of what their duties are?

It is therefore a duty on all Muslims to gain enough knowledge to fulfil all their obligatory duties and avoid sins. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224.

“...blind...so they will not return [to the right path].”

Muslims must avoid this outcome by using their perception in the correct way.

It is important for Muslims to develop the correct perception so that they can increase their obedience to Allah, the Exalted, which involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience. This is what the righteous predecessors possessed and it encouraged them to avoid the excess luxuries of the material world and instead prepare for the hereafter. This is an important characteristic to possess and it can be explained with a worldly example. Two people are extremely thirsty and come across a cup of murky water. They both desire to drink it even though it is not pure and even if it means they have to argue over it. As their thirst grows the more focused on the cup of murky water they become to the point they lose focus on everything else. But if one of them shifted their focus and observed a river of pure water which was only a short distance ahead they would immediately lose focus on the cup of water to the point they would no longer care about it and no longer argue over it. And instead they would endure their thirst patiently knowing a river of pure water is close. The person who is unaware of the river would probably believe the other person is crazy after observing their change in attitude. This is the case of the two types of people in this world. One group greedily focuses on the material world. The other group has shifted their focus to the hereafter and the pure and eternal blessings therein. When one shifts their focus to the bliss of the hereafter worldly problems do not seem like such a big deal. Therefore, patience becomes easier to adopt. But if one keeps their focus on this world then it will seem like everything to them. They will argue, fight, love and hate for it. Just like the person in the example mentioned earlier who only focuses on the cup of murky water.

This correct perception is only achieved through gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge found within the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 53:

“We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth...”

Parable 2

Chapter 2 - Al Baqarah, Verses 19-20

أَوْ كَصَيْبٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ فِيهِ ظُلُمَاتٌ وَرَعْدٌ وَبَرْقٌ يَجْعَلُونَ أَصْبِعَهُمْ فِي آذَانِهِمْ مِنَ الصَّوَاعِقِ حَذَرَ الْمَوْتِ وَاللَّهُ مُحِيطٌ بِالْكَافِرِينَ ﴿١٩﴾

يَكَادُ الْبَرْقُ يَخْطَفُ أَبْصَارَهُمْ كُلَّمَا أَضَاءَ لَهُمْ مَشَوْا فِيهِ وَإِذَا أَظْلَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ قَامُوا وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَذَهَبَ بِسَمْعِهِمْ وَأَبْصَارِهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٢٠﴾

“Or [it is] like a rainstorm from the sky within which is darkness, thunder and lightning. They put their fingers in their ears against the thunderclaps in dread of death. But Allah is encompassing of the disbelievers. The lightning almost snatches away their sight. Every time it lights [the way] for them, they walk therein; but when darkness comes over them, they stand [still]. And if Allah had willed, He could have taken away their hearing and their sight. Indeed, Allah is over all things competent.”

“Or [it is] like a rainstorm from the sky within which is darkness, thunder and lightning. They put their fingers in their ears against the thunderclaps in dread of death...”

This indicates the extreme anxiety and fear the hypocrites had for divine revelation, which has been likened to rain in this verse. Chapter 63 Al Munafiqun, verse 4:

“...they think that every shout is against them...”

And chapter 9 At Tawbah, verse 64:

“The hypocrites are apprehensive lest a surah be revealed about them, informing them of what is in their hearts...”

The darkness indicated in the main verse under discussion could indicate the difficulties and tests one must face when they accept Islam. Therefore, a Muslim must not adopt the anxiety and fear of the hypocrites and instead remain firm on the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted, which involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. One of the best ways of achieving this steadfast attitude through times of tests and difficulties is through gaining and acting on Islamic

knowledge. For example, in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 7500, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that every situation is blessed for a believer. The only condition is that they need to respond to each situation they encounter while obeying Allah, the Exalted, specifically, patience in difficulties and gratitude in times of ease.

There are two aspects of life. One aspect are the situations people find themselves in whether they are times of ease or difficulties. The control of what situation a person faces is out of their hands. Allah, the Exalted, has decided this and there is no escaping them. Therefore, stressing over the situations one faces does not make sense as they are destined and therefore inevitable. The other aspect is a person's reaction to each situation. This is in each person's control and this is what they are judged on for example, showing patience or impatience in a difficult situation. Therefore, a Muslim must concentrate on their behaviour and reaction in each situation instead of stressing over being in a situation as this is unavoidable. If a Muslim desires to succeed in both worlds they should assess each situation and always act in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted. For example, in times of ease they must use the blessings they possess as prescribed by Islam which is true gratitude to Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 14 Ibrahim, verse 7:

“And [remember] when your Lord proclaimed, 'If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favor]...”

And in times of difficulty they must show patience knowing Allah, the Exalted, chooses what is best for His servants even if they do not

understand the wisdom behind the choices. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

Gaining this type of knowledge will prevent one from behaving like the hypocrites and instead it will encourage them to face all tests and difficulties with firmness.

“Or [it is] like a rainstorm from the sky within which is darkness, thunder and lightning. They put their fingers in their ears against the thunderclaps in dread of death. But Allah is encompassing of the disbelievers.”

The one who thrusts their fingers into their ears is like the person who adopts the ignorance is bliss mentality. Muslims should not adopt the behaviour of the misguided by ignoring the glad tidings and warnings which are given to them by Islam. Ignorance is not bliss as ignoring the truth will not change it. A Muslim should not act as if they will never die and face the elements of the hereafter, such as Judgement Day, as this attitude will not alter the truth. The will of Allah, the Exalted, will occur and every person will face these things sooner or later. Therefore, an intelligent Muslim will take the necessary steps to prepare for them by acting on the teachings of Islam instead of ignoring them. A person's real mentality is reflected in their actions meaning, if a Muslim dedicates the majority of their day to accumulating the excess and unnecessary elements of the material world then they are behaving like those described in these verses. But if a Muslim takes what they need from this material world in order to fulfil their necessities and responsibilities according to the teachings of Islam and then dedicates the rest of their efforts to preparing for the hereafter then they will achieve success in both worlds.

“...They put their fingers in their ears against the thunderclaps in dread of death...”

The hypocrites feared the revelation of the Holy Quran as one would fear lightning and thunder as it contradicted their worldly desires. Chapter 9 At Tawbah, verse 64:

“The hypocrites are apprehensive lest a surah be revealed about them, informing them of what is in their hearts...”

They would ignore it hoping it would somehow go away. A Muslim should not adopt this mentality by failing to understand that Islam leads to peace and success in both worlds and should therefore not be ignored. They should understand that the commands and prohibitions will benefit them in both worlds even if this is not obvious to them. Just like the hypocrites, the one who fails to live up to their verbal testimony of faith is unlikely to truly benefit from it in either worlds.

Some people claim that their belief and obedience to their God is in their hearts and they therefore do not need to demonstrate it practically. Unfortunately, this foolish mentality has infected many Muslims who believe they possess a pure faithful heart even though they fail to fulfil the obligatory duties of Islam. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has clearly declared in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3984, that when one's heart is pure the body becomes pure which means their actions become correct. But if one's heart is corrupt the body becomes corrupt which means their actions will

be corrupt and incorrect. Therefore, the one who does not obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling their duties practically can never have a pure heart.

In addition, demonstrating one's faith in Allah, the Exalted, practically is their proof and evidence which is required on Judgment Day in order to be granted Paradise. Not having this practical evidence is as silly as a student who hands back a blank exam paper to their teacher claiming their knowledge is in their mind so they therefore do not need to write it down by answering the exam questions. The same way this student would undoubtedly fail so will a person who reaches Judgment Day without the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in the form of fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience, even if they possess faith in their heart.

“...But Allah is encompassing of the disbelievers.”

It is important for Muslims to understand a simple yet profound lesson namely, they will never succeed in this world or the next in worldly or religious matters through the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted. Since the dawn of time to this age and till the end of time no person has ever achieved true success nor will they ever through the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted. This is quite obvious when one turns the pages of history. Therefore, when a Muslim is in a situation which they desire to achieve a positive and successful outcome from they should never choose to disobey Allah, the Exalted, irrespective of how tempting or easy it may seem to be. Even if one is advised by their close friends and relatives to do so as there is no obedience to the creation if it means disobedience to the Creator. And in truth they will never be able to protect them from Allah, the Exalted, and His punishment in either this world or the next. The same way Allah, the Exalted, grants success to those who obey Him He removes a successful outcome from those who disobey Him even if this removal takes time to witness. A Muslim should not be fooled as this will occur sooner or later. The Holy Quran has made it extremely clear that an evil plan or action only encompasses the doer even if this punishment is delayed. Chapter 35 Fatir, verse 43:

“...but the evil plot does not encompass except its own people...”

Therefore, no matter how difficult the situation and choice Muslims should always choose the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in both worldly and religious matters as this alone will lead to true success in both worlds even if this success is not obvious immediately.

“The lightning almost snatches away their sight...”

The lightning could be referring to the Holy Quran which overcomes all falsehood. Muslims must strive to learn and act on the teachings of the Holy Quran so that it strengthens their faith. Strong faith will overcome all difficulties one could possibly face.

The Holy Quran possesses an uncountable amount of qualities which separates it from any other worldly book. This aspect of the Holy Quran is so intense that it cannot even be explained or discussed over countless lifetimes. But a few of these qualities will be mentioned here. First of all, in the Holy Quran, Allah, the Exalted, has given an open challenge to the entire universe (not just people) and not only a challenge to those who were present when this divine revelation was revealed but to all of creation till the end of time. The challenge being if the people believed the Holy Quran was not a divine revelation from Allah, the Exalted, then they should produce a chapter that can rival a chapter of the Holy Quran. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 23:

“And if you are in some doubt, concerning what We sent down upon Our special devotee, then bring one chapter like it, and call upon all your helpers beside Allah, if you are truthful.”

There is no book on the entire planet that can and has given this type of open challenge. But over 1400 years ago the Holy Quran gave this challenge to the entire universe and to this day this challenge has not been won by the non-Muslims nor will it ever be God willing.

Another quality of the Holy Quran is that it stated the outcome of future events. But the more amazing thing about these statements is that the outcomes seemed impossible at the time. For example chapter 48 Al Fath, verse 28:

“It is He Who sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth that he may make it prevail over all other religions And Sufficient is Allah as witness.”

When this verse was revealed the entire city of Mecca was Islam so when the people of Mecca heard this verse, unfortunately for them, they believed that Islam was too feeble and would therefore not survive long and certainly would not spread beyond the borders of Mecca let alone the entire world. But within a some years Allah, the Exalted, fulfilled this promise.

Another example of how the Holy Quran prophesied a future event which was unimaginable at the time is found in chapter 30 Ar Rum, verses 2-5:

“The Romans have been subdued. In the nearby land and after their subjugation they will soon overcome. In a few years. The command is of Allah only before and after. And on that day the believers shall rejoice.

With the help of Allah, He helps whom He pleases. And He is the Might, and Merciful.”

These verses of the Holy Quran were revealed during a time where the Romans (Christians) were at war with the Persians (Fire worshippers). This war has been confirmed by many authentic historic books. At this particular time the Persians were on the verge of winning the war. At one point Rome itself was surrounded by the Persians. But Allah, the Exalted, stated that the Romans would eventually reign victorious. The non-Muslims of Mecca who themselves were idol worshippers favoured the Persians and agreed with the majority that it was impossible for the Romans to win. But Allah, the Exalted, as always proved these verses true and allowed the Romans victory.

A final example which appeals to the scientists of the world is seen in chapter 21 Al Anbiya, verse 33:

“And it is He Who created the night and the day and the sun and the moon. Each one is floating in a circumference.”

For centuries scientists have fought over theories on how exactly the solar system is arranged e.g. whether the sun remains still and the Earth rotates around or vice versa. Only relatively recently it has been proven by scientists from all different faiths and backgrounds that each object; sun, moon and the Earth all rotate on their own axes and rotate around each other in a set orbit. But Allah, the Exalted, declared this over 1400 years ago. All the science related verses of the Holy Quran are slowly

being proven by scientists today. This is a huge piece of evidence that proves that the Holy Quran are the words of the One and only true God, Allah, the Exalted, who has created this universe and everything in it, because only a Creator can truly explain his creations.

Even though many commands of the Holy Quran may not be understood by people does not mean they are incorrect. Certain verses of the Holy Quran whose wisdom was hidden to man became apparent when society reached a certain level of development. As the whole Holy Quran is a book of wisdom and guidance it must be accepted irrespective if one understands its commands or not. This situation is just like a child who is suffering from a cold and desires ice cream but is not given it by their parent. The child will continue to cry without understanding the wisdom behind but those that possess knowledge will agree with the parent even though outwardly it appears as if the decision of the parent is wronging the child.

“The lightning almost snatches away their sight. Every time it lights [the way] for them, they walk therein; but when darkness comes over them, they stand [still]...”

This verse indicates another characteristic of hypocrisy which Muslims must avoid. Whenever they experience times of ease, which is compared to a bright lightning flash in this verse, they walk the correct path pleased with what Allah, the Exalted, has granted them. But when they face the darkness of difficulties, which all must face, they stubbornly stand still and refuse to continue acting in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 22 Al Hajj, verse 11:

“And of the people is he who worships Allah on an edge. If he is touched by good, he is reassured by it; but if he is struck by trial, he turns on his face. He has lost [this] world and the Hereafter. That is what is the manifest loss.”

These people treat Allah, the Exalted, like a shop-keeper and expect Him to always bless them with good times in exchange for their insignificant and paltry good deeds. They behave as if they do Allah, the Exalted, a favour through their deeds as if He needs them. This is a foolish mentality to adopt as Allah, the Exalted, is independent of the entire creation. The righteous deeds of people only benefit them as they will be rewarded for it. It is important to understand that this world is an abode created for the purpose of tests and trials. In fact, the most beloved group to Allah, the Exalted, namely the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, were tested the most. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4023. If this is true regarding the Holy

Prophets, peace be upon them, how can Muslims believe they will escape tests and trials?

It is the duty of a Muslim to remain obedient to Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience under all conditions. This involves facing times of ease with gratitude and facing difficult times with patience. This will ensure they receive blessings and reward throughout their lives which has been indicated in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 7500.

This verse also indicates the importance of gaining and acting on useful knowledge in order to achieve certainty of faith. Those who possess weak faith behave similarly to those mentioned in this verse. When they experience times of ease their faith appears strong and powerful like a flash of lightning. But when they face difficulties the weakness of their faith is revealed as they remain lost and confused in darkness. Only through strong faith and the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, can a Muslim overcome the tests and difficulties experienced in both times of ease and difficulty.

“...And if Allah had willed...”

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, indicated the infinite and absolute power and authority of Allah, the Exalted, in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2516. This Hadith advises that the entire creation cannot benefit a person if Allah, the Exalted, did not desire them to do so. Similarly, the entire creation together could not harm someone if Allah, the Exalted, did not desire them to. This means only what Allah, the Exalted, decides happens within the universe. It is important to note, that this advice does not indicate one should abandon using means, such as medicine, but it means that one can use the means as they have been created by none other than Allah, the Exalted, but they must understand that Allah, the Exalted, is the only One who decides the outcome of all things. For example, there are many sick people who take medicine and recover from their illness. But there are others who take medicine and do not recover. This indicates that another factor decides the end result namely, the will of Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 9 At Tawbah, verse 51:

“Say, “Never will we be struck except by what Allah has decreed for us...”

The one who understands this knows that anything that affected them could not have been avoided. And those things which missed them could never have been obtained.

It is important to note, that whatever the end result even if it is against a person's desire they should remain patient and truly believe Allah, the Exalted, has chosen the best for them even if they do not observe the wisdom behind the outcome. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

When one truly understands this truth they stop relying on the creation knowing they cannot innately harm or benefit them. Instead, they turn to Allah, the Exalted, seeking His support and protection through sincere obedience by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience. This leads a Muslim to trusting in Allah, the Exalted. It also encourages one to only fear Allah, the Exalted, as they know the creation cannot harm them without the will of Allah, the Exalted.

Recognising that all things which occur within one's life and the universe originate from Allah, the Exalted, is a part of understanding the Oneness of Allah, the Exalted. This is a topic which has no end and goes beyond only superficially believing that there is none worthy of worship except Allah, the Exalted. When this is fixed in one's heart then they only hope in Allah, the Exalted, knowing He is the only One who can help them. They will only submit and obey Allah, the Exalted, in all aspects of their life. In reality, a person only obeys another in order to receive protection from harm or gain some benefit. Only Allah, the Exalted, can grant this therefore only He deserves to be obeyed and worshipped. If anyone chooses the obedience of another over the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, this shows they believe that this other can bring them some sort

of benefit or protect them from harm. This is a sign of the weakness of their faith. The source of all things which occur is Allah, the Exalted, so Muslims should only obey Him. Chapter 35 Fatir, verse 2:

“Whatever Allah grants to people of mercy - none can withhold it; and whatever He withholds - none can release it thereafter...”

It is important to note, that obeying a person which encourages the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in reality is obeying Allah, the Exalted. For example, obeying the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 80:

“He who obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah...”

“...And if Allah had willed, He could have taken away their hearing...”

Muslims must avoid this outcome by using their hearing in the correct way.

Even though, the number of preachers has increased over time and accessing information has become easier yet the strength of Muslims has only weakened. One of the reasons is that many Muslims have adopted a mentality which has hindered them from learning and acting on Islamic knowledge namely, they believe merely listening to Islamic knowledge is good enough to succeed. This is a trap of the Devil and completely contradicts the attitude of the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, and the righteous predecessors. They not only listened to religious knowledge but they fully intended and fulfilled this intention by acting on the knowledge they heard. Failing to act in this way has caused the faith of Muslims to weaken. It is the reason why some Muslims have spent decades attending religious gatherings and talks yet have not changed for the better at all. The danger of this attitude is that eventually people will fall lower by believing that they can simply declare Islam with their tongues without the need to listen or act on religious teachings. Muslims will be left with ignorance as their guide which will only lead them to destruction.

“...And if Allah had willed, He could have taken away their...sight...”

Muslims must avoid this outcome by using their perception in the correct way.

It is important for a Muslim to be observant in their daily life and avoid being too self-absorbed in their own worldly matters so that they become heedless over the things which are occurring around them and the things which have already occurred. This is an important quality to possess as it is an excellent way to strengthen one's faith which in turn helps one to remain obedient to Allah, the Exalted, at all times. For example, when a Muslim observes a sick person they should not only aid them by whatever means they possess, even if it is only a supplication, but they should reflect on their own health and understand that they too will eventually lose their good health either by an illness, ageing or even death. This should inspire them to be grateful for their good health and show this through their actions by taking advantage of their good health in both worldly and religious matters which are pleasing to Allah, the Exalted.

When they observe the death of a rich person they should not only feel sad for the deceased and their family but realise that one day which is unknown to them they will die also. They should understand that just like the rich person was abandoned by their wealth, fame and family at their grave so will they too be left only with their deeds in their grave. This will encourage them to prepare for their grave and the hereafter.

This attitude can and should be applied to all things one observes. A Muslim should learn a lesson from everything around them which has been advised in the Holy Quran. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 191:

“...and give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth, [saying], "Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly; exalted are You [above such a thing]; then protect us from the punishment of the Fire.””

Those who behave in this manner will strengthen their faith on a daily basis whereas those who are too self-absorbed in their worldly life will remain heedless which may lead them to their destruction.

“...Indeed, Allah is over all things competent.”

Allah, the Exalted, is the One who over powers all things and in reality, is the only One who possesses power and might. All strength which is found within the creation is granted by none other than Allah, the Exalted. There is no atom in this world or the next that can escape the power and authority of Allah, the Exalted.

As all power belongs to Allah, the Exalted, a Muslim should therefore always remember that the strength to perform righteous deeds and refrain from sins comes from Allah, the Exalted, alone. This will prevent pride creeping into their heart, an atom's worth of which is enough to take them to Hell. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 266.

Whoever desires for their faith to become mighty must obey the All Mighty, Allah, the Exalted. Only then will they be granted strong faith which will aid them to overcome all difficulties so that they leave this world while Allah, the Exalted, is pleased with them. True obedience only lies in following the footsteps of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, which involves fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 31:

“Say, [O Muhammad], "If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins...”

Truly believing Allah, the Exalted, is All Mighty will prevent a Muslim from disobedience as they know there is no way to escape the power of Allah, the Exalted. In addition, when a Muslim engraves this divine name into their heart it prevents them from committing oppression and wronging others. They become fully aware that even if there is no person powerful enough to seek justice from them Allah, the Exalted, will hold them accountable and punish them in both worlds. A Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6579, warns Muslims that oppression to others may cause the All Mighty, Allah, the Exalted, to hurl them into Hell on Judgment Day.

Parable 3

Chapter 2 – Al Baqarah, Verse 74

ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَهِيَ كَالْحِجَارَةِ أَوْ أَشَدُّ قَسْوَةً وَإِنَّ مِنَ الْحِجَارَةِ لَمَا يَتَفَجَّرُ
مِنْهُ الْأَنْهَارُ وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَشَقُّ فَيَخْرُجُ مِنْهُ الْمَاءُ وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَهْبِطُ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ
وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَفِيلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٧٤﴾

“Then your hearts became hardened after that, being like stones or even harder. For indeed, there are stones from which rivers burst forth, and there are some of them that split open and water comes out, and there are some of them that fall down for fear of Allah. And Allah is not unaware of what you do.”

“Then your hearts became hardened after that, being like stones or even harder...”

When the children of Israel persistently disobeyed Allah, the Exalted, which has been discussed in the previous verses, their spiritual hearts became hardened.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 52, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that if one's spiritual heart is sound the whole body will become sound but if their spiritual heart is corrupt then the whole body will become corrupt.

First of all, this Hadith refutes the foolish belief where one claims to have a purified heart even though their speech and actions are bad. This is because what is inside will eventually manifest outwardly.

The purification of the spiritual heart is only possible when one eliminates evil characteristics from themselves and replaces them with good characteristics discussed in Islamic teachings. This is only possible when one learns and acts on Islamic teachings so that they can sincerely fulfill the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refrain from His prohibitions and face destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Behaving in this manner will lead to a purified spiritual heart. This purification will then reflect in the outward limbs of the body, such as one's tongue and eyes. Meaning, they will only use their organs in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. This is in fact a sign showing the love

Allah, the Exalted, has for His righteous servant according to a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6502.

It is important to note, that this purification will guide one through all worldly difficulties successfully so that they achieve both worldly and religious success.

“Then your hearts became hardened after that, being like stones or even harder...”

The one with a hard spiritual heart can be described as a person who rejects the truth when it is presented to them believing they are superior in knowledge. They lack submission and the fear of Allah, the Exalted, which leads to abandoning good deeds, committing sins, excessive love and striving for the material world while remaining heedless to preparing for the eternal hereafter. They intentionally misinterpret divine scriptures in order to fulfil their own desires such as obtaining fame. They criticise those who strive to adhere to the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, as they desire people to follow their thinking and love for the material world. They cherry pick verses and Hadiths which suit their desires. They label those who strive to adopt and act on all verses and Hadiths as extremists thereby making their own attitude seem pleasing to others. Chapter 5 Al Ma'idah, verse 13:

“So for their breaking of the covenant We cursed them and made their hearts hardened. They distort words from their [proper] places [i.e., usages] and have forgotten a portion of that of which they were reminded. And you will still observe deceit among them, except a few of them...”

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has warned that those who talk excessively without mentioning Allah, the Exalted, are prone to adopting a hard spiritual heart. The one who possesses a hard spiritual heart is furthest from Allah, the Exalted. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2411.

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2305, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that the one who laughs excessively will become hard hearted. Laughing excessively causes one to adopt a mentality where they only discuss funny issues. This causes one to avoid serious issues such as death and Judgment Day. If one avoids these important issues how can they prepare for them? A lack of preparation will lead to one's spiritual heart becoming hard.

Some say over eating can cause hardness of the spiritual heart. This is because over eating causes one to become lazy. Laziness leads to a reduction in good deeds which can cause the spiritual heart to become hard.

As warned by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3334, when a person sins a black spot is etched on their spiritual heart. If sins increase then this blackness increases which leads to a hard spiritual heart. Chapter 83 Al Mutaffifin, verse 14:

“No! Rather, the stain has covered their hearts of that which they were earning.”

This is why it has been said persistently sinning can cause the spiritual heart to die.

“Then your hearts became hardened after that, being like stones or even harder. For indeed, there are stones from which rivers burst forth, and there are some of them that split open and water comes out, and there are some of them that fall down for fear of Allah...”

The three types of stones describe the stages of a hardened spiritual heart becoming a soft sound spiritual heart.

It is important for Muslims to strive to soften their spiritual heart as it leads to its purification. As advised by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 4094, when the spiritual heart is purified all the limbs of the body become purified also. This purification will encourage one to perform righteous deeds and abandon sins for the sake of Allah, the Exalted.

There are many ways to soften the spiritual heart, such as spending time remembering Allah, the Exalted, via the tongue and heart. It is important to involve one's heart by concentrating on what is being recited so that it can become softened. But even if one fails to constantly involve the heart they should never give up. As remembering Allah, the Exalted, only via the tongue is much better than not remembering Him at all. The most superior form of remembering Allah, the Exalted, is reciting the Holy Quran. In order for one to involve their heart in the recitation they should strive to understand what they are reciting by either learning Arabic or by studying the Holy Quran in a language they understand. Chapter 39 Az Zumar, verse 23:

“Allah has sent down the best statement: a consistent Book wherein is reiteration. The skins shiver therefrom of those who fear their Lord; then their skins and their hearts relax at the remembrance [i.e., mention] of Allah...”

The next action which can lead to a soft spiritual heart is being kind to the poor, such as poor orphans and widows. Aiding the poor reminds one of the countless blessings Allah, the Exalted, has bestowed on them. The fact that Allah, the Exalted, has made a person self-sufficient and the helper of others can soften the heart as long as the Muslim has a good intention.

Pondering about death often can cause the spiritual heart to become soft. This is why the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4258, that Muslims should often remember the destroyer of pleasures meaning, death. This will cause one to take things seriously as they know they must prepare for death and the hereafter. This preparation will lead to a soft spiritual heart.

Muslims can also soften their spiritual heart by visiting graves regularly. In fact, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 1569, that Muslims should visit graves as it will remind them of the hereafter. But it is important to note, that this deed will only cause one's spiritual heart to become soft if they ponder over their death, grave and hereafter. Merely visiting graves will make a person's mood more serious but it will not soften their spiritual heart until this self-reflection is done.

Muslims can also contemplate on the past nations who were destroyed by Allah, the Exalted, because of their persistent disobedience. As discussed extensively throughout the Holy Quran and Hadiths of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, the past nations were more powerful, lived longer and obtained more worldly blessings than the people of the modern world yet as they disobeyed Allah, the Exalted, none of these things benefited them. Their massive and unparalleled empires faded away leaving only a few signs behind in order to warn those who came after them. When a Muslim truly reflects on these things their spiritual heart will soften which will encourage them to prepare for the hereafter before their time runs out.

“Then your hearts became hardened after that, being like stones or even harder. For indeed, there are stones from which rivers burst forth, and there are some of them that split open and water comes out, and there are some of them that fall down for fear of Allah...”

The three types of stones describe the stages of a hardened spiritual heart becoming a soft sound spiritual heart. This journey involves learning and acting on the teachings of Islam so that one replaces their negative characteristics with positive ones.

The first type meaning, the stones from which rivers burst forth, is the spiritual heart which benefits others on a large scale. The best way to achieve this is to lead by example.

In the early days of Islam to attend a gathering of Islamic knowledge one had to journey for days but now countless lectures can be found online. Yet, ignorance of the correct path has only increased since the passing of the righteous predecessors. This is because some have acquired knowledge by memorizing verses of the Holy Quran and Hadiths of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, but have not used them to purify their character. Meaning, they did not act on their knowledge. Those who act like this will lose the power to affect the hearts of others through their advice. Some lecturers are like news bulletins that only provide information without stimulating others to act thereby failing in their duty to guide others through their God given knowledge. Non-Muslims are mainly accepting Islam through their own research of Islam instead of observing a practical example of a successful Muslim. One who desires to spread Islam must make it their

priority to purify their character through knowledge. Chapter 61 As Saf, verse 3:

“Greatly hateful in the sight of Allah is that you say what you do not do.”

When one acts in this way then a little correct knowledge will have a massive impact on themself and others. Whereas, those who reject this correct attitude may possess more knowledge but it will have no positive affect on anybody. This type of person has been described in the Holy Quran. Chapter 62 Al Jumu’ah, verse 5:

“...and then did not take it on (did not act on their knowledge) is like that of a donkey who carries volumes [of books]...”

“Then your hearts became hardened after that, being like stones or even harder. For indeed, there are stones from which rivers burst forth, and there are some of them that split open and water comes out, and there are some of them that fall down for fear of Allah...”

The three types of stones describe the stages of a hardened spiritual heart becoming a soft sound spiritual heart. This journey involves learning and acting on the teachings of Islam so that one replaces their negative characteristics with positive ones.

The second type meaning, the stones that split open to release some water, is the spiritual heart which benefits others on a smaller scale, such as one's family or friends.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 2409, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that each person is a guardian and responsible for the things under their care.

The greatest thing a Muslim is a guardian of is their faith. Therefore, they must strive to fulfill its responsibility by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

This guardianship also includes every blessing one has been granted by Allah, the Exalted, which includes external things such as wealth and internal things such as one's body. A Muslim must fulfill the responsibility of these things by using them in the way prescribed by Islam. For example, a Muslim should only use their eyes to look at lawful things and their tongue to utter only lawful and useful words.

This guardianship also extends to others within one's life such as relatives and friends. A Muslim must fulfill this responsibility by fulfilling their rights such as providing for them and gently commanding good and forbidding evil according to the teachings of Islam. One should not cut off from others especially over worldly issues. Instead, they should continue to treat them kindly hoping they will change for the better. This guardianship includes one's children. A Muslim must guide them by leading by example as this by far is the most effective way in guiding children. They must obey Allah, the Exalted, practically as discussed earlier and teach their children to do the same. A separate free eBook has been produced which discusses this aspect in detail and can be viewed using the following link:

<https://documentcloud.adobe.com/link/track?uri=urn:aaid:scds:US:1122ebc4-72ab-4384-9198-7a93e45f53b3>

To conclude, according to this Hadith everyone has some sort of responsibility they have been entrusted with. So they should gain and act on the relevant knowledge in order to fulfill them as this is a part of obeying Allah, the Exalted.

“Then your hearts became hardened after that, being like stones or even harder. For indeed, there are stones from which rivers burst forth, and there are some of them that split open and water comes out, and there are some of them that fall down for fear of Allah...”

The three types of stones describe the stages of a hardened spiritual heart becoming a soft sound spiritual heart. This journey involves learning and acting on the teachings of Islam so that one replaces their negative characteristics with positive ones.

The last type meaning, the stones that fall down from the fear of Allah, the Exalted, is the spiritual heart which has sincerely submitted to Allah, the Exalted, even if it does not benefit others.

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1660, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, mentioned the two most virtuous people. The second person mentioned is the one who secludes themselves from society thereby, keeping their evil away from people and remains firm on the obedience of Allah, the Exalted. A Muslim is not allowed to behave in this manner if they possess dependents as neglecting them is a sin. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 1692.

In addition, one should not avoid people in order to be safe from their evil they should instead do so to keep their own evil away from people. As the former attitude can lead to pride where a person believes they are righteous while all others are sinful. It is important to remember that

an atom's worth of pride is enough to take someone to Hell. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 265. Reducing socializing with people can lead to great good as it reduces the chances of a Muslim committing sins through their speech and actions.

In addition, it will free their time up to learn and act on Islamic knowledge which leads to true and lasting success in both worlds. But the more one unnecessarily interacts with others the more chance of committing sins and the more preoccupied they will become with worldly things. Benefit might be obtained by interacting with people but in this day and age it is far safer to avoid socializing unnecessarily.

“Then your hearts became hardened after that, being like stones or even harder. For indeed, there are stones from which rivers burst forth, and there are some of them that split open and water comes out, and there are some of them that fall down for fear of Allah...”

Firstly, it is important to understand that the major thing which separates a human from an animal is the fact that people live by a higher moral code. If people abandoned this and simply acted on their desires then they would be no difference between them and animals. In fact, people would be worse as they possess the higher level of thinking yet still choose to live like animals. Chapter 7 Al A'raf, verse 179:

“...They have hearts with which they do not understand, they have eyes with which they do not see, and they have ears with which they do not hear. Those are like livestock; rather, they are more astray. It is they who are the heedless.”

Secondly, whether people want to admit it or not in reality, every person is a servant of something or someone. Some are servants of others such as Hollywood executives and do whatever they command them to do even if it challenges modesty and shame. Others are servants of their relatives and friends and do whatever it takes to please them. Some adopt the worse type of servanthood by being servants of their own desires as this is the attitude of animals who generally act to please themselves. The best and highest form of servant hood is being a servant of Allah, the Exalted. This is quite evident if one turns the pages of history which clearly shows that those who were the servants of Allah, the Exalted, such as the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, were granted the highest honour and respect in this world and will be granted

this in the next. Centuries have passed yet their names are remembered as the pillars and beacons of history. Whereas those who became servants of others especially their own desires were eventually disgraced in this world and became mere footnotes in history even if they achieved some worldly status. The media barely remembers them after their pass away and swiftly moves onto the next person to report on. During their lives these people eventually become sad, lonely, depressed and even suicidal as selling their souls and decency to their worldly masters did not grant them the contentment they were looking for. One does not need to be a scholar to understand this obvious truth. So if people must be servants they should be the servants of Allah, the Exalted, as lasting honour, greatness and true success lies only in this.

In addition, a Muslim believes that there is none worthy of worship save Allah, the Exalted. This in reality, means that Allah, the Exalted, is the only One who is obeyed and never disobeyed. When one accepts Allah, the Exalted, as their God they will not obey anything if it leads to the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted. But the moment one obeys anything which leads to the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted, then they have corrupted their belief in His Oneness.

“...and there are some of them that fall down for fear of Allah...”

The aspects of fearing Allah, the Exalted/piety has been discussed in great detail in a free eBook which can be accessed directly using the following link:

<https://documentcloud.adobe.com/link/track?uri=urn:aaid:scds:US:f2696fd3-6f1b-4d27-919e-202045f8b0c4>

But to sum up, piety cannot be achieved without gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge so that one can fulfill the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refrain from His prohibitions and face destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 35 Fatir, verse 28:

“...Only those fear Allah, from among His servants, who have knowledge...”

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2451, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon, advised that a Muslim cannot become pious until they avoid something which is not harmful to their religion out of caution that it will lead to something which is harmful. Therefore, an aspect of piety is to avoid things which are doubtful not just unlawful. This is because doubtful things takes a Muslim one step closer to the unlawful and the closer one is to the unlawful the easier it is

to fall into it. It is why a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1205, advises that the one who avoids unlawful and doubtful things will protect their religion and honor. If one observes those who have become misguided in society, in most cases, this occurred gradually not in one sudden step. Meaning, the person first indulged in doubtful things before falling into the unlawful. This is the reason why Islam stresses the need to avoid unnecessary and vain things in one's life as they can lead them to the unlawful. For example, vain and useless speech which is not classified sinful by Islam often leads to evil speech, such as backbiting, lying and slander. If a person avoids the first step by not indulging in vain speech they will undoubtedly avoid evil speech. This process can be applied to all things which are vain, unnecessary and especially, doubtful.

“...And Allah is not unaware of what you do.”

Allah, the Exalted, is fully aware of all things including the inner intention and feelings of a person as well as their outward actions. The Muslim who understands this will ensure they not only perform righteous deeds but will do so with the correct intention knowing that they might be able to fool people but Allah, the Exalted, is fully aware of their intention and inward state and will hold them accountable for it.

A Muslim must act on this divine name by striving to gain and act on useful worldly and religious knowledge sincerely for the sake of Allah, the Exalted. In addition, they must constantly supervise their inward and outward states. Through this they will become aware of their faults and strive to rectify them. A Muslim should not live heedless to the purpose of their creation. They should instead live in full awareness and therefore obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience.

“...And Allah is not unaware of what you do.”

Allah, the Exalted, does not hasten the punishment for the one who deserves it out of leniency. Instead He gives them an opportunity to sincerely repent and rectify their behaviour. The Muslim who understands this will never give up hope in the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, but will not also cross the limits and adopt wishful thinking by believing Allah, the Exalted, will never punish them. They understand that punishment is only delayed not abandoned unless they sincerely repent. So this divine name creates hope and fear in a Muslim. A Muslim should use this delay in order to repent and hasten towards good deeds.

A Muslim should act on this divine attribute by being lenient with people especially, when they demonstrate bad character. They should show leniency towards others just as they desire Allah, the Exalted, to be lenient with them in their moments of heedlessness. But at the same time they should not be lenient with their own bad characteristics knowing that punishment for sins is delayed not permanently abandoned until they sincerely repent. They should also remain steadfast in leniency by replying evil with good according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 34:

“And not equal are the good deed and the bad. Repel [evil] by that [deed] which is better; and thereupon, the one whom between you and him is enmity [will become] as though he was a devoted friend.”

Parable 4

Chapter 2 - Al Baqarah, Verses 170-171

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ اتَّبِعُوا مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ قَالُوا بَلْ نَتَّبِعُ مَا أَلْفَيْنَا عَلَيْهِ آبَاءَنَا أَوَلَوْ كَانَتْ

ءَابَاءَهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٧٠﴾

وَمَثَلُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا كَمَثَلِ لَذِي يَنْعِقُ بِمَا لَا يَسْمَعُ إِلَّا دُعَاءً وَنِدَاءً صُمُّ بُكْمٌ عُمْى فَهُمْ

لَا يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٧١﴾

“And when it is said to them, “Follow what Allah has revealed,” they say, “Rather, we will follow that which we found our fathers doing.” Even though their fathers understood nothing, nor were they guided? The example of those who disbelieve is like that of one who shouts at what hears nothing but calls and cries [i.e., cattle or sheep] - deaf, dumb and blind, so they do not understand.”

“And when it is said to them, “Follow what Allah has revealed,”...”

This verse highlights the importance of not only believing in the Holy Quran but practically obeying and following it.

In a Hadith found in Imam Munzari's, *Awareness and Apprehension*, number 30, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that the Holy Quran will intercede on Judgment Day. Those who follow it during their lives on Earth will be led to Paradise on Judgment Day. But those who neglect it during their lives on Earth will find that it pushes them into Hell on Judgment Day.

The Holy Quran is a book of guidance. It is not merely a book of recitation. Muslims must therefore strive to fulfill all aspects of the Holy Quran to ensure that it guides them to success in both worlds. The first aspect is reciting it correctly and regularly. The second aspect is to understand it. And the final aspect is to act on its teachings according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Those who behave in such a manner are the ones who are given glad tidings of right guidance through every difficulty in this world and its intercession on the Day of Judgment. But as warned by this Hadith the Holy Quran is only guidance and a mercy for those who correctly act on its aspects according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. But those who misinterpret it and instead act according to their desires in order to gain worldly things, such as fame, will be deprived of this right guidance and its intercession on Judgment Day. In fact, their complete loss in both worlds will only increase until they sincerely repent. Chapter 17 Al Isra, verse 82:

“And We send down of the Quran that which is healing and mercy for the believers, but it does not increase the wrongdoers except in loss.”

Finally, it is important to understand that even though the Holy Quran is a cure for worldly problems a Muslim should not only use it for this purpose. Meaning, they should not only recite it in order to fix their worldly problems thereby, treating the Holy Quran like a tool which is removed during a difficulty and then placed back in a toolbox. The main function of the Holy Quran is to guide one to the hereafter safely. Neglecting this main function and only using it to fix one's worldly problems is not correct as it contradicts the behaviour of a true Muslim. It is like the one who purchases a car with many different accessories yet, it possesses no engine. There is no doubt that this person is simply foolish.

“And when it is said to them, “Follow what Allāh has revealed,” they say, “Rather, we will follow that which we found our fathers doing.”...”

In a similar mentality, the people of the book took their elders as Lords by obeying them without question and taking their opinions to be the words and commands of Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 9 At Tawbah, verse 31:

“They [the people of the book] have taken their scholars and monks as lords besides Allah...”

Unfortunately, some Muslims also blindly follow their scholars and leaders without using the common sense and intellect Allah, the Exalted, granted them. Even though following a rightly guided scholar is important yet a Muslim still needs to use the intelligence granted to them by studying Islamic teachings in order to strengthen their faith. But some hold onto ignorance and blindly follow their scholars as if they are perfect and immune to errors. Therefore, a Muslim who follows a particular scholar who advocates a specific belief should not act like a fanatic and believe their scholar is always right thereby hating those who oppose their scholar’s opinion. This behaviour is not disliking something/someone for the sake of Allah, the Exalted. As long as there is a legitimate difference of opinion amongst the scholars a Muslim following a particular scholar should respect this and not dislike others who differ from what the scholar they follow believes.

“And when it is said to them, “Follow what Allāh has revealed,” they say, “Rather, we will follow that which we found our fathers doing.” Even though their fathers understood nothing, nor were they guided?”

This verse warns against blindly following others as the non-Muslims of Mecca were more desirous of following their ignorant ancestors than the obvious truth meaning, Islam. Unfortunately, this mentality has effected Muslims also who give more weight to following their relatives and elders than following the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, even though their elders were ignorant and advised others based on the cultural practices of non-Muslims they learned from their ignorant elders.

Therefore, it is important for Muslims not to follow and adopt the customary practices of non-Muslims. The more Muslims do this the less they will follow the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This is quite evident in this day and age as many Muslims have adopted the cultural practices of other nations which has caused them to become distant from the teachings of Islam. For example, one only needs to observe the modern Muslim wedding to observe how many non-Muslim cultural practices have been adopted by Muslims. What makes this worse is that many Muslims cannot differentiate between Islamic practices based on the Holy Quran and traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and the cultural practices of non-Muslims. Because of this non-Muslims cannot differentiate between them either which has caused great problems for Islam. For example, honour killings is a cultural practice which has nothing to do with Islam yet because of the ignorance of Muslims and their habit of adopting non-Muslim cultural practices Islam is blamed every time an honour killing occurs in society. The Holy Prophet

Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, removed the social barriers in the form of casts and brotherhoods in order to unite people yet ignorant Muslims have resurrected them by adopting the cultural practices of non-Muslims. Simply put, the more cultural practices Muslims adopt the less they will act on the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

“And when it is said to them, “Follow what Allāh has revealed,” they say, “Rather, we will follow that which we found our fathers doing.” Even though their fathers understood nothing, nor were they guided?”

This verse warns against blindly following others as the non-Muslims of Mecca were more desirous of following their ignorant ancestors than the obvious truth meaning, Islam. Unfortunately, many Muslims have adopted a similar mentality where they blindly follow their elders in respect to Islam instead of using the intelligence they have been granted by Allah, the Exalted, to study Islamic teachings so that they believe through knowledge i.e. certainty of faith.

A Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4049, indicates the importance of not blindly imitating others in accepting Islam, such as one's family, without gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge so that one surpasses blind imitation and obeys Allah, the Exalted, while truly recognizing his Lordship and their own servanthood. This is in fact the purpose of mankind. Chapter 51 Adh Dhariyat, verse 56:

“And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me.”

How can one truly worship someone they do not even recognize? Blind imitation is acceptable for children but adults must follow in the footsteps of the righteous predecessors by truly understanding the purpose of their creation through knowledge. Ignorance is the very reason why the Muslims who fulfil their obligatory duties still feel disconnected from

Allah, the Exalted. This recognition aids a Muslim to behave as a true servant of Allah, the Exalted, throughout the day not just during the five daily obligatory prayers. Only through this will Muslims fulfil true servanthood to Allah, the Exalted. And this is the weapon which overcomes all difficulties a Muslim faces during their life. If they do not possess this they will face difficulties without gaining reward. In fact, it will only lead to more difficulties in both worlds. Performing the obligatory duties through blind imitation may fulfil the obligation but it will not safely guide one through every difficulty in order to reach the proximity of Allah, the Exalted, in both worlds. In fact, in most cases blind imitation will lead to one eventually abandoning their obligatory duties. This Muslim will only fulfil their duties in times of difficulty and turn away from them in times of ease or vice versa.

“And when it is said to them, “Follow what Allāh has revealed,” they say, “Rather, we will follow that which we found our fathers doing.” Even though their fathers understood nothing, nor were they guided?”

This verse also indicates the importance of good companionship as an ignorant person will influence their companions in a negative way.

There are countless examples in the world of how a person inspired their friend to take the wrong path in life which caused them serious trouble, such as prison. One should not only be cautious of people who possess bad characteristics as they will influence their friends in a negative way which is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4833. But a Muslim should also be cautious over the people who seem to possess genuine love for them especially those who do not possess real knowledge. This is because the one who does not possess real knowledge will sometimes advise their loved ones incorrectly believing they have fulfilled and shown their love to their companion. For example, a wife may advise her tired husband to offer his obligatory prayer at home instead of at the Mosque with congregation. Even though according to some scholars it is permissible to offer one's obligatory prayer at home yet, this advice will only take one away from one of the greatest traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This in turn will only take them further away from Allah, the Exalted. This wife may believe she has behaved in a loving way even though she has not. This is why gaining useful knowledge is extremely important and a duty on all Muslims according to a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224. This is because some things may seem difficult outwardly yet many blessings are contained within them. And many things may seem easy and even lawful yet they only take one away from Allah, the Exalted. Therefore, a Muslim should be cautious and remain firm on the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His

commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience and not get fooled by the advice a loved one gives. They should not assume the advice will benefit them just because it comes from a beloved companion.

“And when it is said to them, “Follow what Allāh has revealed,” they say, “Rather, we will follow that which we found our fathers doing.” Even though their fathers understood nothing, nor were they guided?”

A great distraction which prevents one from submitting to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, is ignorance. It can be argued that it is the origin of every sin as the one who truly knows the consequences of sins would never commit them. This refers to true beneficial knowledge which is knowledge that is acted upon. In reality, all knowledge which is not acted on is not beneficial knowledge. The example of the one who behaves in this manner is described in the Holy Quran as a donkey which carries books of knowledge which do not benefit it. Chapter 62 Al Jumu’ah, verse 5:

“...and then did not take it on (did not act upon knowledge) is like that of a donkey who carries volumes [of books]...”

A person who acts on their knowledge rarely slips up and commits sins intentionally. In fact, when this occurs it is only caused by a moment of ignorance where a person forgets to act on their knowledge which results in them sinning.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, once highlighted the seriousness of ignorance in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2322. He declared that everything in the material world is cursed except for the remembrance of Allah, the Exalted, whatever is

connected to this remembrance, the scholar and the student of knowledge. This means that all the blessings in the material world will become a curse for the one who is ignorant as they will misuse them thereby committing sins.

In fact, ignorance can be considered a person's worse enemy as it prevents them from protecting themselves from harm and gaining benefit all of which can only be achieved through acting on knowledge. The ignorant commits sins without being aware of them. How can one avoid a sin if they do not know what is considered a sin? Ignorance causes one to neglect their obligatory duties. How can one fulfil their duties if they are unaware of what their duties are?

It is therefore a duty on all Muslims to gain enough knowledge to fulfil all their obligatory duties and avoid sins. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224.

“And when it is said to them, “Follow what Allāh has revealed,” they say, “Rather, we will follow that which we found our fathers doing.” Even though their fathers understood nothing, nor were they guided?”

This verse indirectly indicates a Muslim should only consult and follow those who possess knowledge and guidance meaning, piety.

Therefore, Muslims should only consult a few people in respect to their affairs. They should select these few people according to the advice of the Holy Quran. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 43:

“...So ask the people of the message if you do not know.”

This verse reminds Muslims to consult those who possess knowledge. As consulting an ignorant person only leads to further trouble. Just like a person would be foolish to consult a car mechanic over their physical health a Muslim should only consult those who possess knowledge about it and the Islamic teachings linked to them.

In addition, a Muslim should only consult those who fear Allah, the Exalted. This is because they will never advise others to disobey Allah, the Exalted. Whereas, those who do not fear or obey Allah, the Exalted, might possess knowledge and experience but they will easily advise

others to disobey Allah, the Exalted, which only increases one's problems. In reality, those who fear Allah, the Exalted, possess true knowledge and only this knowledge will guide others through their problems successfully. Chapter 35 Fatir, verse 28:

“...Only those fear Allah, from among His servants, who have knowledge...”

“And when it is said to them, “Follow what Allāh has revealed,” they say, “Rather, we will follow that which we found our fathers doing.” Even though their fathers understood nothing, nor were they guided?”

This verse also indicates the importance of choosing the right role model to follow.

If one turns the pages of history they will observe many people who achieved great worldly success and in some cases benefited mankind yet, they will also observe at least one thing which taints their achievements. But if one observes the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, they will observe nothing except success and countless things which benefit mankind. Even though, there are people who falsely criticise the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, it is quite evident from his highly accurate and detailed biography which has been verified by reliable Muslim and non-Muslim historians that this criticism is based on nothing but falsehood. This is why Muslims must put aside all role models and instead study and adopt the flawless character of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, as this is the only way to achieve real untainted success in both one's worldly and religious life. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 31:

“Say, [O Muhammad], “If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins...”

There is no goal greater than this in this world. In fact, this is what people irrespective of their faith strive to achieve. And Allah, the Exalted, has placed all of it in the footsteps of his Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 33 Al Ahzab, verse 21:

“There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Last Day and [who] remembers Allah often.”

It is simple, if a person desires worldly and religious success they should follow in the footsteps of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. But if they choose a path other than his whatever tainted success they achieve will eventually become a burden for them and it may lead to a punishment on a Great Day.

“And when it is said to them, “Follow what Allāh has revealed,” they say, “Rather, we will follow that which we found our fathers doing.” Even though their fathers understood nothing, nor were they guided?”

The elders of a family, especially parents, often use a statement which they believe indicates their right guidance namely, elders know best. To be honest this statement was true in the day of the righteous predecessors as the elders at that time used to strive in gaining and acting on beneficial knowledge. They put aside their own opinions and thinking and instead adopted the advice of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Because of their sincere efforts they were granted right guidance by Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 29 Al Ankabut, verse 69:

“And those who strive for Us - We will surely guide them to Our ways...”

Therefore, this statement applied to them and the youngsters in those days benefited if they acted on the advice of these elders. But unfortunately times have changed. In this day and age the majority of elders do not seek nor act on beneficial knowledge instead the vast majority act on their cultural practices which in most cases do not have a foundation in Islamic teachings. They flee from beneficial knowledge and are very content with these teachings based on made up cultural practices. Because of this ignorance elders are now sometimes right and sometimes wrong. Therefore, the statement elders know best no longer applies.

It is important to note this does not mean a Muslim should ignore or disrespect their elders as this completely contradicts the teachings of Islam. They should instead strive to gain correct beneficial knowledge, hear the advice of others, including their elders, and then make a choice which is indicated by Islam in all their matters even if it contradicts the opinions of others. A Muslim should not blindly follow their elders as this in most cases will lead them away from the teachings of Islam. Chapter 6 Al An'am, verse 116:

“And if you obey most of those upon the earth, they will mislead you from the way of Allah. They follow not except assumption, and they are not but misjudging.”

This is possible to do while maintaining respect for others especially one's elders. If Muslims do this then perhaps a day will come when this statement will once again be true.

“And when it is said to them, “Follow what Allāh has revealed,” they say, “Rather, we will follow that which we found our fathers doing.”...The example of those who disbelieve is like that of one who shouts at what hears nothing but calls and cries [i.e., cattle or sheep] - deaf, dumb and blind, so they do not understand.”

When these two verses are assessed together the overall meaning could be that when one blindly follows others without applying their intelligence to assess whether the guidance given to them benefits them or not they behave similarly to cattle who blindly follow the voice of their shepherd. The one who behaves in this manner has failed to use the faculties granted to them and as a result they fail to understand and act on the truth.

In addition, this verse could also mean when one blindly follows their elders then no matter what good advice is given to them they will not comprehend it as they are absorbed by the traditions of their elders. So the shepherd in this verse could be referring to the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, whose call to faith to the non-Muslims who stubbornly and blindly followed their ancestors was similar to a person shouting at cattle.

Either way these verses harshly criticizes those who fail to use the faculties they have been granted by Allah, the Exalted, in order to correctly comprehend the truth. Therefore, Muslims must strive to gain and act on Islamic knowledge so that they avoid becoming like cattle.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6853, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that whoever follows a path seeking knowledge Allah, the Exalted, will make the path to Paradise easy for them.

This indicates both a physical path someone takes seeking knowledge, such as attending lectures and classes, and a path whereby someone seeks knowledge without a physical journey. It encompasses all forms of knowledge, such as listening, reading, studying and writing about knowledge. The path to Paradise has many obstacles preventing a Muslim from reaching it. Only the one who possesses knowledge of them and how to overcome them will reach Paradise safely. In addition, it is easily understood that a person cannot reach a city in this world without knowledge of its location and the route which leads to it. Similarly, Paradise cannot be obtained without knowing these things about it, such as the path leading to it.

But the important thing to note is that a Muslim's intention to seek and act on knowledge must be to please Allah, the Exalted. Whoever seeks religious knowledge for a worldly reason, such as showing off, will end up in Hell if they fail to sincerely repent. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 253.

In addition, a Muslim must strive to act on their knowledge as knowledge without action is of no value or benefit. This is like the one who possesses knowledge of a path to safety but does not take it and instead remains in an area full of dangers. This is why knowledge can be split into two categories. The first is when one acts on their knowledge, which leads to piety and an increase in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted.

The second is when one fails to act on their knowledge. This type will not increase one's obedience to Allah, the Exalted, in fact, it will only increase them in arrogance believing they are superior to others even though they are like donkeys which carry books that do not benefit it. Chapter 62 Al Jumu'ah, verse 5:

“...and then did not take it on (did not act on their knowledge) is like that of a donkey who carries volumes [of books]...”

“And when it is said to them, “Follow what Allāh has revealed,” they say, “Rather, we will follow that which we found our fathers doing.”...The example of those who disbelieve is like that of one who shouts at what hears nothing but calls and cries [i.e., cattle or sheep] - deaf, dumb and blind, so they do not understand.”

Some adopt stubbornness in worldly matters and as a result they do not change their character for the better. Instead, they remain steadfast on their attitude believing this is somehow a sign of their great strength and wisdom. Steadfastness in matters of faith is a praiseworthy attitude but in most worldly matters it is only called stubbornness, which is blameworthy.

Unfortunately, some believe if they change their attitude it demonstrates weakness or it shows that they are admitting their fault and because of this they stubbornly fail to change for the better. Adults behave like immature children by believing that if they change their behaviour it means they have lost while others who remain steadfast on their attitude have won. This is simply childish.

In reality, an intelligent person will remain steadfast on matters of faith but in worldly matters they will change their attitude, as long as it is not sinful, in order to make their life easier. So changing to improve one's life is not a sign of weakness it is in fact a sign of intelligence.

In many cases, a person refuses to change their attitude and expects others in their life to change theirs, such as their relatives. But what often

occurs is that due to stubbornness all remain in the same state which only leads to regular disagreements and arguments. A wise person understands that if the people around them do not change for the better than they should. This change will improve the quality of their life and their relationship with others which is much better than going around in circular arguments with people. This positive attitude will eventually cause others to respect them as it takes real strength to change one's character for the better.

Those who remain stubborn will always find something to be annoyed about which will remove peace from their life. This will cause further difficulties in all aspects of their life, such as their mental health. But those who adapt and change for the better will always move from one station of peace to another. If one achieves this peace does it really matter if others believe they only changed because they were wrong?

To conclude, to remain steadfast on the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, is praiseworthy. But in worldly matters and in cases where no sin is committed a person should learn to adapt and change their attitude so that they find some peace in this world.

“The example of those who disbelieve is like that of one who shouts at what hears nothing but calls and cries [i.e., cattle or sheep] – deaf...so they do not understand.”

Failing to use one’s hearing correctly will prevent them from understanding and acting on the truth.

Even though, the number of preachers has increased over time and accessing information has become easier yet the strength of Muslims has only weakened. One of the reasons is that many Muslims have adopted a mentality which has hindered them from learning and acting on Islamic knowledge namely, they believe merely listening to Islamic knowledge is good enough to succeed. This is a trap of the Devil and completely contradicts the attitude of the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, and the righteous predecessors. They not only listened to religious knowledge but they fully intended and fulfilled this intention by acting on the knowledge they heard. Failing to act in this way has caused the faith of Muslims to weaken. It is the reason why some Muslims have spent decades attending religious gatherings and talks yet have not changed for the better at all. The danger of this attitude is that eventually people will fall lower by believing that they can simply declare Islam with their tongues without the need to listen or act on religious teachings. Muslims will be left with ignorance as their guide which will only lead them to destruction.

“The example of those who disbelieve is like that of one who shouts at what hears nothing but calls and cries [i.e., cattle or sheep] –...dumb...so they do not understand.”

It is important for Muslims to understand that their worldly knowledge irrespective of how much they possess is not enough to gain success in their religious life. Even though, gaining useful worldly knowledge is praiseworthy according to the teachings of Islam as it is an excellent means for one to obtain lawful provision for themselves and their dependents yet, it is not enough to safely guide them through their religious life. For example, in most cases, worldly knowledge will not teach someone how to safely journey through a difficulty or a test in a way which pleases Allah, the Exalted, so that they gain reward in both worlds. The obligatory duties and traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, cannot be acted on by a Muslim who only possesses worldly knowledge. In fact, religious knowledge has the power to guide one to success in both worlds whereas worldly knowledge will only aid someone in this world. The one who possesses religious knowledge will adhere to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, which will result in such blessings and grace that they will find success in both worlds. Whereas, worldly knowledge will inspire one to deduce their own path in religion instead of acting according to the teachings of the rightly guided namely, the righteous predecessors. Religion is not about creating one's own path it is simply to adhere to Islamic teachings.

Unfortunately, many Muslims who possess worldly knowledge do not realise this important point which only reduces their chances of achieving success in both worlds. Therefore, Muslims should strive to obtain and act on both religious and useful worldly knowledge if they desire success in both worlds. This is why gaining useful knowledge is a

duty on all Muslims according to a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224.

“The example of those who disbelieve is like that of one who shouts at what hears nothing but calls and cries [i.e., cattle or sheep] –...dumb [mute]...so they do not understand.”

When one refuses to discuss important matters pertaining to faith they adopt a misguided mentality namely, ignorance is bliss.

It is important to understand that the famous statement ignorance is bliss is not true especially, in respect to religious affairs and the hereafter. Unfortunately, some Muslims believe just because they do not know an Islamic rule they are exempt from obeying it and Allah, the Exalted, will not hold them accountable for it. This is one of the worse types of ignorance as Allah, the Exalted, has made it clear that there are no excuses and Muslims must learn and act on the teachings of Islam. In fact, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, declared this to be a duty on all Muslims in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224. It is a trap of the Devil to believe ignorance is an acceptable excuse and one does not need to gain knowledge about Islam. If a government does not accept this excuse how can one expect Allah, the Exalted, to? Just like a person who takes on a responsibility is expected to know the rules attached to it, such as being a licensed driver, the one who accepts Islam as their religion is responsible for learning the rules linked to it. Therefore, Muslims must avoid ignorance as it will not benefit them in this world and it will certainly not aid them in the hereafter.

“The example of those who disbelieve is like that of one who shouts at what hears nothing but calls and cries [i.e., cattle or sheep] –...blind so they do not understand.”

Failing to use one’s perception correctly will prevent them from understanding and acting on the truth.

It is important for Muslims to develop the correct perception so that they can increase their obedience to Allah, the Exalted, which involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience. This is what the righteous predecessors possessed and it encouraged them to avoid the excess luxuries of the material world and instead prepare for the hereafter. This is an important characteristic to possess and it can be explained with a worldly example. Two people are extremely thirsty and come across a cup of murky water. They both desire to drink it even though it is not pure and even if it means they have to argue over it. As their thirst grows the more focused on the cup of murky water they become to the point they lose focus on everything else. But if one of them shifted their focus and observed a river of pure water which was only a short distance ahead they would immediately lose focus on the cup of water to the point they would no longer care about it and no longer argue over it. And instead they would endure their thirst patiently knowing a river of pure water is close. The person who is unaware of the river would probably believe the other person is crazy after observing their change in attitude. This is the case of the two types of people in this world. One group greedily focuses on the material world. The other group has shifted their focus to the hereafter and the pure and eternal blessings therein. When one shifts their focus to the bliss of the hereafter worldly problems do not seem like such a big deal. Therefore, patience becomes easier to adopt. But if one keeps their focus on this world then it will seem like everything to them.

They will argue, fight, love and hate for it. Just like the person in the example mentioned earlier who only focuses on the cup of murky water.

This correct perception is only achieved through gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge found within the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 53:

“We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth...”

“The example of those who disbelieve is like that of one who shouts at what hears nothing but calls and cries [i.e., cattle or sheep] - deaf, dumb and blind, so they do not understand.”

First of all, it is important to understand, that the major thing which separates a human from an animal is the fact that people live by a higher moral code. If people abandoned this and simply acted on their desires then there would be no difference between them and animals. In fact, people would be worse as they possess the higher level of thinking yet, still choose to live like animals.

Secondly, whether people want to admit it or not in reality, every person is a servant of something or someone. Some are servants of others, such as Hollywood executives and do whatever they command them to do even if it challenges modesty and shame. Others are servants of their relatives and friends and do whatever it takes to please them. Others are the worse by being servants of their own desires as this is the attitude of animals who generally act to please themselves. The best and highest form of servanthood is being a servant of Allah, the Exalted. This is quite evident if one turns the pages of history which clearly shows that those who were the servants of Allah, the Exalted, such as the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, were granted the highest honour and respect in this world and will be granted this in the next. Centuries and millennia have passed yet their names are remembered as the pillars and beacons of history. Whereas those who became servants of others especially, their own desires were eventually disgraced in this world even if they achieved some worldly status and they became mere footnotes in history. The media barely remembers those who pass away for more than a few days before moving onto the next person to report on. During their lives these people eventually become sad, lonely, depressed and even suicidal as selling their souls and decency to their worldly masters did not grant them the contentment they were looking

for. One does not need to be a scholar to understand this obvious truth. So if people must be servants they should be the servants of Allah, the Exalted, as lasting honour, greatness and true success lies only in this.

Parable 5

Chapter 2 - Al Baqarah, Verse 259

أَوْ كَالَّذِي مَرَّ عَلَى قَرْيَةٍ وَهِيَ خَاوِيَةٌ عَلَى عُرُوشِهَا قَالَ أَنَّى يُحْيِي هَذِهِ اللَّهُ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا فَأَمَاتَهُ
اللَّهُ مِائَةَ عَامٍ ثُمَّ بَعَثَهُ قَالَ كَمْ لَبِثْتَ قَالَ لَبِثْتُ يَوْمًا أَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ قَالَ بَل لَّبِثْتَ مِائَةَ
عَامٍ فَانظُرْ إِلَى طَعَامِكَ وَشَرَابِكَ لَمْ يَتَسَنَّهْ وَانظُرْ إِلَى حِمَارِكَ وَلِنَجْعَلَكَ
ءَايَةً لِلنَّاسِ وَانظُرْ إِلَى الْعِظَامِ كَيْفَ نُنشِزُهَا ثُمَّ نَكْسُوهَا لَحْمًا فَلَمَّا
تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ قَالَ أَعْلَمُ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٢٥٩﴾

“Or [consider such an example] as the one who passed by a township which had fallen into ruin. He said, “How will Allah bring this to life after its death?” So Allah caused him to die for a hundred years; then He revived him. He said, “How long have you remained?” He [the man] said, “I have remained a day or part of a day.” He said, “Rather, you have remained one hundred years. Look at your food and your drink; it has not changed with time. And look at your donkey; and We will make you a sign for the people. And look at the bones [of this donkey] - how We raise them and then We cover them with flesh.” And when it became clear to him, he said, “I know that Allah is over all things competent.””

“Or [consider such an example] as the one...”

The earlier verses mentioned the difference between those who seek and accept the truth thereby sincerely obeying Allah, the Exalted, and those who reject the clear truth and hold onto their misguided ways. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verses 256-257:

“...The right course has become distinct from the wrong. So whoever disbelieves in ṭāghūt and believes in Allāh has grasped the most trustworthy handhold with no break in it. Allāh is the Ally of those who believe. He brings them out from darkneses into the light. And those who disbelieve - their allies are ṭāghūt. They take them out of the light into darkneses...”

The verses after these then discuss some examples of the types of mentalities mentioned.

“Or [consider such an example] as the one who passed by a township which had fallen into ruin. He said, "How will Allah bring this to life after its death?"...”

It is important for a Muslim to be observant in their daily life and avoid being too self-absorbed in their own worldly matters so that they become heedless over the things which are occurring around them. This is an important quality to possess as it is an excellent way to strengthen one's faith which in turn helps one to remain obedient to Allah, the Exalted, at all times. For example, when a Muslim observes a sick person they should not only aid them by whatever means they possess, even if it is only a supplication, but they should reflect on their own health and understand that they too will eventually lose their good health either by an illness, ageing or even death. This should inspire them to be grateful for their good health and show this through their actions by taking advantage of their good health in both worldly and religious matters which are pleasing to Allah, the Exalted.

When they observe the death of a rich person they should not only feel sad for the deceased and their family but realise that one day which is unknown to them they will die also. They should understand that just like the rich person was abandoned by their wealth, fame and family at their grave so will they too be left only with their deeds in their grave. This will encourage them to prepare for their grave and the hereafter.

This attitude can and should be applied to all things one observes. A Muslim should learn a lesson from everything around them which has been advised in the Holy Quran. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 191:

"...and give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth, [saying], "Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly; exalted are You [above such a thing]; then protect us from the punishment of the Fire.""

Those who behave in this manner will strengthen their faith on a daily basis whereas those who are too self-absorbed in their worldly life will remain heedless which may lead them to their destruction.

“Or [consider such an example] as the one who passed by a township which had fallen into ruin. He said, “How will Allāh bring this to life after its death?”...And when it became clear to him...”

The man referred to in this verse could be the Holy Prophet Uzair, peace be upon him. This has been discussed in Tafsir Ibn Kathir, Volume 2, Page 38.

Scholars have discussed for many generations regarding the man mentioned in this verse. But the important thing to note, is that Muslims should never fall into arguments over this and similar issues to the point that it creates enmity between them. In addition, identifying the man or failing to do so will not affect their faith and obedience to Allah, the Exalted. Neither will this be questioned about on the Day of Judgement by Allah, the Exalted, otherwise the Muslim nation would have been informed of this. So spending countless hours discussing this and similar issues does not make sense. Muslims should instead concentrate more on the things which when clarified will increase their sincere obedience to Allah, the Exalted, in the form of fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and concentrate on those things which will be questioned about on Judgement Day, such as fulfilling the rights of people. Unfortunately, over concentrating on these types of issues has distracted Muslims from concentrating on more important things and issues. This is one of the reasons why the general strength of the Muslim nation has declined over time.

“Or [consider such an example] as the one who passed by a township which had fallen into ruin. He said, “How will Allāh bring this to life after its death?”...And when it became clear to him...”

The man referred to in this verse could be the Holy Prophet Uzair, peace be upon him. This has been discussed in Tafsir Ibn Kathir, Volume 2, Page 38.

The first thing to note is that Allah, the Exalted, did not criticize the Holy Prophet Uzair, peace be upon him, for asking this question as it was rooted in a desire to gain certainty of faith and not rooted in doubt and rejection. He desired to understand the method in which the resurrection would occur. He did not doubt that the resurrection would occur. Therefore, this indicates the importance of gaining and acting on knowledge, a branch of this is asking sensible and relevant questions, so that one can obtain certainty of faith.

All Muslims have faith in Islam but the strength of their faith varies from person to person. For example, the one who follows the teachings of Islam because their family told them to is not the same as the one who believes in it through evidence. A person who has heard about something will not believe in it in the same way as the one who has witnessed the thing with their own eyes.

As confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224, gaining useful knowledge is a duty on all Muslims. One of the reasons for this is that it is the best way a Muslim can strengthen their faith in Islam. This is important to pursue as the stronger one's certainty of faith the greater the chance they will remain steadfast on the correct path, especially when facing difficulties. In addition, having certainty of faith has been described as one of the best things one can possess in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3849. This knowledge should be obtained by studying the Holy Quran and the Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, through a reliable source.

Allah, the Exalted, did not only declare a truth in the Holy Quran but He also provided evidence for it through examples. Not only examples which are to be found in the past nations but examples which have been placed in one's very own life. For example, in the Holy Quran Allah, the Exalted, advises that sometimes a person loves a thing even though it will cause them trouble if they obtained it. Similarly, they might hate a thing while there is much hidden good in it for them. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

There are many examples of this truth in history such as the Pact of Hudaiba. Some Muslims believed this pact, which was made with the non-Muslims of Mecca, would completely favour the latter group. Yet, history clearly shows that it favoured Islam and the Muslims. This event is discussed in the Hadiths found in Sahih Bukhari, numbers 2731 and 2732.

If one reflects on their own life they will find many examples when they believed something was good when it was actually bad for them and vice versa. These examples prove the authenticity of this verse and help one's faith strengthen.

Another example is found in chapter 79 An Naziat, verse 46:

“It will be, on the Day they see it (Judgement Day) as though they had not remained [in the world] except for an afternoon or a morning thereof.”

If one turns the pages of history they will clearly observe how great empires came and went. But when they left they passed away in such a way as if they were only on Earth for a moment. All but a few of their signs have faded away as if they were never present on Earth in the first place. Similarly, when one reflects on their own life they will realise that no matter how old they are and no matter how slow certain days might have felt overall their life so far has passed in a flash. Understanding the truthfulness of this verse strengthens one's certainty of faith and this inspires them to prepare for the hereafter before their time runs out.

The Holy Quran and the Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, are full of such examples. Therefore, one should strive to learn and act on these divine teachings so that they adopt certainty of faith. The one who achieves this will not be shaken by any difficulty they face and will remain steadfast on the path which leads to the gates of Paradise. Chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 53:

“We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth...”

“Or [consider such an example] as the one who passed by a township which had fallen into ruin. He said, “How will Allāh bring this to life after its death?”...”

Allah, the Exalted, alone created and controls both life and death.

The Muslim who understands this divine name will submit and sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience without fearing any of the creation while knowing nothing controls life or death except Allah, the Exalted. In addition, a Muslim who recognises this fact will understand that as Allah, the Exalted, chose the beginning and end of every creation He has also chosen everything that occurs in between. The choices of Allah, the Exalted, are unavoidable so one should not become impatient when facing them. Instead they should simply sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, in every situation so that they obtain reward with every passing moment. For example, they should demonstrate patience during times of difficulty and demonstrate true gratitude by using the blessings they possess correctly in times of ease. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 7500.

A Muslim should act on this divine name by bringing their spiritual heart to life and cause death to their ego and negative characteristics by striving to remove them from themselves through obtaining and acting on Islamic knowledge.

“...So Allāh caused him to die for a hundred years...”

This should remind a Muslim of their own death and preparing adequately for it. Death is something which is certain to occur but the time is unknown so it therefore makes sense that a Muslim who believes in the hereafter prioritises preparing for it over preparing for things which might not occur, such as marriage, children or their retirement. It is strange how many Muslims have adopted the opposite mentality even though they testify that the world is temporary and uncertain whereas the hereafter is permanent and they are certain to reach it. No matter how one behaves they will be judged regarding their deeds. A Muslim should not be fooled into believing that they can and will prepare for the hereafter in the future as this attitude only causes them to delay further until their death occurs and they leave this world with regrets that will not aid them.

So the important thing is not that people will die as this is unavoidable but the key is acting in such a way that one is fully prepared for it. The only way to prepare for it correctly is by acting on the teachings of Islam namely, fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience. This is only possible when one prioritises preparing for the hereafter over preparing for things which might not occur.

“...So Allāh caused him to die for a hundred years; then He revived him....”

This reminds Muslims of when they will be resurrected on the Day of Judgement.

The trumpet blast will lead to the death of the creation. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 7381. The important thing to learn is that this is a call which no one can or will reject responding to. It will lead to the resurrection and final judgment. Therefore, Muslims should respond to the call of Allah, the Exalted, through the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, through sincere obedience by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 8 An Anfal, verse 24:

“O you who have believed, respond to Allah and to the Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life...”

Whoever responds to this call in this world will find the final call easy to endure and respond to. Whereas, the one who lives heedless to the call of Allah, the Exalted, in this world will not find peace in it and they will be forced to answer the call of the trumpet which will be a great burden for them to endure and respond to. A person can only ignore the call of Allah, the Exalted, for so long as the final call will occur, sooner or later, and no one will be able to avoid or ignore it. If this is inevitable it makes

sense that one respond to it now, today, instead of living in heedlessness. If one hears the trumpet blast while heedless no action or regret will benefit them and what comes after for this person will be even more terrifying.

“...So Allāh caused him to die for a hundred years; then He revived him. He said, "How long have you remained?" He [the man] said, "I have remained a day or part of a day." He said, "Rather, you have remained one hundred years...”

This will be the attitude of all when they die and when they are resurrected on the Day of Judgement. Therefore, Muslims must use the small moment they have in this world in order to prepare for the eternal hereafter.

It is strange that even though people believe they can die at any moment yet the vast majority behave as if they will live a long life. Some dedicate their efforts to this material world to such a degree that even if they were guaranteed a long life they could not exert any more effort for the sake of the material world. Unfortunately, Muslims delay preparing for the hereafter believing they can do it in the future. They often keep delaying this preparation until they suddenly encounter death unprepared.

It is important for Muslims to understand that no matter how long they live life goes by in a flash. So they should take every opportunity they have in order to prepare for the eternal hereafter. This does not mean they should abandon the world completely. It means they should prioritize preparing for the hereafter by only taking what they need from the material world in order to fulfil their necessities and responsibilities according to the commands of Allah, the Exalted. This attitude will allow them to enjoy the lawful pleasures of this world and prepare adequately for the next one also. A Muslim only fails preparing for the hereafter correctly because of their pursuit of the excess of this material world, not by striving to fulfil their necessities and responsibilities.

A Muslim should remember the Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 7424, which warns that only a person's deeds will accompany them in their grave while their family and wealth abandons them at this crucial moment. Therefore, a Muslim should give priority to the thing which will aid them in their moment of need.

Muslims should not delay preparing for the hereafter otherwise they may well encounter death suddenly while unprepared as death does not come at a particular age or time. If they fail to prepare they will be left with nothing but regrets at a time when regrets will not benefit them. Chapter 89 Al Fajr, verse 23:

“And brought [within view], that Day, is Hell - that Day, man will remember, but how [i.e., what good] to him will be the remembrance?”

“...So Allāh caused him to die for a hundred years; then He revived him. He said, "How long have you remained?" He [the man] said, "I have remained a day or part of a day." He said, "Rather, you have remained one hundred years...”

This will be the attitude of all when they die and when they are resurrected on the Day of Judgement. Therefore, Muslims must use the small moment they have in this world in order to prepare for the eternal hereafter.

A great obstacle to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, is having false hope for a long life. It is an extremely blameworthy characteristic as it is the main cause for a Muslim giving priority to amassing the material world over preparing for the hereafter. One only needs to assess their average 24 hour day and observe how much time they dedicate to the material world and how much time they dedicate to the hereafter in order to realise this truth. In fact, having false hope for a long life is one of the strongest weapons the Devil uses in order to misguide people. When a person believes they will live long they delay preparing for the hereafter falsely believing they can prepare for it in the near future. In most cases, this near future never comes and a person passes away without adequately preparing for the hereafter.

In addition, false hope for a long life causes one to delay sincere repentance and changing one's character for the better as they believe they have much time left to do this. It encourages a person to hoard the things of this material world, such as wealth, as it convinces them they will need these things during their long life on Earth. The Devil scares people into thinking they must hoard wealth for their old age as they may

find no one to support them when they become physically weaker and therefore can no longer work for themselves. They forget that the same way Allah, the Exalted, took care of their provision when they were younger He will provide for them in old age too. In fact, the provision of the creation was allocated over fifty thousand years before the creation of the Heavens and the Earth. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6748. It is strange how a person will dedicate 40 years of their life saving for their retirement which very rarely lasts longer than 20 years but fails to prepare in the same way for the eternal hereafter.

Islam does not teach Muslims to not prepare anything for the world. There is no harm in saving for the near future as long as priority is given to the hereafter. Even though, people admit they may die at any time yet, some behave as if they will live forever in this world. Even to the point that if they were given a promise of eternal life on Earth they would not be able to strive harder in order to accumulate more of the material world due to the restrictions of the day and night. How many people have passed away earlier than expected? And how many learn a lesson from this and change their behaviour?

In reality, one of the greatest pains a person will feel at the time of death or any other stage of the hereafter is regret for delaying their preparation for the hereafter. Chapter 63 Al Munafiqun, verses 10-11:

“And spend [in the way of Allah] from what We have provided you before death approaches one of you and he says, “My Lord, if only You would delay me for a brief term so I would give charity and be of the righteous.”

But never will Allah delay a soul when its time has come. And Allah is Aware of what you do.”

A person would be labelled a fool if they dedicated more time and wealth on a house which they were only going to live in for a short while compared to a house they were planning to live in for a very long time. This is the example of giving priority to the temporal world over the eternal hereafter.

Muslims should work for both the world and the hereafter but know that death does not come to a person at a time, situation or age known to them but it is certain to come. Therefore, preparing for it and what it leads to should take priority over preparing for a future in this world which is not certain to occur.

“...So Allāh caused him to die for a hundred years; then He revived him...Look at your food and your drink; it has not changed with time. And look at your [decayed] donkey...”

Allah, the Exalted, alone controls the states of His creation. If He wills the state of His creation does not change and if He wills they do.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, indicated the infinite and absolute power and authority of Allah, the Exalted, in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2516. This Hadith advises that the entire creation cannot benefit a person if Allah, the Exalted, did not desire them to do so. Similarly, the entire creation together could not harm someone if Allah, the Exalted, did not desire them to. This means only what Allah, the Exalted, decides happens within the universe. It is important to note, that this advice does not indicate one should abandon using means, such as medicine, but it means that one can use the means as they have been created by none other than Allah, the Exalted, but they must understand that Allah, the Exalted, is the only One who decides the outcome of all things. For example, they are many sick people who take medicine and recover from their illness. But they are others who take medicine and do not recover. This indicates that another factor decides the end result namely, the will of Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 9 At Tawbah, verse 51:

“Say, “Never will we be struck except by what Allah has decreed for us...”

The one who understands this knows that anything that affected them could not have been avoided. And those things which missed them could never have been obtained.

It is important to note, that whatever the end result even if it is against a person's desire they should remain patient and truly believe Allah, the Exalted, has chosen the best for them even if they do not observe the wisdom behind the outcome. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

When one truly understands this truth they stop relying on the creation knowing they cannot innately harm or benefit them. Instead, they turn to Allah, the Exalted, seeking His support and protection through sincere obedience by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience. This leads a Muslim to trusting in Allah, the Exalted. It also encourages one to only fear Allah, the Exalted, as they know the creation cannot harm them without the will of Allah, the Exalted.

Recognising that all things which occur within one's life and the universe originate from Allah, the Exalted, is a part of understanding the Oneness of Allah, the Exalted. This is a topic which has no end and goes beyond only superficially believing that there is none worthy of worship except Allah, the Exalted. When this is fixed in one's heart then they only hope in Allah, the Exalted, knowing He is the only One who can help them.

They will only submit and obey Allah, the Exalted, in all aspects of their life. In reality, a person only obeys another in order to receive protection from harm or gain some benefit. Only Allah, the Exalted, can grant this therefore only He deserves to be obeyed and worshipped. If anyone chooses the obedience of another over the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, this shows they believe that this other can bring them some sort of benefit or protect them from harm. This is a sign of the weakness of their faith. The source of all things which occur is Allah, the Exalted, so Muslims should only obey Him. Chapter 35 Fatir, verse 2:

“Whatever Allah grants to people of mercy - none can withhold it; and whatever He withholds - none can release it thereafter...”

It is important to note, that obeying a person which encourages the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in reality is obeying Allah, the Exalted. For example, obeying the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 80:

“He who obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah...”

“...So Allāh caused him to die for a hundred years; then He revived him...Look at your food and your drink; it has not changed with time. And look at your [decayed] donkey...”

Allah, the Exalted, alone controls the states of His creation. If He wills the state of His creation does not change and if He wills they do.

Generally speaking, a Muslim should therefore dedicate their efforts to those beneficial things which will endure even after they pass away.

First of all, it is important to understand worldly legacies come and go. How many rich and powerful people have built massive empires only for them to be torn apart and forgotten shortly after their death? The few signs left behind from some of these legacies only endure in order to warn people not to follow in their footsteps. An example is the great empire of Pharaoh. Islam not only teaches Muslims to send blessings ahead of them to the hereafter in the form of righteous deeds but it also teaches them to leave a lovely legacy behind from which people can benefit from. In fact, when a Muslim passes away and leaves behind anything which is useful, such as an ongoing charity in the form of a water well they will be rewarded for it. This is confirmed in Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 4223. So a Muslim should strive to perform righteous deeds and send forward as much good as possible but they should also try leaving a good legacy behind which will benefit them after they pass away.

Unfortunately, many Muslims are so concerned about their wealth and properties that they only end up leaving them behind which does not benefit them in the least. Each Muslim should not be fooled into believing they have plenty of time for creating a legacy for themselves as the moment of death is unknown and often pounces on people unexpectedly. Today is the day a Muslim should truly reflect on the legacy they will leave behind. If this legacy is good and beneficial they should praise Allah, the Exalted, for granting them the strength to do so. But if it is something which will not benefit them then they should prepare something which will so that they not only send forward good to the hereafter but also leave good behind. It is hoped that the one who is surrounded by good in this way will be forgiven by Allah, the Exalted. So each Muslim should ask themselves what is their legacy?

“...And look at your donkey; and We will make you a sign for the people. And look at the bones [of this donkey] - how We raise them and then We cover them with flesh.” And when it became clear to him he said, “I know that Allāh is over all things competent.””

The One who created something from nothing and then fashioned its form can also resurrect it after it has turned to bones and dust. This is in fact easy for the One who has power over all things.

Allah, the Exalted, is the One who over powers all things, who in reality is the only One who possesses power and might. Anyone else who possesses strength only does so because Allah, the Exalted, granted it to them. There is no atom in this world or in the next that can escape the power and authority of Allah, the Exalted.

As all power belongs to Allah, the Exalted, a Muslim should therefore always remember that the strength to perform righteous deeds and refrain from sins comes from Allah, the Exalted, alone. This will remove any chance of pride creeping into their heart. An atom’s worth of which is enough to take a person to Hell. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 266.

Whoever desires for their faith to become mighty must obey the All Mighty, Allah, the Exalted. Only then will they be granted strong faith which will aid

them to overcome all difficulties so that they leave this world while Allah, the Exalted, is pleased with them. True obedience only lies in following the footsteps of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This includes fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 31:

“Say, [O Muhammad], “If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins.”

Truly Knowing Allah, the Exalted, is All Mighty should prevent a Muslim from sinning. As they should know there is no way to escape the might of Allah, the Exalted. In addition, when a Muslim engraves this divine name into their heart it prevents them from committing oppression and wronging others. They become fully aware that even if there is no person powerful enough to seek justice from them Allah, the Exalted, will certainly take them to account and punish them in both worlds. As confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6579, oppression to others may cause the All Mighty, Allah, the Exalted, to hurl them into Hell on Judgment Day.

“...And when it became clear to him, he said, "I know that Allah is over all things competent."”

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2645, that when Allah, the Exalted, desires to give someone good He provides them with Islamic knowledge.

There is no doubt that every Muslim irrespective of the strength of their faith desires good in both worlds. Even though many Muslims incorrectly believe that this good which they desire lies in fame, wealth, authority, companionship and their career this Hadith makes it crystal clear that true lasting good lies in gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge. It is important to note a branch of religious knowledge is useful worldly knowledge whereby one earns lawful provision in order to fulfil their necessities and the necessities of their dependents. Even though the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has pointed out where good lies yet it is a shame how many Muslims do not place much value in this. They in most cases only strive to obtain the bare minimum of Islamic knowledge in order to fulfil their obligatory duties and fail to acquire and act on more such as the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Instead they dedicate their efforts on worldly things believing true good is found there. Many Muslims fail to appreciate that the righteous predecessors had to journey for weeks on end just to learn a single verse or Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, whereas today one can study Islamic teachings without leaving their home. Yet, many fail to make use of this blessing given to the modern day Muslims. Out of His infinite mercy Allah, the Exalted, through his Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has not only pointed out where true good lies but He has also placed this good at one's finger tips. Allah, the Exalted, has informed mankind of where

an eternal buried treasure is located which can solve all the problems they may encounter in both worlds. But Muslims will only obtain this good once they struggle to acquire and act on it.

Parable 6

Chapter 2 - Al Baqarah, Verse 261

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَنْبَتَتْ سَبْعَ سَنَابِلَ فِي كُلِّ سُنبُلَةٍ
مِائَةٌ حَبَّةٌ وَاللَّهُ يُضَعِفُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٦١﴾

“The example of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is like a seed [of grain] which grows seven spikes; in each spike is a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies [His reward] for whom He wills. And Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing.”

“The example of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is like a seed [of grain] which grows seven spikes; in each spike is a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies [His reward] for whom He wills...”

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 2376, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, indicated that the one who spends in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, will be rewarded according to what they give. And he warned not to hoard otherwise Allah, the Exalted, will withhold His blessings.

It is important to note, that one must only obtain and spend lawful wealth as any righteous deed which has a foundation in the unlawful will be rejected by Allah, the Exalted, irrespective of one's intention. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 2342.

In addition, this spending is not only through charity but includes spending on one's own necessities and the necessities of their dependents according to the teachings of Islam without waste, excessiveness or extravagance. This is in fact a righteous deed according to a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 4006. A Muslim should spend in a balanced way whereby they help others without becoming needy themselves. Chapter 17 Al Isra, verse 29:

“And do not make your hand [as] chained to your neck or extend it completely and [thereby] become blamed and insolvent.”

A Muslim should donate regularly according to their means even if it is a little as Allah, the Exalted, observes one's quality meaning, their sincerity, not the quantity of a deed. Regularly donating a little is far better and more beloved to Allah, the Exalted, than donating a larger amount once in a while. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6465.

It is important to note, as mentioned in the main Hadith under discussion when one gives according to their means Allah, the Exalted, will reward them according to His infinite status. But the one who holds back will find a similar response from Allah, the Exalted. If a Muslim hoards their wealth they will leave it behind for others to enjoy while they are held accountable for it. If they misuse their wealth it will become a curse and burden for them in this world and a punishment in the next.

“The example of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is like a seed [of grain] which grows seven spikes; in each spike is a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies [His reward] for whom He wills...”

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 2336, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that every day two Angels supplicate to Allah, the Exalted. The first asks Allah, the Exalted, to compensate the one who spends for His sake. The second asks Allah, the Exalted, to destroy the one who withholds.

The aim of this Hadith is to encourage one to become generous and avoid being stingy. It is important to note that spending for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, does not only involve the obligatory charity but it also includes spending on one's own necessities and the necessities of their family as this has been commanded by Islam. Anyone who fails to spend on these elements deserves for their wealth to be destroyed as they have failed to fulfil its purpose which in reality makes wealth useless. It is important to note, spending for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, never leads to an overall loss as a person is compensated one way or another. In fact the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has guaranteed that charity does not decrease one's wealth in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2029. Chapter 34 Saba, verse 39:

“...But whatever thing you spend [in His cause] - He will compensate it...”

A Muslim should remember a generous person is close to Allah, the Exalted, close to Paradise, close to people and far from Hell. Whereas, the stingy person is far from Allah, the Exalted, far from Paradise, far from people and close to Hell. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1961.

Finally, it is important to note that this Hadith applies to all blessings one possesses, such as their good health, not just wealth. So if one fails to dedicate and expend their blessings in the correct way as commanded by Allah, the Exalted, the supplication against their blessing by the Angel maybe accepted by Allah, the Exalted. Therefore, it is vital for Muslims to correctly use each blessing according to the teachings of Islam so that they receive more which in reality is true gratitude. Otherwise, they may well lose the blessing forever. Chapter 14 Ibrahim, verse 7:

“And [remember] when your Lord proclaimed, 'If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favor]...”

“The example of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is like a seed [of grain] which grows seven spikes; in each spike is a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies [His reward] for whom He wills...”

In reality, in most cases nothing in this material world in itself is good or bad, such as wealth. What makes a thing good or bad is the way it is used. It is important to understand that the very purpose of everything which was created by Allah, the Exalted, was for it to be used correctly according to the teachings of Islam. When something is not used correctly it in reality becomes useless. For example, wealth is useful in both worlds when it is used correctly such as being spent on the necessities of a person and their dependents. But it can become useless and even a curse for its bearer if it is not used correctly, such as being hoarded or spent on sinful things. Simply hoarding wealth causes wealth to lose value. How can paper and metal coins one tucks away be useful? In this respect, there is no difference between a blank piece of paper and a note of money. It is only useful when it is used correctly.

So if a Muslim desires all their worldly possessions to become a blessing for them in both worlds all they have to do is use them correctly according to the teachings found in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. But if they use them incorrectly then the same blessing will become a burden and curse for them in both worlds. It is as simple as that.

“The example of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is like a seed [of grain] which grows seven spikes; in each spike is a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies [His reward] for whom He wills...”

A Muslim will adopt the correct mentality mentioned in this verse when they understand that every blessing they possess is only a means they need to use to reach Allah, the Exalted, safely in the hereafter.

Every worldly blessing a Muslim possesses is only a means which should aid them in reaching the hereafter safely. It is not an end in itself. For example, wealth is a means one should use in order to obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, fulfilling their necessities and the necessities of their dependents. It is not an end or an ultimate goal in itself.

This not only aids a Muslim in maintaining their focus on the hereafter but it also aids them whenever they lose worldly blessings. When a Muslim treats each worldly blessing, such as a child, as a means to please Allah, the Exalted, and reach the hereafter safely then losing it will not have such a detrimental impact on them. They may become sad, which is an acceptable emotion, but they will not become grieved which leads to impatience and other mental problems, such as depression. This is because they firmly believe the worldly blessing they possessed was only a means so losing it does not cause a loss in the ultimate goal namely, Paradise, the loss of which is disastrous. Therefore, still possessing and concentrating on the ultimate goal will prevent them from becoming grieved.

In addition, they will understand that just like the thing they lost was only a means they firmly believe they will be provided with another means to reach and fulfil their ultimate goal by Allah, the Exalted. This will also prevent them from grieving. Whereas, the one who believes their worldly blessing is the end instead of a means will experience severe grief when losing it as their whole purpose and objective has been lost. This grief will lead to depression and other mental issues.

To conclude, Muslims should treat each blessing they possess as a means to reach the hereafter safely not as an end in itself. This is how one can possess things without being possessed by them. This is how they can keep worldly things in their hands and not in their hearts.

“...And Allah multiplies [His reward] for whom He wills...”

Throughout Islamic teachings different amounts of reward have been declared for performing righteous deeds. Some teachings advise ten times reward like this Hadith, others seven hundred times and in some cases a reward which cannot be counted.

This varying reward is dependent on one's sincerity. The more sincere a person is the more they will be rewarded. Meaning, the more they perform the righteous deed for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, the more they will be rewarded. For example, the one who only acts to please Allah, the Exalted, without desiring a lawful worldly blessing will obtain more reward than the one who acts in order to please Allah, the Exalted, and seeks a lawful worldly blessing.

“...And Allah multiplies for whom He wills...”

This indicates that the more sincere to Allah, the Exalted, a Muslim is the more effective their action will become.

One of the main reasons why people who do good things, such as buying gifts for others, do not receive the same level of respect and love from people than some who do not do these things is because of their intention. When these people perform righteous deeds in respect to people, such as visiting the sick, they do so either for the sake of people meaning, to please them or they mix this intention by also aiming to please Allah, the Exalted. First of all, the one who acts for the sake of people will gain no reward from Allah, the Exalted. They will be told to gain their reward from the people they acted for on Judgment Day. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3154. Scholars are divided on whether those who mix their intention by aiming to please Allah, the Exalted, and people will receive a partial reward or none at all. In order to be on the safe side a wise Muslim should only act for the sake of Allah, the Exalted.

On the other hand, the other people who gain more respect and love from others do so because they solely act for the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted. When they treat others kindly they do not do it for the sake of people. Because of their sincerity Allah, the Exalted, places more love and respect in the hearts of the people compared to those who do more acts of kindness to people but are less sincere in their deeds.

So if people desire reward from Allah, the Exalted, and respect from people they should correct their intention and only perform righteous deeds for the sake of Allah, the Exalted. One sign of this correct intention is that this person will aim to please Allah, the Exalted, even if it displeases people. Meaning, they do not pay attention to the attitude and reactions of people.

“...And Allāh is all-Encompassing...”

The generosity, mercy and control of Allah, the Exalted, extends to all things and He is never preoccupied from one thing thereby being distracted from another. The vastness of His mercy and the blessings He has generously bestowed on the creation are truly uncountable. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 18:

“And if you should count the favors of Allah, you could not enumerate them.”

The Muslim who understands this divine name will strike a balance between fear and hope as they know Allah, the Exalted, is vast in both mercy and power. His mercy inspires hope while His power inspires fear.

A Muslim should act on this divine name by adopting good character which extends far and wide by effecting everyone they are in contact with in a positive way. They should constrict the number of negative characteristics they possess until they remove them entirely from their character.

“...Allāh is...Knowing.”

Allah, the Exalted, is All Knowing as nothing escapes His knowledge whether in the Heavens or the Earth whether visible or not. The knowledge of Allah, the Exalted, has no limit, it has no beginning and no end and it is innate meaning, no one gave it to Him. Every creation which possesses knowledge has been granted it by none other than Allah, the Exalted. The knowledge of the creation is limited and has a beginning. Allah, the Exalted, is fully aware of one's outer and inner beings at all time.

The Muslim who understands this divine name will refrain from sins both outward and inward rightfully believing Allah, the Exalted, knows all this and will hold them accountable for their actions. In addition, they will not stress about worldly issues understanding that Allah, the Exalted, is fully aware of them and will respond to them at the right time.

A Muslim should act on this divine name by striving to gain and act on useful knowledge both worldly and religious which is the path of piety. This is the true inheritor of the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, which has been indicated in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 223.

Parable 7

Chapter 2 - Al Baqarah, Verse 265

وَمَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ وَتَثْبِيتًا مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ كَمَثَلِ
جَنَّةٍ بَرْبُورَةٍ أَصَابَهَا وَابِلٌ فَآتَتْ أُكُلَهَا ضِعْفَيْنِ فَإِن لَّمْ يُصِبْهَا وَابِلٌ فَطَلٌّ وَاللَّهُ
بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿٢٦٥﴾

“And the example of those who spend their wealth seeking means to the approval of Allah and assuring [reward for] themselves is like a garden on high ground which is hit by a downpour - so it yields its fruits in double. And [even] if it is not hit by a downpour, then a drizzle [is sufficient]. And Allah, of what you do, is Seeing.”

“And the example of those who spend their wealth seeking means to the approval of Allah and assuring [reward for] themselves...”

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 2376, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, indicated that the one who spends in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, will be rewarded according to what they give. And he warned not to hoard otherwise Allah, the Exalted, will withhold His blessings.

It is important to note, that one must only obtain and spend lawful wealth as any righteous deed which has a foundation in the unlawful will be rejected by Allah, the Exalted, irrespective of one's intention. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 2342.

In addition, this spending is not only through charity but includes spending on one's own necessities and the necessities of their dependents according to the teachings of Islam without waste, excessiveness or extravagance. This is in fact a righteous deed according to a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 4006. A Muslim should spend in a balanced way whereby they help others without becoming needy themselves. Chapter 17 Al Isra, verse 29:

“And do not make your hand [as] chained to your neck or extend it completely and [thereby] become blamed and insolvent.”

A Muslim should donate regularly according to their means even if it is a little as Allah, the Exalted, observes one's quality meaning, their sincerity, not the quantity of a deed. Regularly donating a little is far better and more beloved to Allah, the Exalted, than donating a larger amount once in a while. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6465.

It is important to note, as mentioned in the main Hadith under discussion when one gives according to their means Allah, the Exalted, will reward them according to His infinite status. But the one who holds back will find a similar response from Allah, the Exalted. If a Muslim hoards their wealth they will leave it behind for others to enjoy while they are held accountable for it. If they misuse their wealth it will become a curse and burden for them in this world and a punishment in the next.

“And the example of those who spend their wealth seeking means to the approval of Allah and assuring [reward for] themselves...”

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 2336, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that every day two Angels supplicate to Allah, the Exalted. The first asks Allah, the Exalted, to compensate the one who spends for His sake. The second asks Allah, the Exalted, to destroy the one who withholds.

The aim of this Hadith is to encourage one to become generous and avoid being stingy. It is important to note that spending for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, does not only involve the obligatory charity but it also includes spending on one's own necessities and the necessities of their family as this has been commanded by Islam. Anyone who fails to spend on these elements deserves for their wealth to be destroyed as they have failed to fulfil its purpose which in reality makes wealth useless. It is important to note, spending for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, never leads to an overall loss as a person is compensated one way or another. In fact the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has guaranteed that charity does not decrease one's wealth in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2029. Chapter 34 Saba, verse 39:

“...But whatever thing you spend [in His cause] - He will compensate it...”

A Muslim should remember a generous person is close to Allah, the Exalted, close to Paradise, close to people and far from Hell. Whereas, the stingy person is far from Allah, the Exalted, far from Paradise, far from people and close to Hell. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1961.

Finally, it is important to note that this Hadith applies to all blessings one possesses, such as their good health, not just wealth. So if one fails to dedicate and expend their blessings in the correct way as commanded by Allah, the Exalted, the supplication against their blessing by the Angel maybe accepted by Allah, the Exalted. Therefore, it is vital for Muslims to correctly use each blessing according to the teachings of Islam so that they receive more which in reality is true gratitude. Otherwise, they may well lose the blessing forever. Chapter 14 Ibrahim, verse 7:

“And [remember] when your Lord proclaimed, 'If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favor]...”

“And the example of those who spend their wealth seeking means to the approval of Allah and assuring [reward for] themselves...”

Every worldly blessing a Muslim possesses is only a means which should aid them in reaching the hereafter safely. It is not an end in itself. For example, wealth is a means one should use in order to obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, fulfilling their necessities and the necessities of their dependents. It is not an end or an ultimate goal in itself.

This not only aids a Muslim in maintaining their focus on the hereafter but it also aids them whenever they lose worldly blessings. When a Muslim treats each worldly blessing, such as a child, as a means to please Allah, the Exalted, and reach the hereafter safely then losing it will not have such a detrimental impact on them. They may become sad, which is an acceptable emotion, but they will not become grieved which leads to impatience and other mental problems, such as depression. This is because they firmly believe the worldly blessing they possessed was only a means so losing it does not cause a loss in the ultimate goal namely, Paradise, the loss of which is disastrous. Therefore, still possessing and concentrating on the ultimate goal will prevent them from becoming grieved.

In addition, they will understand that just like the thing they lost was only a means they firmly believe they will be provided with another means to reach and fulfil their ultimate goal by Allah, the Exalted. This will also prevent them from grieving. Whereas, the one who believes their worldly blessing is the end instead of a means will experience severe grief when

losing it as their whole purpose and objective has been lost. This grief will lead to depression and other mental issues.

To conclude, Muslims should treat each blessing they possess as a means to reach the hereafter safely not as an end in itself. This is how one can possess things without being possessed by them. This is how they can keep worldly things in their hands and not in their hearts.

“And the example of those who spend their wealth seeking means to the approval of Allah and assuring [reward for] themselves...”

In reality, in most cases nothing in this material world in itself is good or bad, such as wealth. What makes a thing good or bad is the way it is used. It is important to understand that the very purpose of everything which was created by Allah, the Exalted, was for it to be used correctly according to the teachings of Islam. When something is not used correctly it in reality becomes useless. For example, wealth is useful in both worlds when it is used correctly such as being spent on the necessities of a person and their dependents. But it can become useless and even a curse for its bearer if it is not used correctly, such as being hoarded or spent on sinful things. Simply hoarding wealth causes wealth to lose value. How can paper and metal coins one tucks away be useful? In this respect, there is no difference between a blank piece of paper and a note of money. It is only useful when it is used correctly.

So if a Muslim desires all their worldly possessions to become a blessing for them in both worlds all they have to do is use them correctly according to the teachings found in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. But if they use them incorrectly then the same blessing will become a burden and curse for them in both worlds. It is as simple as that.

“And the example of those who spend their wealth seeking means to the approval of Allah and assuring [reward for] themselves...”

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3154, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that those who perform deeds for the sake of people, such as showing off, instead of doing them for the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted, will be told to gain their reward on Judgment Day from the people they acted for which in reality is not possible to do.

It is important to understand that the foundation of all deeds and even Islam itself is one's intention. It is the very thing which Allah, the Exalted, judges people on according to a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1. A Muslim should ensure they perform all religious and useful worldly actions for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, so that they gain reward from Him in both worlds. A sign of this correct mentality is that this person neither expects nor desires people to appreciate or show gratitude to them for the deeds they perform. If one desires this then it indicates their incorrect intention.

In addition, acting with the correct intention prevents sadness and bitterness as the one who acts for the sake of people will eventually encounter ungrateful people who will make them annoyed and bitter as they feel they wasted their effort and time. Unfortunately, this is seen in parents and relatives as they often fulfill their duties towards their children and relatives for their sake instead of for the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted. But the one who acts for the sake of Allah, the exalted, will fulfill all their duties towards others such as their children and never become bitter or

enraged when they fail to show gratitude towards them. This attitude leads to peace of mind and general happiness as they know Allah, the Exalted, is fully aware of their righteous deed and will reward them for it. This is the way all Muslims must act otherwise they may well be left empty handed on the Day of Judgment.

“And the example of those who spend their wealth seeking means to the approval of Allah and assuring [reward for] themselves...”

One of the main reasons why people who do good things, such as buying gifts for others, do not receive the same level of respect and love from people than some who do not do these things is because of their intention. When these people perform righteous deeds in respect to people, such as visiting the sick, they do so either for the sake of people meaning, to please them or they mix this intention by also aiming to please Allah, the Exalted. First of all, the one who acts for the sake of people will gain no reward from Allah, the Exalted. They will be told to gain their reward from the people they acted for on Judgment Day. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3154. Scholars are divided on whether those who mix their intention by aiming to please Allah, the Exalted, and people will receive a partial reward or none at all. In order to be on the safe side a wise Muslim should only act for the sake of Allah, the Exalted.

On the other hand, the other people who gain more respect and love from others do so because they solely act for the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted. When they treat others kindly they do not do it for the sake of people. Because of their sincerity Allah, the Exalted, places more love and respect in the hearts of the people compared to those who do more acts of kindness to people but are less sincere in their deeds.

So if people desire reward from Allah, the Exalted, and respect from people they should correct their intention and only perform righteous deeds for the sake of Allah, the Exalted. One sign of this correct intention is that this

person will aim to please Allah, the Exalted, even if it displeases people.
Meaning, they do not pay attention to the attitude and reactions of people.

“And the example of those who spend their wealth seeking means to the approval of Allah and assuring themselves...”

This could mean that they are certain and sure they will gain reward from Allah, the Exalted, if they act in ways pleasing to Him. This certainty only comes when one gains and acts on Islamic knowledge. For example, in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2029, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that charity does not decrease one's wealth. The one who does not possess knowledge will find this hard to believe with certainty so that it encourages them to spend in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. Instead, they will outwardly believe in the Hadith without taking action. Therefore, Islamic knowledge is required if one desires to use their blessings in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. For the sake of clarification, the Hadith means that whatever a Muslim spends for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, in respect to any blessing, such as time, Allah, the Exalted, will compensate them. This compensation will be much more than what they originally used. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 245:

“Who is it that would loan Allah a goodly loan so He may multiply it for him many times over?...”

For example, Allah, the Exalted, may grant the one who spends for His sake with financial opportunities which leads to an overall increase in wealth. In addition, this could be referring to the reality that whatever is destined to be spent on a person, which is their true wealth, can never change irrespective of their behaviour or the behaviour of the entire

creation. In fact, a person's provision was allocated to them over fifty thousand years before Allah, the Exalted, created the Heavens and the Earth. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6748. So in reality, one's charity will not change the amount of wealth which is destined to be spent on them, such as wealth spent on their food.

In addition, all Muslims have faith in Islam but the strength of their faith varies from person to person. For example, the one who follows the teachings of Islam because their family told them to is not the same as the one who believes in it through evidence. A person who has heard about something will not believe in it in the same way as the one who has witnessed the thing with their own eyes.

As confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224, gaining useful knowledge is a duty on all Muslims. One of the reasons for this is that it is the best way a Muslim can strengthen their faith in Islam. This is important to pursue as the stronger one's certainty of faith the greater the chance they will remain steadfast on the correct path, especially when facing difficulties. In addition, having certainty of faith has been described as one of the best things one can possess in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3849. This knowledge should be obtained by studying the Holy Quran and the Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, through a reliable source.

Allah, the Exalted, did not only declare a truth in the Holy Quran but He also provided evidence for it through examples. Not only examples which are to be found in the past nations but examples which have been placed in

one's very own life. For example, in the Holy Quran Allah, the Exalted, advises that sometimes a person loves a thing even though it will cause them trouble if they obtained it. Similarly, they might hate a thing while there is much hidden good in it for them. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

There are many examples of this truth in history such as the Pact of Hudaiba. Some Muslims believed this pact, which was made with the non-Muslims of Mecca, would completely favour the latter group. Yet, history clearly shows that it favoured Islam and the Muslims. This event is discussed in the Hadiths found in Sahih Bukhari, numbers 2731 and 2732.

If one reflects on their own life they will find many examples when they believed something was good when it was actually bad for them and vice versa. These examples prove the authenticity of this verse and help one's faith strengthen.

Another example is found in chapter 79 An Naziat, verse 46:

“It will be, on the Day they see it (Judgement Day) as though they had not remained [in the world] except for an afternoon or a morning thereof.”

If one turns the pages of history they will clearly observe how great empires came and went. But when they left they passed away in such a way as if they were only on Earth for a moment. All but a few of their signs have faded away as if they were never present on Earth in the first place. Similarly, when one reflects on their own life they will realise that no matter how old they are and no matter how slow certain days might have felt overall their life so far has passed in a flash. Understanding the truthfulness of this verse strengthens one's certainty of faith and this inspires them to prepare for the hereafter before their time runs out.

The Holy Quran and the Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, are full of such examples. Therefore, one should strive to learn and act on these divine teachings so that they adopt certainty of faith. The one who achieves this will not be shaken by any difficulty they face and will remain steadfast on the path which leads to the gates of Paradise. Chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 53:

“We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth...”

“And the example of those who spend their wealth seeking means to the approval of Allah and assuring [peace for] themselves...”

Generally speaking, it is important for Muslims to fulfil the rights people have over them, such as their parents, according to the teachings of Islam. But they should not do this for the sake of people nor should they go overboard in their duties by crossing the limits set by Allah, the Exalted. One should instead act only for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, and stay within the limits set by Him when fulfilling their duties to others. For example, they should not disobey Allah, the Exalted, in the process of pleasing people. The problem with dedicating one's life and efforts to people, even if no sins are committed, is that a day will certainly come when this person will realise that they dedicated so much effort to people but in return obtained nothing significant from them, such as gratitude. This attitude leads to bitterness towards life and people. If one persists on this attitude they will eventually fail in their duties towards Allah, the Exalted, and especially those duties towards people. On the other hand when one acts for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, irrespective of how little gratitude people show them they will not become bitter as they acted for and hope reward from Allah, the Exalted. If one's intention is sincere this will prevent bitterness as they seek payback for their efforts from Allah, the Exalted, not people. People might let them down through a lack of gratitude whereas Allah, the Exalted, will reward them beyond their expectations.

“...those who spend their wealth seeking means to the approval of Allāh and assuring [reward for] themselves is like a garden on high ground which is hit by a downpour - so it yields its fruits in double. And [even] if it is not hit by a downpour, then a drizzle [is sufficient]...”

This verse indicates the importance of sincerity. Throughout Islamic teachings different amounts of reward have been declared for performing righteous deeds. Some teachings advise ten times reward like this Hadith, others seven hundred times and in some cases a reward which cannot be counted. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 261:

“The example of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is like a seed [of grain] which grows seven spikes; in each spike is a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies [His reward] for whom He wills...”

This varying reward is dependent on one's sincerity. The more sincere a person is the more they will be rewarded. Meaning, the more they perform the righteous deed for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, the more they will be rewarded. For example, the one who only acts to please Allah, the Exalted, without desiring a lawful worldly blessing will obtain more reward than the one who acts in order to please Allah, the Exalted, and seeks a lawful worldly blessing.

“...those who spend their wealth seeking means to the approval of Allāh and assuring [reward for] themselves is like a garden on high ground which is hit by a downpour - so it yields its fruits in double. And [even] if it is not hit by a downpour, then a drizzle [is sufficient]...”

This verse inspires hope for the one who uses their blessings in the correct way. But it is important to make clear the difference between hope in Allah, the Exalted, and wishful thinking.

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2459, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, described the difference between true hope in the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, and wishful thinking. True hope is when one controls their soul by avoiding the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted, and actively struggles for preparing for the hereafter. Whereas, the foolish wishful thinker follows their desires and then expects Allah, the Exalted, to forgive them and fulfill their wishes.

It is important for Muslims not to confuse these two attitudes so that they avoid living and dying as a wishful thinker as this person is highly unlikely to succeed in this world or the next. Wishful thinking is like a farmer who fails to prepare the land for planting, fails to plant seeds, fails to water the land and then expects to harvest a huge crop. This is plain foolishness and this farmer is highly unlikely to succeed. Whereas, true hope is like a farmer who prepares the land, plants seeds, waters the land and then hopes Allah, the Exalted, will bless them with a huge harvest. The key difference is that the one who possesses true hope will actively strive to

obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. And whenever they slip up they sincerely repent. Whereas, the wishful thinker will not actively strive in obeying Allah, the Exalted, and instead follow their desires and still expect Allah, the Exalted, to forgive them and fulfill their wishes.

Muslims must therefore learn the key difference so that they can abandon wishful thinking and instead adopt true hope in Allah, the Exalted, which always leads to nothing except good and success in both worlds. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 7405.

“...those who spend their wealth seeking means to the approval of Allāh and assuring [reward for] themselves is like a garden on high ground which is hit by a downpour - so it yields its fruits in double. And [even] if it is not hit by a downpour, then a drizzle [is sufficient]...”

This verse is connected to chapter 11 Hud, verse 115:

“...Allah does not allow to be lost the reward of those who do good.”

This verse provides hope that as long as one strives to do something lawful and beneficial their efforts will not be wasted. If Allah, the Exalted, does not waste the efforts of people who do not even believe in Him why would He not support the Muslims who believe in His Oneness and Lordship? If Allah, the Exalted, does not waste the efforts of people when they strive for the material world how can He then waste the efforts of those who strive to achieve good in the hereafter?

People should therefore, never give up striving to achieve good in both this world and in the next. Unfortunately, some Muslims have given up struggling to earn a lawful income after facing some hardship. They instead opt to receive social benefits and become a burden on society. Those who are rightly entitled to receive benefits should continue to utilise them as it is

their right. But those who have the ability to earn for themselves should do so.

This verse also encourages Muslims to continue doing good to others even if they do not appreciate their efforts. If one acts with sincerity meaning, for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, they should be confident their efforts have been recorded and will be rewarded in both worlds.

To conclude, whatever lawful action a Muslim performs whether its worldly, such as a business opportunity, or whether they perform a religious deed they should put full effort into it knowing that Allah, the Exalted, will support them and grant them success, sooner or later.

“...And Allāh, of what you do, is Seeing.”

Nothing irrespective of its size and location is out of the reach of the divine sight and hearing of Allah, the Exalted.

The Muslim who understands this divine name will be extremely cautious in their actions and speech. The same way one becomes vigilant over their actions when they are in the hearing and seeing range of someone they respect or fear a true Muslim will be vigilant over their behaviour knowing no word or action escapes Allah, the Exalted. In fact, acting in this way is the high level of faith which has been described by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 99. If one remains steadfast on this behaviour then they will eventually reach excellence of faith whereby they perform acts, such as the prayer, as if they observe Allah, the Exalted, constantly watching their inner and outer being. This attitude will prevent sins and encourage one to sincerely perform righteous deeds.

In addition, this divine name encourages Muslims never to give up hope whenever they face a difficulty thereby believing no one is aware or even cares about them. Allah, the Exalted, undoubtedly hears and sees their distress and will respond at the time which is best for His servant. Chapter 40 Ghafir, verse 60:

“And your Lord says, “Call upon Me; I will respond to you...”

A Muslim should act on this divine name by using these two senses in the way commanded by Allah, the Exalted. Meaning, one should not observe unlawful and vain things nor should they listen to unlawful and vain things. They should instead use them in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted. It is important to avoid vain things as they are often the first step to the unlawful. This is achieved by acting on the Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6502. It advises that when one fulfils the commands of Allah, the Exalted, in respect to the obligatory duties and then strives in voluntary righteous deeds for the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted, He empowers their senses such as their sight and hearing so that they only use them in accordance to His desire and pleasure.

“...And Allāh, of what you do, is Seeing.”

In a long Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 99, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, explained the meaning of Ihsan, which can be translated to mean excellence. This excellence refers to one's conduct and behavior towards Allah, the Exalted, and the creation. Acting with excellence has been mentioned throughout the Holy Quran, such as chapter 10 Yunus, verse 26:

“For them who have done excellent is the best [reward] - and extra...”

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has explained this verse in Hadiths found in Sahih Muslim, numbers 449 and 450. The word extra in this verse refers to when the inhabitants of Paradise will be blessed with the divine vision of Allah, the Exalted. This reward befits the Muslim who acts with excellence. As excellence means to lead one's life as if they can witness Allah, the Exalted, observing their outer and inner being at all times. A person who can observe a powerful authority watching them will never misbehave out of awe of them. In fact, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, once advised someone to always behave as if they were constantly being observed by a righteous man they respected. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Imam Tabarani's, Al Mu'jam Al Kabir, number 5539.

Whoever acts in this manner will very rarely commit sins and always hasten towards good deeds. This attitude creates the fear of Allah, the Exalted, and acts as a shield from the fire of trials in this world and the fire of Hell in the hereafter. This vigilance will ensure one not only fulfills all their duties towards Allah, the Exalted, but it also encourages them to fulfill their responsibilities towards the creation. The peak of which is to sincerely treat others with kindness. This person will fulfill the Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 251, which advises that a person cannot be a true believer until they love for others what they love for themselves.

This level of excellence ensures one acts with the right intention, which is the foundation of faith according to the Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1. Success is guaranteed for the one who performs good deeds and demonstrates good behavior with the right intention namely, to please Allah, the Exalted. The more excellent a person acts the stronger their faith becomes until they become a Muslim who is far from heedlessness and is always struggling to beautify their hereafter and worldly life according to the teachings of Islam.

It is feared that the opposite of this reward will be given to those who turned away from Allah, the Exalted. As they lived without fearing the all-encompassing gaze of Allah, the Exalted, they will be veiled from seeing Him in the hereafter. Chapter 83 Al Mutaffifin, verse 15:

“No! Indeed, from their Lord, that Day, they will be partitioned.”

Those who fail to reach the level of acting as if they witness Allah, the Exalted, must act on the second part of the advice given in the main Hadith quoted at the beginning. This person should sincerely believe that Allah, the Exalted, is constantly observing them. Even though this state is lower in rank than the one who acts as if they observe Allah, the Exalted, none the less, it is a great way of adopting true fear of Allah, the Exalted. As mentioned earlier this attitude will prevent one from committing sins and encourage them towards good deeds. As advised by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in Imam Tabarani's, Al Mu'jam Al Kabir, number 7935, the one who strives to adopt this mentality will be granted shade on the Day of Judgment by Allah, the Exalted.

The divine presence of Allah, the Exalted, is mentioned throughout the Holy Quran, such as Chapter 57 Al Hadid, verse 4:

"...He is with you wherever you are. And Allah, of what you do, is Seeing."

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has advised to adopt the true awareness of the divine presence of Allah, the Exalted, in many Hadiths. For example, in one divine Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 7405, Allah, the Exalted, declares that He is with whoever remembers Him. This is the reason why it has been reported in Hilyat Al Awliya, volume 1, pages 84 and 85, about the Commander of the Faithful, Ali Bin Abu Talib, may Allah be pleased with him, that he shied away from the glitter and pomp of the material world and only found solace in the

lonely night. Meaning, he sought the companionship of Allah, the Exalted, rather than the companionship of people.

Adopting the awareness of the divine presence of Allah, the Exalted, not only prevents sins and encourages good deeds but it also prevents loneliness and depression. A person is very rarely affected by mental health issues when they are constantly surrounded by a person who loves them and aids them. No one loves the creation more than Allah, the Exalted, and there is no doubt that He is the source of all aid. Therefore, acting with excellence benefits one's faith, actions, emotional state and the wider society.

A Muslim must avoid becoming like those who treat Allah, the Exalted, as the most insignificant of those who observe them. This is a serious spiritual illness which leads to all types of sins and evil behavior towards Allah, the Exalted, and the creation.

Parable 8

Chapter 2 - Al Baqarah, Verse 266

أَيُّودٌ أَحَدُكُمْ أَنْ تَكُونَ لَهُ جَنَّةٌ مِّن نَّخِيلٍ وَأَعْنَابٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ لَهُ فِيهَا
مِن كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ وَأَصَابَهُ الْكِبَرُ وَلَهُ ذُرِّيَّةٌ ضِعْفًا فَأَصَابَهَا إِعْصَارٌ فِيهِ نَارٌ فَاحْتَرَقَتْ
كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢٦٦﴾

“Would one of you like to have a garden of palm trees and grapevines underneath which rivers flow in which he has from every fruit? But he is afflicted with old age and has weak [i.e., immature] offspring, and it is hit by a whirlwind containing fire and is burned. Thus does Allah make clear to you [His] verses that you might give thought.”

“Would one of you like to have a garden of palm trees and grapevines underneath which rivers flow in which he has from every fruit? But he is afflicted with old age and has weak [i.e., immature] offspring, and it is hit by a whirlwind containing fire and is burned...”

An earlier verse warned Muslims not to follow up their good deeds with actions or characteristics which would nullify their good deeds. The current verse under discussion is another parable of that verse. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 264:

“O you who have believed, do not invalidate your charities with reminders [of it] or injury as does one who spends his wealth [only] to be seen by the people and does not believe in Allāh and the Last Day...”

Therefore, the main verse under discussion describes the person who performs good deeds, which is described as a rich and flourishing garden, but because of their bad intention, negative actions, such as reminding people of their favours, and negative characteristics, such as pride, the reward for their good deeds are destroyed at a time they most need them, such as at death, in the grave and on Judgement Day.

Therefore, it is important for Muslims to avoid the actions or characteristics which can nullify their good deeds. This is an extremely deadly trap of the Devil. He patiently waits for decades just to ruin the reward of a Muslim.

The Holy Quran makes it clear that a Muslim will gain reward for what they bring to Judgment Day, meaning, take with them when they die it does not declare they will gain reward after simply doing a deed. Chapter 6 Al An'am, verse 160:

“Whoever comes [on the Day of Judgment] with a good deed...”

“Would one of you like to have a garden of palm trees and grapevines underneath which rivers flow in which he has from every fruit? But he is afflicted with old age and has weak [i.e., immature] offspring, and it is hit by a whirlwind containing fire and is burned...”

As discussed earlier this indicates the destruction of the reward of one's good deeds because of their bad intention, actions and characteristics.

Generally speaking, it is important for Muslims to understand a simple yet profound lesson namely, they will never succeed in this world or the next in worldly or religious matters through the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted. Since the dawn of time to this age and till the end of time no person has ever achieved true success nor will they ever through the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted. This is quite obvious when one turns the pages of history. Therefore, when a Muslim is in a situation which they desire to achieve a positive and successful outcome from they should never choose to disobey Allah, the Exalted, irrespective of how tempting or easy it may seem to be. Even if one is advised by their close friends and relatives to do so as there is no obedience to the creation if it means disobedience to the Creator. And in truth they will never be able to protect them from Allah, the Exalted, and His punishment in either this world or the next. The same way Allah, the Exalted, grants success to those who obey Him He removes a successful outcome from those who disobey Him even if this removal takes time to witness. A Muslim should not be fooled as this will occur sooner or later. The Holy Quran has made it extremely clear that an evil plan or action only encompasses the doer even if this punishment is delayed. Chapter 35 Fatir, verse 43:

“...but the evil plot does not encompass except its own people...”

Therefore, no matter how difficult the situation and choice Muslims should always choose the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in both worldly and religious matters as this alone will lead to true success in both worlds even if this success is not obvious immediately.

“Would one of you like to have a garden of palm trees and grapevines underneath which rivers flow in which he has from every fruit? But he is afflicted with old age and has weak [i.e., immature] offspring, and it is hit by a whirlwind containing fire and is burned...”

As discussed earlier this indicates the destruction of the reward of one's good deeds because of their bad intention, actions and characteristics.

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2465, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that whoever prioritises the hereafter over this material world will be granted contentment, their affairs will be corrected for them and they will receive their destined provision in an easy way.

This half of the Hadith means that whoever correctly fulfils their duties in respect to Allah, the Exalted, and to the creation, such as providing for their family in a lawful manner while avoiding the excess of this material world will be granted contentment. This is when one is pleased with what they possess without being greedy and actively striving to obtain more worldly things. In reality, the one who is content with what they possess is a truly rich person even if they possess little wealth as they become independent of things. Independence of anything makes one rich in respect to it.

In addition, this attitude will allow one to comfortably deal with any worldly issues which may arise during their life. This is because the less one interacts with the material world and focuses on the hereafter the less worldly issues they will face. The less worldly issues a person faces the more comfortable their life will become. For example, the one who possesses one house will have fewer issues to deal with in respect to it, such as a broken cooker, than the one who possesses ten houses. Finally, this person will easily and pleasantly obtain their lawful provision. Not only this but Allah, the Exalted, will place such grace in their provision that it will cover all their responsibilities and necessities meaning, it will satisfy them and their dependents.

But as mentioned in the other half of this Hadith the one who prioritises the material world over the hereafter meaning, by neglecting their duties or striving for the unnecessary and excess of this material world will find that their need, meaning greed, for worldly things is never satisfied which by definition makes them poor even if they possess much wealth. These people will go from one worldly issue to another throughout the day failing to achieve contentment as they have opened too many worldly doors. And they will receive their destined provision with difficulty and it will not give them satisfaction and never seem enough to fill their greed. This may even push them towards the unlawful which only leads to a loss in both worlds.

“Would one of you like to have a garden of palm trees and grapevines underneath which rivers flow in which he has from every fruit? But he is afflicted with old age and has weak [i.e., immature] offspring, and it is hit by a whirlwind containing fire and is burned...”

As discussed earlier this indicates the destruction of the reward of one's good deeds because of their bad intention, actions and characteristics.

Islam teaches Muslims that they should never compromise on their faith in order to gain something from the material world. Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 135:

“O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives...”

As the material world is temporary whatever one gains from it will eventually fade away and they will be held accountable for their actions and attitude in the hereafter. On the other hand, faith is the precious jewel which guides a Muslim through all difficulties in this world and in the hereafter safely. Therefore, it is plain foolishness to compromise the thing which is more beneficial and lasting for the sake of a temporary thing.

Many people especially women, will encounter moments in their lives where they will have to choose whether to compromise on their faith. For example, in some cases a Muslim woman may believe that if she removed her scarf and dressed a certain way she would be more respected at work and may even climb the corporate ladder more quickly. Similarly, in the corporate world it is considered important to mingle with colleagues after work hours. So a Muslim might find themselves being invited to a pub or club after work.

In times like this it is important to remember that ultimate victory and success will only be granted to those who remain steadfast on the teachings of Islam. Those who act in this way will be granted worldly and religious success. But more importantly their worldly success will not become a burden for them. In fact, it will become a means for Allah, the Exalted, to increase their rank and remembrance amongst mankind. Examples of this are the rightly guided Caliphs of Islam. They did not compromise on their faith and instead remained steadfast throughout their lives and in return Allah, the Exalted, granted them a worldly and religious empire.

All other forms of success are very temporal and sooner or later they become a difficulty for its bearer. One only needs to observe the many celebrities who compromised on their ideals and belief in order to obtain fame and fortune only for these things to become a cause of their sadness, anxiety, depression, substance abuse and even suicide.

Reflect on these two paths for a moment and then decide which one should be preferred and chosen.

“Would one of you like to have a garden of palm trees and grapevines underneath which rivers flow in which he has from every fruit? But he is afflicted with old age and has weak [i.e., immature] offspring, and it is hit by a whirlwind containing fire and is burned...”

As discussed earlier this indicates the destruction of the reward of one's good deeds because of their bad intention, actions and characteristics especially, at a time when they are in desperate need for reward and blessings and are no longer in a position to do good and sincere actions nor can anyone else aid them.

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3154, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that those who perform deeds for the sake of people, such as showing off, instead of doing them for the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted, will be told to gain their reward on Judgment Day from the people they acted for which in reality is not possible to do.

It is important to understand that the foundation of all deeds and even Islam itself is one's intention. It is the very thing which Allah, the Exalted, judges people on according to a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1. A Muslim should ensure they perform all religious and useful worldly actions for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, so that they gain reward from Him in both worlds. A sign of this correct mentality is that this person neither expects nor desires people to appreciate or show gratitude to them for the deeds they perform. If one desires this then it indicates their incorrect intention.

In addition, acting with the correct intention prevents sadness and bitterness as the one who acts for the sake of people will eventually encounter ungrateful people who will make them annoyed and bitter as they feel they wasted their effort and time. Unfortunately, this is seen in parents and relatives as they often fulfill their duties towards their children and relatives for their sake instead of for the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted. But the one who acts for the sake of Allah, the exalted, will fulfill all their duties towards others such as their children and never become bitter or enraged when they fail to show gratitude towards them. This attitude leads to peace of mind and general happiness as they know Allah, the Exalted, is fully aware of their righteous deed and will reward them for it. This is the way all Muslims must act otherwise they may well be left empty handed on the Day of Judgment.

“Would one of you like to have a garden of palm trees and grapevines underneath which rivers flow in which he has from every fruit? But he is afflicted with old age and has weak [i.e., immature] offspring, and it is hit by a whirlwind containing fire and is burned...”

As discussed earlier this indicates the destruction of the reward of one's good deeds because of their bad intention, actions and characteristics especially, at a time when they are in desperate need for reward and blessings and are no longer in a position to do good and sincere actions nor can anyone else aid them.

It is important for Muslims to understand that whenever they face any type of worldly failure or regrets they should remind themselves of the regrets in the hereafter some people will have, such as the one mentioned in chapter 89 Al Fajr, verse 24:

“He will say, “Oh, I wish I had sent ahead [some good] for my life.””

In this world one's regret will always be followed by another chance or other options which they can pursue in order to gain success once again. But the regret and failure of the hereafter is something which cannot be rectified meaning, there are no second chances in the next world. No one will have the opportunity to return to Earth in order to act differently.

Therefore, every Muslim should be more concerned with the failures they may encounter in the hereafter over the failures and regrets of this world. This does not mean one should not strive to achieve lawful success in this world. It means they should always prioritise gaining success in the hereafter over gaining success in this world. This is an important mentality Muslims should adopt before they reach a day where reflecting on their failures and regrets will not help them in the slightest. Chapter 89 Al Fajr, verse 23:

“And brought [within view], that Day, is Hell - that Day, man will remember, but how [i.e., what good] to him will be the remembrance?”

“Would one of you like to have a garden of palm trees and grapevines underneath which rivers flow in which he has from every fruit? But he is afflicted with old age and has weak [i.e., immature] offspring, and it is hit by a whirlwind containing fire and is burned...”

This verse also describes the one who cultivates and beautifies this world while neglecting the hereafter. When they reach their death their worldly things abandon them in their moment of need. Just like the man in the verse is left empty handed so is the one who reaches the hereafter unprepared.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6442, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that a person's true wealth is what they send ahead to the hereafter whereas, what they leave behind is in reality the wealth of their inheritors.

It is important for Muslims to send as many blessings, such as their wealth, as they can to the hereafter by using them in ways which are pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. This includes spending on one's needs and the needs of their dependents without being wasteful, excessive or extravagant. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 4006.

But if a Muslim does not use their blessings correctly they will become a burden for them in both worlds. And if they hoard them and leave them

behind for their inheritors then they will be held accountable for obtaining them even though others will enjoy them after they depart. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2379.

In addition, if their inheritors use the blessings correctly then they will obtain reward from Allah, the Exalted, while the one who collected it will be left empty handed on Judgment Day. Or their inheritor will misuse the blessings which will become a great regret for both the one who earned the blessing and their inheritor especially, if they did not teach their inheritor, such as their child, how to correctly use the blessings as this is a duty on them. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 2928.

Muslims should therefore fulfill their responsibilities towards Allah, the Exalted, and people and ensure they take the rest of their blessings with them to the hereafter by using them correctly as prescribed by Islam. Otherwise, they will be left empty handed and full of regrets on Judgment Day.

“...Thus does Allāh make clear to you [His] verses that you might give thought.”

This makes it clear that the verses of Allah, the Exalted, will only benefit the one who reflects on them and then strives to act on their teachings as reflection without action is not true reflection at all.

In a Hadith found in Imam Munzari's, Awareness and Apprehension, number 30, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that the Holy Quran will intercede on Judgment Day. Those who follow it during their lives on Earth will be led to Paradise on Judgment Day. But those who neglect it during their lives on Earth will find that it pushes them into Hell on Judgment Day.

The Holy Quran is a book of guidance. It is not merely a book of recitation. Muslims must therefore strive to fulfill all aspects of the Holy Quran to ensure that it guides them to success in both worlds. The first aspect is reciting it correctly and regularly. The second aspect is to understand it. And the final aspect is to act on its teachings according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Those who behave in such a manner are the ones who are given glad tidings of right guidance through every difficulty in this world and its intercession on the Day of Judgment. But as warned by this Hadith the Holy Quran is only guidance and a mercy for those who correctly act on its aspects according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. But those who misinterpret it and instead act according to their desires in order to gain worldly things, such as fame, will be deprived of this

right guidance and its intercession on Judgment Day. In fact, their complete loss in both worlds will only increase until they sincerely repent. Chapter 17 Al Isra, verse 82:

“And We send down of the Quran that which is healing and mercy for the believers, but it does not increase the wrongdoers except in loss.”

Finally, it is important to understand that even though the Holy Quran is a cure for worldly problems a Muslim should not only use it for this purpose. Meaning, they should not only recite it in order to fix their worldly problems thereby, treating the Holy Quran like a tool which is removed during a difficulty and then placed back in a toolbox. The main function of the Holy Quran is to guide one to the hereafter safely. Neglecting this main function and only using it to fix one's worldly problems is not correct as it contradicts the behaviour of a true Muslim. It is like the one who purchases a car with many different accessories yet, it possesses no engine. There is no doubt that this person is simply foolish.

“Would one of you like to have a garden of palm trees and grapevines underneath which rivers flow in which he has from every fruit? But he is afflicted with old age and has weak [i.e., immature] offspring, and it is hit by a whirlwind containing fire and is burned. Thus does Allāh make clear to you [His] verses that you might give thought.”

This makes it clear that the verses of Allah, the Exalted, will only benefit the one who reflects on them and then strives to act on their teachings. Therefore, this verse encourages Muslims to gain and act on Islamic knowledge so that they obtain certainty of faith. Those who fail to do so will only cause harm to themselves, which has been warned in this verse.

A great obstacle to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, is weakness of faith. It is a blameworthy characteristic which gives rise to other negative characteristics, such as failing to act on one's knowledge, fearing others, placing the obedience of people above the obedience to Allah, the Exalted, having hope in forgiveness without striving for it and other undesired characteristics. The greatest affliction of weakness of faith is that it allows one to commit sins, such as neglecting the obligatory duties. The root cause of weakness of faith is ignorance of Islam.

One should strive to gain knowledge in order to strengthen their faith. With time they will eventually reach certainty of faith which is so strong that it safeguards a person through all tests and trials and ensures they fulfil their duties both religious and worldly. This knowledge is obtained when one studies the teachings of the Holy Quran and the Hadiths of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Specifically, those

teachings which discuss the promises of reward for those who are obedient and the punishment for those who are disobedient to Allah, the Exalted. This creates fear of punishment and hope of reward in a Muslim's heart which acts like a pull and push mechanism towards the obedience of Allah, the Exalted.

One can strengthen their faith by reflecting on the creations within the Heavens and the Earth. When done correctly this clearly indicates the Oneness of Allah, the Exalted, and His infinite power. Chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 53:

“We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth...”

For example, if a Muslim ponders over the night and day and how perfectly in sync they are and the other things linked to them they will truly believe that this is not a random thing meaning, there is a force which ensures everything runs like clockwork. This is the infinite power of Allah, the Exalted. In addition, if one ponders over the perfect timing of the night and day they will realise it clearly indicates that there is only one God namely, Allah, the Exalted. If there were more than one God each god would desire the night and day to occur according to their own desires. This would lead to utter chaos as one God might desire the Sun to rise whereas the other God might desire the night to continue. The perfect uninterrupted system found within the universe proves there is only one God namely, Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 21 Al Anbiya, verse 22:

“Had there been within them [i.e., the heavens and earth] gods besides Allah, they both would have been ruined...”

Another thing which can strengthen one's faith is to persist in righteous deeds and abstain from all sins. As faith is belief supported by actions it weakens when sins are committed and strengthens when good deeds are performed. For example, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, once warned in a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 5662, that a Muslim is not a believer when they drink alcohol.

Parable 9

Chapter 3 - Alee Imran, Verses 116-117

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَنْ تُغْنِيَ عَنْهُمْ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُهُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا وَأُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ
النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿١١٦﴾

مَثَلُ مَا يُنْفِقُونَ فِي هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا كَمَثَلِ رِيحٍ فِيهَا صِرٌّ أَصَابَتْ حَرْثَ قَوْمٍ ظَلَمُوا
أَنْفُسَهُمْ فَأَهْلَكَتْهُ وَمَا ظَلَمَهُمُ اللَّهُ وَلَكِنْ أَنْفُسُهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿١١٧﴾

“Indeed, those who disbelieve - never will their wealth or their children avail them against Allah at all, and those are the companions of the Fire; they will abide therein eternally.

The example of what they spend in this worldly life is like that of a wind containing frost which strikes the harvest of a people who have wronged themselves [i.e., sinned] and destroys it. And Allah has not wronged them, but they wrong themselves.”

“Indeed, those who disbelieve...”

A Muslim must avoid behaving like the one who does not believe by failing to practically obey Allah, the Exalted.

Some people claim that their belief and obedience to their God is in their hearts and they therefore do not need to demonstrate it practically. Unfortunately, this foolish mentality has infected many Muslims who believe they possess a pure faithful heart even though they fail to fulfil the obligatory duties of Islam. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has clearly declared in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3984, that when one's heart is pure the body becomes pure which means their actions become correct. But if one's heart is corrupt the body becomes corrupt which means their actions will be corrupt and incorrect. Therefore, the one who does not obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling their duties practically can never have a pure heart.

In addition, demonstrating one's faith in Allah, the Exalted, practically is their proof and evidence which is required on Judgment Day in order to be granted Paradise. Not having this practical evidence is as silly as a student who hands back a blank exam paper to their teacher claiming their knowledge is in their mind so they therefore do not need to write it down by answering the exam questions. The same way this student would undoubtedly fail so will a person who reaches Judgment Day without the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in the form of fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience, even if they possess faith in their heart.

“Indeed, those who disbelieve - never will their wealth or their children avail them against Allah at all...The example of what they spend in this worldly life is like that of a wind containing frost which strikes the harvest of a people who have wronged themselves [i.e., sinned] and destroys it...”

In reality, worldly blessings will only benefit a person, Muslim or non-Muslim, when they use them in the correct way.

In reality, in most cases nothing in this material world in itself is good or bad, such as wealth. What makes a thing good or bad is the way it is used. It is important to understand that the very purpose of everything which was created by Allah, the Exalted, was for it to be used correctly according to the teachings of Islam. When something is not used correctly it in reality becomes useless. For example, wealth is useful in both worlds when it is used correctly such as being spent on the necessities of a person and their dependents. But it can become useless and even a curse for its bearer if it is not used correctly, such as being hoarded or spent on sinful things. Simply hoarding wealth causes wealth to lose value. How can paper and metal coins one tucks away be useful? In this respect, there is no difference between a blank piece of paper and a note of money. It is only useful when it is used correctly.

So if a Muslim desires all their worldly possessions to become a blessing for them in both worlds all they have to do is use them correctly according to the teachings found in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. But if they use them incorrectly then the same blessing will become a burden and curse for them in both worlds. It is as simple as that.

“Indeed, those who disbelieve - never will their wealth or their children avail them against Allah at all...The example of what they spend in this worldly life is like that of a wind containing frost which strikes the harvest of a people who have wronged themselves [i.e., sinned] and destroys it...”

In reality, worldly blessings will only benefit a person, Muslim or non-Muslim, when they use them in the correct way.

It is important for Muslims to understand that they should not define a situation as good or bad according to worldly definitions. For example, according to a worldly definition being wealthy is good whereas being poor is bad. Instead, Muslims should ascribe good and bad to events and things according to the teachings of Islam. Meaning, anything which takes one closer to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in the form of fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience, is good even if it is seen as bad from a worldly point of view. And anything which takes one away from the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, is bad even if it appears good.

There are many examples throughout the teachings of Islam which demonstrate this. For example, Qarun was an extremely wealthy person who lived in the time of the Holy Prophet Musa, peace be upon him. Many people then and now may consider his wealth to be a good thing but as it led him to pride it became a means of his destruction. So in his case being wealthy was a bad thing. Chapter 28 Al Qasas, verses 79-81.

“So he came out before his people in his adornment. Those who desired the worldly life said, “Oh, would that we had like what was given to Qārūn. Indeed, he is one of great fortune. But those who had been given knowledge said, “Woe to you! The reward of Allah is better for he who believes and does righteousness. And none are granted it except the patient.” And We caused the earth to swallow him and his home. And there was for him no company to aid him other than Allah, nor was he of those who [could] defend themselves.”

On the other hand, the third rightly guided Caliph of Islam, Usman Bin Affan, may Allah be pleased with him, was also wealthy yet he used his wealth in the correct way. In fact, once after donating a large amount of wealth he was told by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, that nothing could harm his faith after that day. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3701. So in his case wealth was a good thing.

To conclude, a Muslim should remember that every difficulty they face has wisdoms behind it even if they do not observe them. So they should not believe something is good or bad from a worldly point of view. Meaning, if the thing encourages them towards the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, then it is good even if it looks bad. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

“Indeed, those who disbelieve - never will their wealth or their children avail them against Allah at all...The example of what they spend in this worldly life is like that of a wind containing frost which strikes the harvest of a people who have wronged themselves [i.e., sinned] and destroys it...”

In reality, worldly blessings will only benefit a person, Muslim or non-Muslim, when they use them in the correct way.

Every worldly blessing a Muslim possesses is only a means which should aid them in reaching the hereafter safely. It is not an end in itself. For example, wealth is a means one should use in order to obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, fulfilling their necessities and the necessities of their dependents. It is not an end or an ultimate goal in itself.

This not only aids a Muslim in maintaining their focus on the hereafter but it also aids them whenever they lose worldly blessings. When a Muslim treats each worldly blessing, such as a child, as a means to please Allah, the Exalted, and reach the hereafter safely then losing it will not have such a detrimental impact on them. They may become sad, which is an acceptable emotion, but they will not become grieved which leads to impatience and other mental problems, such as depression. This is because they firmly believe the worldly blessing they possessed was only a means so losing it does not cause a loss in the ultimate goal namely, Paradise, the loss of which is disastrous. Therefore, still possessing and concentrating on the ultimate goal will prevent them from becoming grieved.

In addition, they will understand that just like the thing they lost was only a means they firmly believe they will be provided with another means to reach and fulfil their ultimate goal by Allah, the Exalted. This will also prevent them from grieving. Whereas, the one who believes their worldly blessing is the end instead of a means will experience severe grief when losing it as their whole purpose and objective has been lost. This grief will lead to depression and other mental issues.

To conclude, Muslims should treat each blessing they possess as a means to reach the hereafter safely not as an end in itself. This is how one can possess things without being possessed by them. This is how they can keep worldly things in their hands and not in their hearts.

“Indeed, those who disbelieve - never will their wealth or their children avail them against Allah at all...The example of what they spend in this worldly life is like that of a wind containing frost which strikes the harvest of a people who have wronged themselves [i.e., sinned] and destroys it...”

In reality, worldly blessings will only benefit a person, Muslim or non-Muslim, when they use them in the correct way. It is important to note an aspect of this punishment is experienced in this world also.

Therefore, it is important for Muslims to strive in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience as Allah, the Exalted, has guaranteed a good life in both worlds for the one who behaves in this manner. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

“Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do.”

This good life will protect a Muslim from severe grief, depression and other extreme moods and mental disorders which can destroy a person's life. Even though, Muslims will face difficulties which will sadden them but if they obey Allah, the Exalted, this sadness will never become extreme and effect their entire life on a long term basis. This is because a Muslim who strives in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, has an

excellent reason to continue moving forward through their difficulty without giving up and turning to depression and even suicide. For example, they look forward to the countless reward which will be granted to the patient. Chapter 39 Az Zumar, verse 10:

“...Indeed, the patient will be given their reward without account [i.e., limit].”

Whereas, the Muslim who does not strive in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, and only claims the title of being a Muslim with their tongue will not be granted this attitude and a good life. And whenever they face difficulties it will drive them to extreme moods and mental disorders which will destroy their entire life.

“Indeed, those who disbelieve - never will their wealth or their children avail them against Allah at all...The example of what they spend in this worldly life is like that of a wind containing frost which strikes the harvest of a people who have wronged themselves [i.e., sinned] and destroys it...”

It is important for Muslims to understand that whenever they face any type of worldly failure or regrets they should remind themselves of the regrets in the hereafter some people will have, such as the one mentioned in chapter 89 Al Fajr, verse 24:

“He will say, "Oh, I wish I had sent ahead [some good] for my life.””

In this world one's regret will always be followed by another chance or other options which they can pursue in order to gain success once again. But the regret and failure of the hereafter is something which cannot be rectified meaning, there are no second chances in the next world. No one will have the opportunity to return to Earth in order to act differently.

Therefore, every Muslim should be more concerned with the failures they may encounter in the hereafter over the failures and regrets of this world. This does not mean one should not strive to achieve lawful success in this world. It means they should always prioritise gaining success in the hereafter over gaining success in this world. This is an important mentality Muslims should adopt before they reach a day where

reflecting on their failures and regrets will not help them in the slightest.
Chapter 89 Al Fajr, verse 23:

“And brought [within view], that Day, is Hell - that Day, man will remember, but how [i.e., what good] to him will be the remembrance?”

“...and those are the companions of the Fire; they will abide therein eternally...And Allāh has not wronged them, but they wrong themselves.”

The thing to remember is that in reality each person who will end up in Hell takes the fire, which they will encounter in Hell, with them from this world in the form of their sins. When a Muslim engraves this reality into their mind they will observe each sin, major or minor, as a piece of unbearable fire. The same way a person avoids fire in this world they should avoid sins as in reality sins are like hidden fire which will be shown to them in the hereafter.

In addition, a Muslim should not live in heedlessness and believe they can simply claim love for Allah, the Exalted, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, without supporting this verbal declaration with actions. If this was true then the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, would not have strived so hard in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, and they undoubtedly understood Islam and Judgment Day better than the people after them. Simply put, a declaration of love without actions will not save one from Hell. In fact, it has been made clear that some Muslims will enter Hell on Judgment Day. The Muslim who abandons acting on Islamic teachings should understand that their attitude may cause them to lose their faith before their death so that they enter Judgment Day as a non-Muslim, which is the greatest loss.

The same way one would not enter a battle without armour and a shield a Muslim should not enter Judgment Day without the armour and shield

of righteous deeds. Otherwise, the same way the soldier who has no protection will most likely be harmed so will a Muslim who reaches Judgment Day without the protection provided by the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, which involves fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience. A Muslim should remember that the luxuries and pleasures of the material world they enjoyed will not make them feel better if they end up in Hell. In fact, it will only make them feel worse.

“The example of what they spend in this worldly life is like that of a wind containing frost which strikes the harvest of a people who have wronged themselves [i.e., sinned] and destroys it...”

This applies to any good deed advised by Islam which is not supported by a good intention.

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3154, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that those who perform deeds for the sake of people, such as showing off, instead of doing them for the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted, will be told to gain their reward on Judgment Day from the people they acted for which in reality is not possible to do.

It is important to understand that the foundation of all deeds and even Islam itself is one's intention. It is the very thing which Allah, the Exalted, judges people on according to a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1. A Muslim should ensure they perform all religious and useful worldly actions for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, so that they gain reward from Him in both worlds. A sign of this correct mentality is that this person neither expects nor desires people to appreciate or show gratitude to them for the deeds they perform. If one desires this then it indicates their incorrect intention.

In addition, acting with the correct intention prevents sadness and bitterness as the one who acts for the sake of people will eventually encounter ungrateful people who will make them annoyed and bitter as

they feel they wasted their effort and time. Unfortunately, this is seen in parents and relatives as they often fulfill their duties towards their children and relatives for their sake instead of for the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted. But the one who acts for the sake of Allah, the exalted, will fulfill all their duties towards others such as their children and never become bitter or enraged when they fail to show gratitude towards them. This attitude leads to peace of mind and general happiness as they know Allah, the Exalted, is fully aware of their righteous deed and will reward them for it. This is the way all Muslims must act otherwise they may well be left empty handed on the Day of Judgment.

“The example of what they spend in this worldly life is like that of a wind containing frost which strikes the harvest of a people who have wronged themselves [i.e., sinned] and destroys it...”

This includes any deed which is not rooted in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

In a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4606, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that any matter which is not based on Islam will be rejected.

If Muslims desire lasting success in both worldly and religious matters they must strictly adhere to the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Even though, certain actions which are not directly taken from these two sources of guidance can still be considered a righteous deed it is important to prioritize these two sources of guidance over all else. Because the fact is that the more one acts on things which are not taken from these two sources even if it is a righteous deed the less they will act on these two sources of guidance. An obvious example is how many Muslims have adopted cultural practices into their lives which do not have a foundation in these two sources of guidance. Even if these cultural practices are not sins they have preoccupied Muslims from learning and acting on these two sources of guidance as they feel satisfied with their behaviour. This leads to ignorance of the two sources of guidance which in turn will only lead to misguidance.

This is why a Muslim must learn and act on these two sources of guidance which have been established by the leaders of guidance and only then act on other voluntary righteous deeds if they have the time and energy to do so. But if they choose ignorance and made up practices even if they are not sins over learning and acting on these two sources of guidance they will not achieve success.

“...And Allāh has not wronged them...”

Allah, the Exalted, is the One who judges the actions of His creation and justly chooses the outcome of all things. The Muslim who understands that Allah, the Exalted, only acts with justice will always be pleased with His choices and will therefore show patience in difficulty and gratitude in pleasing situations. The one who is content with the rulings of the Just will find peace in this world and in the next.

A Muslim must act on this divine name by always acting with justice with themselves and in matters concerning others. This includes fulfilling the rights of Allah, the Exalted, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, oneself and others according to the teachings of Islam even if it contradicts one's desires or the desires of others. Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 135:

“O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives. Whether one is rich or poor, Allah is more worthy of both. So follow not [personal] inclination, lest you not be just...”

The one who achieves this will become a complete balanced believer. This is the character of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

“...And Allāh has not wronged them, but they wrong themselves.”

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 2447, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that oppression will become a darkness on the Day of Judgment.

This is vital to avoid as those who find themselves plunged in darkness are unlikely to find their way to Paradise. Only those who will be provided a guiding light will be able to do this successfully.

Oppression can take many forms. The first type is when one fails to fulfill the commands of Allah, the Exalted, and refrain from His prohibitions. Even though this has no effect on the infinite status of Allah, the Exalted, it will cause the person to become submerged into darkness in both worlds. According to a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4244, whenever a person commits a sin a black spot is etched on their spiritual heart. The more they sin the more their heart will become encompassed by darkness. This will prevent them from accepting and following true guidance in this world which will ultimately lead to darkness in the next world. Chapter 83 Al Mutaffifin, verse 14:

“No! Rather, the stain has covered their hearts of that which they were earning.”

The next type of oppression is when one oppresses themselves by not fulfilling the trust they have been granted by Allah, the Exalted, in the form of their body and other worldly blessings they possess. The greatest of which is one's faith. This must be protected and strengthened through gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge.

The final type of oppression is when one mistreats others. Allah, the Exalted, will not forgive these sins until the oppressor's victim forgives them first. As people are not so merciful this is unlikely to happen. Then justice will be established on Judgment Day where the oppressor's righteous deeds will be given to their victim and if necessary the victim's sins will be given to the oppressor. This may lead to the oppressor being hurled into Hell. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6579. One should therefore treat others how they wish to be treated by people. A Muslim should avoid all forms of oppression if they desire a guiding light in this world and in the next.

Parable 10

Chapter 6 – Al An'am, Verse 122

أَوْ مَن كَانَ مَيِّتًا فَأَحْيَيْنَاهُ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُ نُورًا يَمْشِي بِهِ فِي النَّاسِ كَمَن مَّثَلَهُ
فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ لَيْسَ بِخَارِجٍ مِّنْهَا كَذَلِكَ زُيِّنَ لِلْكَافِرِينَ مَا كَانُوا
يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٢٢﴾

“And is one who was dead and We gave him life and made for him light by which to walk among the people like one who is in darkness, never to emerge therefrom? Thus it has been made pleasing to the disbelievers that which they were doing.”

“And is one who was dead and We gave him life and made for him light by which to walk among the people like one who is in darkness, never to emerge therefrom?...”

The difference between the two is the sincere remembrance of Allah, the Exalted.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6407, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that the difference between the person who remembers Allah, the Exalted, and the one who does not is like a living person compared to a dead person.

It is important for muslims who desire to create a strong connection with Allah, the Exalted, so that they can overcome all difficulties in this world and in the hereafter successfully to remember Allah, the Exalted, as much as possible. Put simply, the more they remember Him the more they will achieve this vital goal.

This is achieved by practically acting on the three levels of the remembrance of Allah, the Exalted. The first level is to remember Allah, the Exalted, internally and silently. This includes correcting one's intention so that they only act in order to please Allah, the Exalted. The second is by remembering Allah, the Exalted, through one's tongue. But the highest and most effective way of strengthening one's bond with Allah, the Exalted, is practically remembering Him with one's limbs. This is achieved by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the

Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This requires one to gain and act on Islamic knowledge which in turn is the root of all good and success in both worlds.

Those who remain on the first two levels will receive reward depending on their intention but they are unlikely to increase the strength of their faith and piety unless they move to the third and highest level of the remembrance of Allah, the Exalted.

“And is one who was dead and We gave him life and made for him light by which to walk among the people like one who is in darkness, never to emerge therefrom?...”

The difference between the two is the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim number 196, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that Islam is sincerity towards Allah, the Exalted.

Sincerity towards Allah, the Exalted, includes fulfilling all the duties given by Him in the form of commands and prohibitions, solely for His pleasure. As confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1, all will be judged by their intention. So if one is not sincere towards Allah, the Exalted, when performing good deeds they will gain no reward in this world or in the next. In fact, according to a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3154, those who performed insincere deeds will be told on Judgement Day to seek their reward from those who they acted for, which will not be possible. Chapter 98 Al Bayyinah, verse 5.

"And they were not commanded except to worship Allah, [being] sincere to Him in religion....."

If one is lax in fulfilling their duties towards Allah, the Exalted, it proves a lack of sincerity. Therefore, they should sincerely repent and struggle to fulfil them all. It is important to bear in mind Allah, the Exalted, never burdens one with duties they cannot perform or handle. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 286.

"Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity...."

Being sincere towards Allah, the Exalted, means that one should always choose His pleasure over the pleasure of themselves and others. A Muslim should always give priority to those actions which are for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, over all else. One should love others and dislike their sins for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, and not for the sake of their own desires. When they help others or refuse to take part in sins it should be for the sake of Allah, the Exalted. The one who adopts this mentality has perfected their faith. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4681.

“And is one who was dead and We gave him life and made for him light by which to walk among the people like one who is in darkness, never to emerge therefrom?...”

It is important for muslims to strive in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience as Allah, the Exalted, has guaranteed a good life in both worlds for the one who behaves in this manner. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

“Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do.”

This good life will protect a muslim from severe grief, depression and other extreme moods and mental disorders which can destroy a person's life. Even though, muslims will face difficulties which will sadden them but if they obey Allah, the Exalted, this sadness will never become extreme and effect their entire life on a long term basis. This is because a muslim who strives in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, has an excellent reason to continue moving forward through their difficulty without giving up and turning to depression and even suicide. For example, they look forward to the countless reward which will be granted to the patient. Chapter 39 Az Zumar, verse 10:

“...Indeed, the patient will be given their reward without account [i.e., limit].”

Whereas, the muslim who does not strive in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, and only claims the title of being a muslim with their tongue will not be granted this attitude and a good life. And whenever they face difficulties it will drive them to extreme moods and mental disorders which will destroy their entire life.

“And is one who was dead and We gave him life and made for him light by which to walk among the people like one who is in darkness, never to emerge therefrom?...”

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2465, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that whoever prioritises the hereafter over this material world will be granted contentment, their affairs will be corrected for them and they will receive their destined provision in an easy way.

This half of the Hadith means that whoever correctly fulfils their duties in respect to Allah, the Exalted, and to the creation, such as providing for their family in a lawful manner while avoiding the excess of this material world will be granted contentment. This is when one is pleased with what they possess without being greedy and actively striving to obtain more worldly things. In reality, the one who is content with what they possess is a truly rich person even if they possess little wealth as they become independent of things. Independence of anything makes one rich in respect to it.

In addition, this attitude will allow one to comfortably deal with any worldly issues which may arise during their life. This is because the less one interacts with the material world and focuses on the hereafter the less worldly issues they will face. The less worldly issues a person faces the more comfortable their life will become. For example, the one who possesses one house will have fewer issues to deal with in respect to it, such as a broken cooker, than the one who possesses ten houses. Finally, this person will easily and pleasantly obtain their lawful provision. Not only this but Allah, the Exalted, will place such grace in their

provision that it will cover all their responsibilities and necessities meaning, it will satisfy them and their dependents.

But as mentioned in the other half of this Hadith the one who prioritises the material world over the hereafter meaning, by neglecting their duties or striving for the unnecessary and excess of this material world will find that their need, meaning greed, for worldly things is never satisfied which by definition makes them poor even if they possess much wealth. These people will go from one worldly issue to another throughout the day failing to achieve contentment as they have opened too many worldly doors. And they will receive their destined provision with difficulty and it will not give them satisfaction and never seem enough to fill their greed. This may even push them towards the unlawful which only leads to a loss in both worlds.

“And is one who was dead and We gave him life and made for him light by which to walk among the people like one who is in darkness, never to emerge therefrom?...”

First of all, it is important to understand, that the major thing which separates a human from an animal is the fact that people live by a higher moral code. If people abandoned this and simply acted on their desires then there would be no difference between them and animals. In fact, people would be worse as they possess the higher level of thinking yet, still choose to live like animals.

Secondly, whether people want to admit it or not in reality, every person is a servant of something or someone. Some are servants of others, such as Hollywood executives and do whatever they command them to do even if it challenges modesty and shame. Others are servants of their relatives and friends and do whatever it takes to please them. Others are the worse by being servants of their own desires as this is the attitude of animals who generally act to please themselves. The best and highest form of servanthood is being a servant of Allah, the Exalted. This is quite evident if one turns the pages of history which clearly shows that those who were the servants of Allah, the Exalted, such as the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, were granted the highest honour and respect in this world and will be granted this in the next. Centuries and millennia have passed yet their names are remembered as the pillars and beacons of history. Whereas those who became servants of others especially, their own desires were eventually disgraced in this world even if they achieved some worldly status and they became mere footnotes in history. The media barely remembers those who pass away for more than a few days before moving onto the next person to report on. During their lives these people eventually become sad, lonely,

depressed and even suicidal as selling their souls and decency to their worldly masters did not grant them the contentment they were looking for. One does not need to be a scholar to understand this obvious truth. So if people must be servants they should be the servants of Allah, the Exalted, as lasting honour, greatness and true success lies only in this.

“And is one who was dead and We gave him life and made for him light by which to walk among the people like one who is in darkness, never to emerge therefrom?...”

Those who disbelieve or avoid acting on their faith in Islam do so out of love for the material world and the things within it. They believe that believing or acting on their faith will prevent them from enjoying worldly blessings meaning, for them faith is something that restricts their desires and therefore they turn away from it either literally or practically. Instead they turn towards the material world and strive to fulfill their desires without restrictions believing that true peace lies in this. They look down at those who accept and actualize their faith by controlling their actions and using their worldly blessings in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. They believe that these pious Muslims are lowly slaves who been restricted from enjoying themselves whereas they, the disbelievers and the misguided, are free. But in actual fact this could not be further from the truth as the real slaves are those who fail to accept and submit to Allah, the Exalted, and the superior ones are those who have done this as they become free of slavery to the world. This can be understood by an example. A good parent will restrict the type of food their child eats meaning, they will only let them eat junk and unhealthy food once in a while and instead force them to follow a healthy diet. This child therefore believes that their parent has placed undesirable restrictions on them and that they have become slaves to their parent and their healthy diet. On the other hand another child has been given permission from their parent to eat whatever they desire, whenever they desire and how much they desire. So this child believes that they are completely free of all restrictions. When these children come together the child who has been given complete freedom criticizes and looks down on the child who has been restricted by their parent. The latter child will also feel sorry for themselves when they observe the other child has been given free reign to behave however they wish. Outwardly it appears the child who has been granted freed has obtained happiness whereas the

other child is too tied up with restrictions to enjoy life. But years down the line the truth will become manifest. The child who had no restrictions grows up to become extremely unhealthy e.g. obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, etc. As a result of this they even become mentally unhealthy as they lose confidence in their body and the way they look. Because of this they become a slave of medications, diseases, mental and social problems. All these things restrict their happiness and life. Whereas, the child who was restricted by their parent grows up healthy in mind and body. As a result they become confident in their body and ability, which aids them to succeed in life. They become free of any slavery to medications, diseases, mental and social problems as they grew up with the correct balance and guidance. So the child who had no restrictions grew up becoming a slave to many things, whereas the child who had restrictions grew up independent of all restrictions.

To conclude, the real slave is the one who becomes a slave to all other things except Allah, the Exalted, such as social media, society, fashion and culture, and this leads to mental, physical and social problems, whereas the real free person is the one who submits only to Allah, the Exalted, thereby achieving peace of mind and body.

“And is one who was dead and We gave him life and made for him light by which to walk among the people like one who is in darkness, never to emerge therefrom?...”

It is a universal aim and goal for all people, irrespective of their faith or social class, to achieve peace of mind in this world. It is the ultimate reason why people strive in this material world, work long hours and dedicate the majority of their efforts to this world. People desire to obtain such a life whereby they have no stresses or worries such as financial difficulties. But it is strange how people, especially muslims, look for peace of mind in the wrong place. Just like a person who desires to watch a football game yet, goes to a cricket match. Allah, the Exalted, has made it clear that true peace of mind only lies in His obedience which involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and being patient with destiny. Chapter 13 Ar Ra'd, verse 28:

“...Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah hearts are assured.”

Whenever a person seeks peace of mind in the material world it will only lead them further away from their goal. Whenever a person sets a target in respect to this material world that target will only lead onto more targets. This continues until the person departs this world without obtaining what they were looking for. It is obvious that the rich do not obtain true peace of mind as they stress more than normal people and whatever they obtain of the world ends up becoming a burden for them. It is why the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2465, that the one who focuses on the

hereafter will be blessed with a rich heart and Allah, the Exalted, will organize their affairs meaning, they will obtain peace of mind. But the one who focuses on the material world will only see their poverty and their affairs will become scattered meaning, they will not achieve peace of mind. The one who obeys Allah, the Exalted, will find peace of mind even if they possess little of this world. But the one who is lost in the material world will go from one worldly door to another but will never find true peace as it has not been placed there. If a person wants to watch a football game they should not go to a cricket match and if a muslim desires peace of mind they should not search for it in the material world as it lies only in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted. It is important to note, that those who adhere to the teachings of Islam will encounter difficulties throughout their lives as this is guaranteed but through their obedience Allah, the Exalted, will remove fear and grief from them so that they remain firm and steadfast on the correct path. This is similar to the one who only feels slight discomfort from a medical procedure as they have been anaesthetised.

“And is one who was dead and We gave him life and made for him light by which to walk among the people like one who is in darkness, never to emerge therefrom?...”

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2645, that when Allah, the Exalted, desires to give someone good He provides them with Islamic knowledge.

There is no doubt that every muslim irrespective of the strength of their faith desires good in both worlds. Even though many muslims incorrectly believe that this good which they desire lies in fame, wealth, authority, companionship and their career this Hadith makes it crystal clear that true lasting good lies in gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge. It is important to note a branch of religious knowledge is useful worldly knowledge whereby one earns lawful provision in order to fulfil their necessities and the necessities of their dependents. Even though the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has pointed out where good lies yet it is a shame how many muslims do not place much value in this. They in most cases only strive to obtain the bare minimum of Islamic knowledge in order to fulfil their obligatory duties and fail to acquire and act on more such as the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Instead they dedicate their efforts on worldly things believing true good is found there. Many muslims fail to appreciate that the righteous predecessors had to journey for weeks on end just to learn a single verse or Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, whereas today one can study Islamic teachings without leaving their home. Yet, many fail to make use of this blessing given to the modern day muslims. Out of His infinite mercy Allah, the

Exalted, through his Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has not only pointed out where true good lies but He has also placed this good at one's finger tips. Allah, the Exalted, has informed mankind of where an eternal buried treasure is located which can solve all the problems they may encounter in both worlds. But muslims will only obtain this good once they struggle to acquire and act on it.

“And is one who was dead and We gave him life and made for him light by which to walk among the people like one who is in darkness, never to emerge therefrom?...”

The darkness has been described in the plural while light has been described in the singular. This is because the path to success is single while the paths of misguidance are many. The single path of success is the path of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, which involves sincerely obeying and following the Holy Quran and his traditions.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim number 196, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that Islam is sincerity towards the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

Sincerity towards the Holy Quran includes having deep respect and love for the words of Allah, the Exalted. This sincerity is proven when one fulfils the three aspects of the Holy Quran. The first is to recite it correctly and regularly. The second is to understand its teachings through a reliable source and teacher. The final aspect is to act on the teachings of the Holy Quran with the aim of pleasing Allah, the Exalted. The sincere muslim gives priority to acting on its teachings over acting on their desires which contradict the Holy Quran. Modelling one's character on the Holy Quran is the sign of true sincerity towards the book of Allah, the Exalted. This is the tradition of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon

him, which is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 1342.

The next thing mentioned in the main Hadith under discussion is sincerity towards the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This includes striving to acquire knowledge in order to act on his traditions. These traditions include the ones related to Allah, the Exalted, in the form of worship, and his blessed noble character towards the creation. Chapter 68 Al Qalam, verse 4:

"And indeed, you are of a great moral character."

It includes to accept his commands and prohibitions at all times. This has been made a duty by Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 59 Al Hashr, verse 7:

"...And whatever the Messenger has given you - take; and what he has forbidden you - refrain from..."

Sincerity includes to give priority to his traditions over the actions of anyone else as all paths to Allah, the Exalted, are closed except the path of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 31:

"Say, [O Muḥammad], "If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins..."

One must love all those who supported him during his life and after his passing, whether they are from his Family or his Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all. Supporting those who walk on his path and teach his traditions is a duty on those who desire to be sincere to him. Sincerity also includes loving those who love him and disliking those who criticise him irrespective, of one's relationship with these people. This is all summarised in a single Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 16. It advises that a person cannot have true faith until they love Allah, the Exalted, and the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, more than the entire creation. This love must be shown through actions not just words.

“And is one who was dead and We gave him life and made for him light by which to walk among the people like one who is in darkness, never to emerge therefrom?...”

If one turns the pages of history they will observe many people who achieved great worldly success and in some cases benefited mankind yet, they will also observe at least one thing which taints their achievements. But if one observes the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, they will observe nothing except success and countless things which benefit mankind. Even though, there are people who falsely criticise the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, it is quite evident from his highly accurate and detailed biography which has been verified by reliable muslim and non-muslim historians that this criticism is based on nothing but falsehood. This is why muslims must put aside all role models and instead study and adopt the flawless character of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, as this is the only way to achieve real untainted success in both one's worldly and religious life. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 31:

“Say, [O Muhammad], “If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins...”

There is no goal greater than this in this world. In fact, this is what people irrespective of their faith strive to achieve. And Allah, the Exalted, has placed all of it in the footsteps of his Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 33 Al Ahzab, verse 21:

“There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Last Day and [who] remembers Allah often.”

It is simple, if a person desires worldly and religious success they should follow in the footsteps of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. But if they choose a path other than his whatever tainted success they achieve will eventually become a burden for them and it may lead to a punishment on a Great Day.

“And is one who was dead and We gave him life and made for him light by which to walk among the people like one who is in darkness, never to emerge therefrom?...”

The fact that the light of faith has been mentioned with walking amongst society indicates the importance of fulfilling one's duty as the ambassador of Islam. It is extremely important for muslims to fulfil this duty according to their potential. The best way to achieve this is by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and being patient with His choices. Islam spread across the entire globe because the righteous predecessors took this duty very seriously. When they gained and acted on beneficial knowledge the outside world recognised the truthfulness of Islam through their behaviour. This caused countless people to enter the fold of Islam. Unfortunately, many muslims today believe that showing others about Islam is merely in one's appearance, such as growing a beard or wearing a scarf. This is only an aspect of representing Islam. The greatest part is by adopting the characteristics of Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, discussed in the Holy Quran and his traditions. Only with this attitude will the outside world observe the true nature of Islam. A muslim should always remember that adopting an Islamic appearance while possessing characteristics which oppose the teachings of Islam only causes the outside world to disrespect Islam. They will be held accountable for this disrespect as they are the cause of it. A muslim should therefore behave as a true ambassador of Islam by adopting the inward teachings of Islam as well as the outer appearance of Islam.

In addition, this important position should remind muslims that they will be held accountable and questioned whether they fulfilled this role or not on Judgment Day. The same way a king would become angry at their diplomat

and representative if they failed to fulfil their duty so will Allah, the Exalted, become angry with the muslim who fails to fulfill their duty as an ambassador of Islam.

“...Thus it has been made pleasing to the disbelievers that which they were doing.”

This verse is connected to chapter 29 Al Ankabut, verse 38:

“...And Satan had made pleasing to them their deeds and averted them from the path...”

As mentioned in this verse the Devil fools people into committing sins and making wrong decisions by beautifying the incorrect choice for them. This occurs in situations when a person must make a choice between two or more options. It also occurs when the choice is between the lawful and unlawful and even between two lawful options. If the Devil cannot guide someone to a sin then he attempts to guide them to the inferior option, even if it is lawful, hoping it will lead to some sort of a sin, such as a person complaining about life and destiny. The Devil beautifies a choice by causing one to focus on its apparent benefit to such a degree that they lose focus on the bigger picture and the consequences of the choice. An adult then behaves like a child who makes choices without reflecting over the consequences of their actions. This is one of the main reasons why people commit sins. In reality, if one truly reflected on the punishment of sins they would never commit them.

Something which helps in situations like this is to mentally take a step back and assess the options by comparing their long-term benefits and harms. Only when the lawful benefits of something outweighs the harm should a person proceed. The other thing which helps is to deeply reflect on the consequences of the potential options. Some choices might be lawful but if one goes ahead with them it may make their life difficult in the long run. For example, sometimes people rush into marriage with someone they apparently love. They base their decision solely on their feelings instead of reflecting on other more important aspects, for example, if their potential future spouse will make a good life partner or a good parent and if they will help them in their obedience to Allah, the Exalted. Many marriages have ended in divorce because the couple did not reflect on the long term implications of a potential marriage. Many people often claim their spouse was very different before they got married but in most cases they have not changed at all. The truth is that before marriage they did not spend so much time with them so they did not observe certain characteristics which became obvious after marriage.

Some often rush into action and later have regrets as their choice caused them more trouble and in many cases the issue was not a big deal in the first place. This type of action can only be avoided when one reflects on the situation and observes the bigger picture meaning, the wider and long-term implications and consequences of taking a step forward.

One should not only assess if something is lawful or unlawful before making a decision. Even though, this is the most important thing to consider yet, it is not the only thing. As many lawful incorrect choices, which are beautified by the Devil, can lead to trouble further on in life.

To sum up, before making any choice a person must take a step back and reflect deeply over its lawfulness and its potential long-term benefits and harms under the guidance of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Whoever acts like this will rarely make a wrong choice they later regret.

“...Thus it has been made pleasing to the disbelievers that which they were doing.”

A Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 3294, advises that whichever path the second rightly guided Caliph of Islam, Umar Bin Khataab, may Allah be pleased with him, took the Devil would take a different path, meaning, out of fear of him. One of the reasons why the Devil acted in this way was because he had little influence over Umar Bin Khataab, may Allah be pleased with him. The Devil cannot physically force someone to commit sins. He instead encourages them to do so through whisperings. But in order for them to be effective he requires a person to possess some sort of worldly desire. Then through his whisperings he encourages the growth of this worldly desire until it drives the person to act on it thereby committing a sin. The reason the Devil had little effect on Umar Bin Khataab, may Allah be pleased with him, was because he had removed worldly desires from his heart. His only desires were connected to pleasing Allah, the Exalted. Therefore, if muslims desire to minimise the effect the Devil has on them they should remove unnecessary desires from their heart. This only occurs when one refrains from indulging in the excess and unnecessary aspects of this material world. The more they do this the more these worldly desires will leave their heart until they reach a point where they only desire to please Allah, the Exalted, in all their actions. The Devil will flee from this person as he knows he will have little effect on them. But the more one indulges in the unnecessary aspects of this material world the more worldly desires they will possess and therefore, the more influence the Devil will have over them.

“...Thus it has been made pleasing to the disbelievers that which they were doing.”

The Devil tries to convince muslims to always observe those who are worse than them in behaviour in order to justify their lack of striving in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, and improving their character and behaviour for the better. For example, a muslim who offers their obligatory prayers once in a while will observe someone who does not pray at all in order to make themselves feel better. A thief will look at a murderer and convince themselves stealing is not so bad. The examples are endless. It is very strange how these muslims so easily observe those who appear worse than them in order to justify their lack of effort in obeying Allah, the Exalted, but these same people will not observe those who are in a worse off position than them when they face difficulties. For example, the person who suffers from back pain will not observe the one who is physically disabled so that it prevents them from complaining. This attitude has specifically been advised by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2513.

In addition, if observing those who appear worse in their behaviour does not save one from punishment in a worldly court, such as a thief being pardoned by a judge because there are many murderers in the world, how can one imagine this excuse will hold up in the court of Allah, the Exalted?

Muslims should therefore avoid this trap of the Devil by observing those who appear better than them so that they are inspired to improve their character and behaviour progressively for the pleasure of Allah, the

Exalted. This is what Allah, the Exalted, demands meaning, He does not demand perfection.

“...Thus it has been made pleasing to the disbelievers that which they were doing.”

It is important to understand that no matter how much religious knowledge one obtains or how much worship and righteous deeds they perform they will never be safe from the attacks and traps of the Devil. This is because the Devil attacks each person according to how much knowledge they possess and how much righteous deeds they perform. For example, he will try to convince the muslim who is strict in offering their obligatory prayers not to offer them in congregation at the Mosque or by convincing them to delay their obligatory prayers beyond their starting times as he knows he will not be able to convince them to completely abandon the obligatory prayers. Whereas, in respect to the muslim who is struggling to establish their obligatory prayers he will attempt to convince them that they are too difficult to establish therefore they should only offer them when they are completely free. He tries to convince those who perform many voluntary righteous deeds not to gain and act on Islamic knowledge in order to improve their character so that they continue to destroy their good deeds through bad characteristics such as, lying and backing.

The Devil aims to prevent a person from a reaching a higher level if he cannot convince them to fall in rank through disobedience to Allah, the Exalted. Therefore, muslims should always be on guard against his attacks and traps by persistently striving to increase in rank, improve their character and avoid acts of disobedience which is all achieved by gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge.

Parable 11

Chapter 7 – Al A'raf, Verses 57-58

وَهُوَ الَّذِي يُرْسِلُ الرِّيحَ بُشْرًا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ رَحْمَتِهِ، حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَقَلَّتْ
سَحَابًا ثِقَالًا سُقْنَاهُ لِبَلَدٍ مَّيِّتٍ فَأَنْزَلْنَا بِهِ الْمَاءَ فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ
كَذَٰلِكَ نُخْرِجُ الْمَوْتَىٰ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾

وَالْبَلَدُ الطَّيِّبُ يَخْرُجُ نَبَاتُهُ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِ، وَالَّذِي خَبثَ لَا يَخْرُجُ إِلَّا نَكْدًا
كَذَٰلِكَ نُنصِّفُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يُشْكُرُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾

“And it is He who sends the winds as good tidings before His mercy [i.e., rainfall] until, when they have carried heavy rainclouds, We drive them to a dead land and We send down rain therein and bring forth thereby [some] of all the fruits. Thus will We bring forth the dead; perhaps you may be reminded.

And the good land - its vegetation emerges by permission of its Lord; but that which is bad - nothing emerges except sparsely, with difficulty. Thus do We diversify the signs for a people who are grateful.”

“And it is He who sends the winds as good tidings before His mercy [i.e., rainfall] until, when they have carried heavy rainclouds, We drive them to a dead land and We send down rain therein and bring forth thereby [some] of all the fruits...”

Allah, the Exalted, is the Creator and Allocator of provision to the entire creation which they need to preserve their physical and spiritual constitutions. In fact, according to a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6748, the provision of the entire creation was allocated over fifty thousand years before the creation of the Heavens and the Earth.

The one who understands this divine name will rely on Allah, the Exalted, to provide for them as He has planned for them before they were created. They will prove this reliance by striving to gain lawful provision as commanded by Allah, the Exalted, while refraining from anything which is unlawful and doubtful.

It is important to note that as people require physical provision in the form of food and drink. Similarly, the soul of a muslim requires provision also. This provision strengthens it and leads it to eternal bliss. This provision is in the form of sincere obedience to Allah, the Exalted, which involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience. The foundation of all this is gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge. Therefore, muslims should strive to gain this important provision of the soul as well as provision for their physical body. Two elements should be remembered in this respect. Do not exert unlawful and unnecessary efforts in gaining one's guaranteed provision. And do not misuse or waste the provision one gains.

A muslim, should act on this divine name by fulfilling their duty by providing for their dependents according to the teachings of Islam. This includes providing them with both physical and spiritual provision through education. A muslim should also do the same for the needy according to their capacity without fearing poverty for themselves. They should remember the Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4893, which advises that Allah, the Exalted, will fulfil the needs of the muslim who takes care of the needs of others.

“...We drive them to a dead land and We send down rain therein and bring forth thereby [some] of all the fruits. Thus will We bring forth the dead; perhaps you may be reminded.”

Just like Allah, the Exalted, revives barren land through rain He is more than capable in resurrecting the dead after they have turned into dust and bones. In addition, the fact that Allah, the Exalted, created people from nothing indicates that resurrecting them from bones and dust is not difficult for Him. As indicated by the end of this verse, the one who understands this will practically prepare for the Day of Judgement.

The trumpet blast will lead to the death of the creation. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 7381. The important thing to learn is that this is a call which no one can or will reject responding to. It will lead to the resurrection and final judgment. Therefore, muslims should respond to the call of Allah, the Exalted, through the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, through sincere obedience by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 8 An Anfal, verse 24:

“O you who have believed, respond to Allah and to the Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life...”

Whoever responds to this call in this world will find the final call easy to endure and respond to. Whereas, the one who lives heedless to the call

of Allah, the Exalted, in this world will not find peace in it and they will be forced to answer the call of the trumpet which will be a great burden for them to endure and respond to. A person can only ignore the call of Allah, the Exalted, for so long as the final call will occur, sooner or later, and no one will be able to avoid or ignore it. If this is inevitable it makes sense that one respond to it now, today, instead of living in heedlessness. If one hears the trumpet blast while heedless no action or regret will benefit them and what comes after for this person will be even more terrifying.

“...We drive them to a dead land and We send down rain therein and bring forth thereby [some] of all the fruits. Thus will We bring forth the dead; perhaps you may be reminded.”

Just like Allah, the Exalted, revives barren land through rain He is more than capable in resurrecting the dead after they have turned into dust and bones. In addition, the fact that Allah, the Exalted, created people from nothing indicates that resurrecting them from bones and dust is not difficult for Him. As indicated by the end of this verse, the one who understands this will practically prepare for the Day of Judgement.

It is important for muslims to regularly assess their own deeds as no one except Allah, the Exalted, is better aware of them than themselves. When one honestly judges their own deeds it will inspire them to sincerely repent from their sins and encourage them towards righteous deeds. But the one who fails to regularly assess their deeds will lead a life of heedlessness whereby they commit sins without sincerely repenting. This person will find the weighing of their deeds on the Day of Judgment extremely difficult. In fact, it may well cause them to be hurled into Hell.

A clever business owner will always regularly assess their accounts. This will ensure their business heads in the right direction and ensures they complete all the necessary accounts such as a tax return correctly. But the foolish business owner will not regularly take accounts of their business. This will lead to a loss in profits and a failure in correctly preparing for their accounts. Those who fail to file their accounts correctly with the government face penalties which only makes their lives more difficult. But the key thing to note is that the penalty of failing to

correctly assess and prepare one's deeds for the Scales of Judgment Day does not involve a monetary fine. Its penalty is more severe and truly unbearable. Chapter 99 Az Zalalah, verses 7-8:

“So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it. And whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it.”

“...We drive them to a dead land and We send down rain therein and bring forth thereby [some] of all the fruits. Thus will We bring forth the dead; perhaps you may be reminded.”

Just like Allah, the Exalted, revives barren land through rain He is more than capable in resurrecting the dead after they have turned into dust and bones. In addition, the fact that Allah, the Exalted, created people from nothing indicates that resurrecting them from bones and dust is not difficult for Him. As indicated by the end of this verse, the one who understands this will practically prepare for the Day of Judgement. Preparing for it involves using the blessings one has been granted correctly.

In reality, in most cases nothing in this material world in itself is good or bad, such as wealth. What makes a thing good or bad is the way it is used. It is important to understand that the very purpose of everything which was created by Allah, the Exalted, was for it to be used correctly according to the teachings of Islam. When something is not used correctly it in reality becomes useless. For example, wealth is useful in both worlds when it is used correctly such as being spent on the necessities of a person and their dependents. But it can become useless and even a curse for its bearer if it is not used correctly, such as being hoarded or spent on sinful things. Simply hoarding wealth causes wealth to lose value. How can paper and metal coins one tucks away be useful? In this respect, there is no difference between a blank piece of paper and a note of money. It is only useful when it is used correctly.

So if a muslim desires all their worldly possessions to become a blessing for them in both worlds all they have to do is use them correctly

according to the teachings found in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. But if they use them incorrectly then the same blessing will become a burden and curse for them in both worlds. It is as simple as that.

“...We drive them to a dead land and We send down rain therein and bring forth thereby [some] of all the fruits. Thus will We bring forth the dead; perhaps you may be reminded.”

Just like Allah, the Exalted, revives barren land through rain He is more than capable in resurrecting the dead after they have turned into dust and bones. In addition, the fact that Allah, the Exalted, created people from nothing indicates that resurrecting them from bones and dust is not difficult for Him. As indicated by the end of this verse, the one who understands this will practically prepare for the Day of Judgement. Preparing for it involves using the blessings one has been granted correctly. One can adopt this correct attitude when they understand the purpose of these blessings.

Every worldly blessing a muslim possesses is only a means which should aid them in reaching the hereafter safely. It is not an end in itself. For example, wealth is a means one should use in order to obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, fulfilling their necessities and the necessities of their dependents. It is not an end or an ultimate goal in itself.

This not only aids a muslim in maintaining their focus on the hereafter but it also aids them whenever they lose worldly blessings. When a muslim treats each worldly blessing, such as a child, as a means to please Allah, the Exalted, and reach the hereafter safely then losing it will not have such a detrimental impact on them. They may become sad, which is an acceptable emotion, but they will not become grieved which leads to impatience and other mental problems, such as depression. This is because they firmly believe the worldly blessing they possessed

was only a means so losing it does not cause a loss in the ultimate goal namely, Paradise, the loss of which is disastrous. Therefore, still possessing and concentrating on the ultimate goal will prevent them from becoming grieved.

In addition, they will understand that just like the thing they lost was only a means they firmly believe they will be provided with another means to reach and fulfil their ultimate goal by Allah, the Exalted. This will also prevent them from grieving. Whereas, the one who believes their worldly blessing is the end instead of a means will experience severe grief when losing it as their whole purpose and objective has been lost. This grief will lead to depression and other mental issues.

To conclude, muslims should treat each blessing they possess as a means to reach the hereafter safely not as an end in itself. This is how one can possess things without being possessed by them. This is how they can keep worldly things in their hands and not in their hearts.

“And the good land - its vegetation emerges by permission of its Lord; but that which is bad - nothing emerges except sparsely, with difficulty. Thus do We diversify the signs...”

Just like rain comes from the skies so does divine revelation. Some hearts accept and act on divine revelation thereby benefiting themselves and others, just like a blossoming tree/crop. Others reject or fail to act on divine revelation and as a result they face difficulties in both worlds, just like the bad land mentioned in this verse.

It is therefore important for muslims to strive in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience as Allah, the Exalted, has guaranteed a good life in both worlds for the one who behaves in this manner. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

“Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do.”

This good life will protect a muslim from severe grief, depression and other extreme moods and mental disorders which can destroy a person's life. Even though, muslims will face difficulties which will sadden them but if they obey Allah, the Exalted, this sadness will never become extreme and effect their entire life on a long term basis. This is because a muslim who strives in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, has an

excellent reason to continue moving forward through their difficulty without giving up and turning to depression and even suicide. For example, they look forward to the countless reward which will be granted to the patient. Chapter 39 Az Zumar, verse 10:

“...Indeed, the patient will be given their reward without account [i.e., limit].”

Whereas, the muslim who does not strive in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, and only claims the title of being a muslim with their tongue will not be granted this attitude and a good life. And whenever they face difficulties it will drive them to extreme moods and mental disorders which will destroy their entire life.

“And the good land - its vegetation emerges by permission of its Lord; but that which is bad - nothing emerges except sparsely, with difficulty. Thus do We diversify the signs...”

Just like rain comes from the skies so does divine revelation. Some hearts accept and act on divine revelation thereby benefiting themselves and others, just like a blossoming tree/crop. Others reject or fail to act on divine revelation and as a result they face difficulties in both worlds, just like the bad land mentioned in this verse.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6407, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that the difference between the person who remembers Allah, the Exalted, and the one who does not is like a living person compared to a dead person.

It is important for muslims who desire to create a strong connection with Allah, the Exalted, so that they can overcome all difficulties in this world and in the hereafter successfully to remember Allah, the Exalted, as much as possible. Put simply, the more they remember Him the more they will achieve this vital goal.

This is achieved by practically acting on the three levels of the remembrance of Allah, the Exalted. The first level is to remember Allah, the Exalted, internally and silently. This includes correcting one's intention so that they only act in order to please Allah, the Exalted. The second is by remembering Allah, the Exalted, through one's tongue. But the highest and most effective way of strengthening one's bond with

Allah, the Exalted, is practically remembering Him with one's limbs. This is achieved by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This requires one to gain and act on Islamic knowledge which in turn is the root of all good and success in both worlds.

Those who remain on the first two levels will receive reward depending on their intention but they are unlikely to increase the strength of their faith and piety unless they move to the third and highest level of the remembrance of Allah, the Exalted.

“And the good land - its vegetation emerges by permission of its Lord; but that which is bad - nothing emerges except sparsely, with difficulty. Thus do We diversify the signs...”

Just like rain comes from the skies so does divine revelation. Some hearts accept and act on divine revelation thereby benefiting themselves and others, just like a blossoming tree/crop. Others reject or fail to act on divine revelation and as a result they face difficulties in both worlds, just like the bad land mentioned in this verse.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 52, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that if one's spiritual heart is sound the whole body will become sound but if their spiritual heart is corrupt then the whole body will become corrupt.

First of all, this Hadith refutes the foolish belief where one claims to have a purified heart even though their speech and actions are bad. This is because what is inside will eventually manifest outwardly.

The purification of the spiritual heart is only possible when one eliminates evil characteristics from themselves and replaces them with good characteristics discussed in Islamic teachings. This is only possible when one learns and acts on Islamic teachings so that they can sincerely fulfill the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refrain from His prohibitions and face destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Behaving in this manner will lead to a purified spiritual heart. This

purification will then reflect in the outward limbs of the body, such as one's tongue and eyes. Meaning, they will only use their organs in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. This is in fact a sign showing the love Allah, the Exalted, has for His righteous servant according to a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6502.

It is important to note, that this purification will guide one through all worldly difficulties successfully so that they achieve both worldly and religious success.

“...Thus do We diversify the signs...”

Muslims will only understand these signs so that it positively affects their behaviour when they gain and act on Islamic knowledge.

A great distraction which prevents one from submitting to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, is ignorance. It can be argued that it is the origin of every sin as the one who truly knows the consequences of sins would never commit them. This refers to true beneficial knowledge which is knowledge that is acted upon. In reality, all knowledge which is not acted on is not beneficial knowledge. The example of the one who behaves in this manner is described in the Holy Quran as a donkey which carries books of knowledge which do not benefit it. Chapter 62 Al Jumu'ah, verse 5:

“...and then did not take it on (did not act upon knowledge) is like that of a donkey who carries volumes [of books]...”

A person who acts on their knowledge rarely slips up and commits sins intentionally. In fact, when this occurs it is only caused by a moment of ignorance where a person forgets to act on their knowledge which results in them sinning.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, once highlighted the seriousness of ignorance in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2322. He declared that everything in the material world is cursed except for the remembrance of Allah, the Exalted, whatever is connected to this remembrance, the scholar and the student of knowledge. This means that all the blessings in the material world will become a curse for the one who is ignorant as they will misuse them thereby committing sins.

In fact, ignorance can be considered a person's worse enemy as it prevents them from protecting themselves from harm and gaining benefit all of which can only be achieved through acting on knowledge. The ignorant commits sins without being aware of them. How can one avoid a sin if they do not know what is considered a sin? Ignorance causes one to neglect their obligatory duties. How can one fulfil their duties if they are unaware of what their duties are?

It is therefore a duty on all Muslims to gain enough knowledge to fulfil all their obligatory duties and avoid sins. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224.

“...Thus do We diversify the signs...”

Muslims will only understand these signs so that it positively affects their behaviour when they gain and act on Islamic knowledge. This leads to certainty of faith.

All muslims have faith in Islam but the strength of their faith varies from person to person. For example, the one who follows the teachings of Islam because their family told them to is not the same as the one who believes in it through evidence. A person who has heard about something will not believe in it in the same way as the one who has witnessed the thing with their own eyes.

As confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224, gaining useful knowledge is a duty on all muslims. One of the reasons for this is that it is the best way a muslim can strengthen their faith in Islam. This is important to pursue as the stronger one's certainty of faith the greater the chance they will remain steadfast on the correct path, especially when facing difficulties. In addition, having certainty of faith has been described as one of the best things one can possess in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3849. This knowledge should be obtained by studying the Holy Quran and the Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, through a reliable source.

Allah, the Exalted, did not only declare a truth in the Holy Quran but He also provided evidence for it through examples. Not only examples

which are to be found in the past nations but examples which have been placed in one's very own life. For example, in the Holy Quran Allah, the Exalted, advises that sometimes a person loves a thing even though it will cause them trouble if they obtained it. Similarly, they might hate a thing while there is much hidden good in it for them. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

There are many examples of this truth in history such as the Pact of Hudaiba. Some muslims believed this pact, which was made with the non-muslims of Mecca, would completely favour the latter group. Yet, history clearly shows that it favoured Islam and the muslims. This event is discussed in the Hadiths found in Sahih Bukhari, numbers 2731 and 2732.

If one reflects on their own life they will find many examples when they believed something was good when it was actually bad for them and vice versa. These examples prove the authenticity of this verse and help one's faith strengthen.

Another example is found in chapter 79 An Naziat, verse 46:

“It will be, on the Day they see it (Judgement Day) as though they had not remained [in the world] except for an afternoon or a morning thereof.”

If one turns the pages of history they will clearly observe how great empires came and went. But when they left they passed away in such a way as if they were only on Earth for a moment. All but a few of their signs have faded away as if they were never present on Earth in the first place. Similarly, when one reflects on their own life they will realise that no matter how old they are and no matter how slow certain days might have felt overall their life so far has passed in a flash. Understanding the truthfulness of this verse strengthens one's certainty of faith and this inspires them to prepare for the hereafter before their time runs out.

The Holy Quran and the Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, are full of such examples. Therefore, one should strive to learn and act on these divine teachings so that they adopt certainty of faith. The one who achieves this will not be shaken by any difficulty they face and will remain steadfast on the path which leads to the gates of Paradise. Chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 53:

“We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth...”

“...Thus do We diversify the signs for a people who are grateful.”

A muslim must ensure they fulfill all three aspects of gratitude so that they avoid becoming a denier of Allah, the Exalted, as the one who is ungrateful in reality, scorns the One who granted them the blessings. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 152:

“...And be grateful to Me and do not deny Me.”

The three aspects of gratitude are to internally acknowledge Allah, the Exalted, as the sole Creator and Provider of all blessings. An aspect of this is to correct one's intention so that they only perform actions to please Allah, the Exalted. The next aspect is to praise Allah, the Exalted, via the tongue. And the final and highest aspect is to practically show gratitude through one's actions by using each blessing as prescribed by Islam in order to please Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 14 Ibrahim, verse 7:

“And [remember] when your Lord proclaimed, 'If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favor]; but if you deny, indeed, My punishment is severe.'”

As true gratitude leads to an increase in blessings muslims should fear that showing ingratitude may cause the blessings they possess to either be taken away from them or for their blessings to be used against them

by becoming a burden and a curse for them in both worlds. It is important to note, even if a muslim becomes truly grateful they will still face tests and difficulties as they are guaranteed. But if they behave in the correct way they will be guided through every situation so that they obtain peace of mind and body in this world and a great reward in the hereafter.

“And the good land - its vegetation emerges by permission of its Lord; but that which is bad - nothing emerges except sparsely, with difficulty. Thus do We diversify the signs for a people who are grateful.”

Just like rain comes from the skies so does divine knowledge. Some hearts accept and act on divine knowledge thereby benefiting themselves and others, just like a blossoming tree/crop. Others reject, misuse or fail to act on divine knowledge and as a result they face difficulties in both worlds, just like the bad land mentioned in this verse. As indicated by the end of this verse, heeding and correctly acting on divine knowledge is the essence of showing gratitude to Allah, the Exalted.

In a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 253, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that the one who obtains religious knowledge in order to show off to scholars, argue with others or attract attention to themselves will go to Hell.

Even though, the foundation of all good in both worldly and religious matters is knowledge muslims must understand that knowledge will only benefit them when they firstly correct their intention. Meaning, they strive to obtain and act on knowledge in order to please Allah, the Exalted. All other reasons will only lead to a loss of reward and even punishment if a muslim fails to sincerely repent.

In reality, knowledge is like rain water which falls on different types of trees. Some trees grow by this water in order to benefit others such as a fruit tree. Whereas, other trees grow by this water and become a nuisance to others such as a thorny tree. Even though, the rain water is the same in both cases but the outcome is very different. Similarly, religious knowledge is the same for people but if one adopts the incorrect intention then it will become a means of their destruction. Conversely, if one adopts the correct intention it will become a means of their salvation.

Muslims should therefore correct their intention in all matters as they will be judged on this. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1. And they should remember that one of the first people to enter Hell will be a scholar who only obtained knowledge in order to show off to others. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 4923.

To conclude, only obtaining and acting on useful knowledge with the correct intention is true beneficial knowledge.

Whoever conceals knowledge without a valid reason will be bridled with fire on Judgment Day. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2649. Therefore, muslims must share the useful knowledge their gain with others. It is simply foolish not to as this is one of the righteous deeds which will benefit a muslim even after they die. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 241. Those who hoarded knowledge were forgotten by history but those who shared it with others became known as the scholars and teachers of mankind.

“And the good land - its vegetation emerges by permission of its Lord; but that which is bad - nothing emerges except sparsely, with difficulty. Thus do We diversify the signs for a people who are grateful.”

This verse also indicates the difference between the one who is sincere to Allah, the Exalted, thereby obtaining reward and blessings in both worlds and the one who is insincere. The insincere find it hard to do good deeds yet they will not benefit from them.

One of the main reasons why people who do good things, such as buying gifts for others, do not receive the same level of respect and love from people than some who do not do these things is because of their intention. When these people perform righteous deeds in respect to people, such as visiting the sick, they do so either for the sake of people meaning, to please them or they mix this intention by also aiming to please Allah, the Exalted. First of all, the one who acts for the sake of people will gain no reward from Allah, the Exalted. They will be told to gain their reward from the people they acted for on Judgment Day. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3154. Scholars are divided on whether those who mix their intention by aiming to please Allah, the Exalted, and people will receive a partial reward or none at all. In order to be on the safe side a wise muslim should only act for the sake of Allah, the Exalted.

On the other hand, the other people who gain more respect and love from others do so because they solely act for the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted. When they treat others kindly they do not do it for the sake of people. Because of their sincerity Allah, the Exalted, places more love

and respect in the hearts of the people compared to those who do more acts of kindness to people but are less sincere in their deeds.

So if people desire reward from Allah, the Exalted, and respect from people they should correct their intention and only perform righteous deeds for the sake of Allah, the Exalted. One sign of this correct intention is that this person will aim to please Allah, the Exalted, even if it displeases people. Meaning, they do not pay attention to the attitude and reactions of people.

Parable 12

Chapter 7 – Al A'raf, Verses 175-178

وَأْتَلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ الَّذِي آتَيْنَاهُ آيَاتِنَا فَانْسَلَخَ مِنْهَا فَاتَّبَعَهُ الشَّيْطَانُ

فَكَانَ مِنَ الْغَاوِينَ ﴿١٧٥﴾

وَلَوْ شِئْنَا لَرَفَعْنَاهُ بِهَا وَلَكِنَّهُ أَخْلَدَ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ فَمَثَلُهُ
كَمَثَلِ الْكَلْبِ إِنْ تَحْمِلَ عَلَيْهِ يَلْهَثْ أَوْ تَتْرُكْهُ يَلْهَثْ ذَلِكَ
مَثَلُ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا فَاقْصُصِ الْقَصَصَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

﴿١٧٦﴾

سَاءَ مَثَلًا الْقَوْمُ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَأَنْفُسُهُمْ كَانُوا يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿١٧٧﴾

مَنْ يَهْدِ اللَّهُ فَهُوَ الْمُهْتَدِي وَمَنْ يُضِلِلْ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ ﴿١٧٨﴾

“And recite to them the news of him to whom We gave [knowledge of] Our signs, but he detached himself from them; so Satan pursued him, and he became of the deviators.

And if We had willed, We could have elevated him thereby, but he adhered [instead] to the earth and followed his own desire. So his example is like that of the dog: if you chase him, he pants, or if you leave him, he [still] pants. That is the example of the people who denied Our signs. So relate the stories that perhaps they will give thought.

How evil an example [is that of] the people who denied Our signs and used to wrong themselves.

Whoever Allah guides - he is the [rightly] guided; and whoever He sends astray - it is those who are the losers.”

“And recite to them the news of him to whom...”

This part of the verse reminds muslims that knowing certain things which do not increase one's sincere obedience to Allah, the Exalted, such as the name of this person, should not be investigated nor asked about.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 3257, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned against asking too many questions as this led to the destruction of the past nations. Muslims should instead do what they have been commanded according to their capacity and refrain from what they have been prohibited from.

Muslims should not adopt this mentality as people who have a habit of asking too many questions often fail in fulfilling their duties and acquiring beneficial knowledge as they are too busy asking and researching about less important and sometimes irrelevant information. This mentality can inspire a person to argue and debate over these types of issues also. Unfortunately, this attitude is quite widespread amongst muslims today as they often argue about non obligatory and less important issues instead of concentrating on fulfilling their obligatory duties and the established traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, correctly meaning, fulfilling them with their full etiquettes and conditions.

A muslim should instead research and query about topics which are relevant and important to understand for both worldly and religious matters otherwise they will follow in the footsteps of the people mentioned in this Hadith and only make their own lives more difficult.

“And recite to them the news of him...So relate the stories that perhaps they will give thought.”

It is important for a muslim to be observant in their daily life and avoid being too self-absorbed in their own worldly matters so that they become heedless over the things which are occurring around them and the things which have already occurred. This is an important quality to possess as it is an excellent way to strengthen one's faith which in turn helps one to remain obedient to Allah, the Exalted, at all times. For example, when a muslim observes a sick person they should not only aid them by whatever means they possess, even if it is only a supplication, but they should reflect on their own health and understand that they too will eventually lose their good health either by an illness, ageing or even death. This should inspire them to be grateful for their good health and show this through their actions by taking advantage of their good health in both worldly and religious matters which are pleasing to Allah, the Exalted.

When they observe the death of a rich person they should not only feel sad for the deceased and their family but realise that one day which is unknown to them they will die also. They should understand that just like the rich person was abandoned by their wealth, fame and family at their grave so will they too be left only with their deeds in their grave. This will encourage them to prepare for their grave and the hereafter.

This attitude can and should be applied to all things one observes. A muslim should learn a lesson from everything around them which has been advised in the Holy Quran. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 191:

*“...and give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth, [saying],
"Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly; exalted are You [above such a
thing]; then protect us from the punishment of the Fire.””*

Those who behave in this manner will strengthen their faith on a daily basis whereas those who are too self-absorbed in their worldly life will remain heedless which may lead them to their destruction.

“And recite to them the news of him...So relate the stories that perhaps they will give thought.”

Ignorance will prevent one from reflecting. Reflecting in turn leads to a positive change.

A great distraction which prevents one from submitting to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, is ignorance. It can be argued that it is the origin of every sin as the one who truly knows the consequences of sins would never commit them. This refers to true beneficial knowledge which is knowledge that is acted upon. In reality, all knowledge which is not acted on is not beneficial knowledge. The example of the one who behaves in this manner is described in the Holy Quran as a donkey which carries books of knowledge which do not benefit it. Chapter 62 Al Jumu'ah, verse 5:

“...and then did not take it on (did not act upon knowledge) is like that of a donkey who carries volumes [of books]...”

A person who acts on their knowledge rarely slips up and commits sins intentionally. In fact, when this occurs it is only caused by a moment of ignorance where a person forgets to act on their knowledge which results in them sinning.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, once highlighted the seriousness of ignorance in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2322. He declared that everything in the material world is cursed except for the remembrance of Allah, the Exalted, whatever is connected to this remembrance, the scholar and the student of knowledge. This means that all the blessings in the material world will become a curse for the one who is ignorant as they will misuse them thereby committing sins.

In fact, ignorance can be considered a person's worse enemy as it prevents them from protecting themselves from harm and gaining benefit all of which can only be achieved through acting on knowledge. The ignorant commits sins without being aware of them. How can one avoid a sin if they do not know what is considered a sin? Ignorance causes one to neglect their obligatory duties. How can one fulfil their duties if they are unaware of what their duties are?

It is therefore a duty on all Muslims to gain enough knowledge to fulfil all their obligatory duties and avoid sins. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224.

“And recite to them the news of him...So relate the stories that perhaps they will give thought.”

Ignorance will prevent one from reflecting. Reflecting in turn leads to a positive change.

It is important for muslims to understand that their worldly knowledge irrespective of how much they possess is not enough to gain success in their religious life. Even though, gaining useful worldly knowledge is praiseworthy according to the teachings of Islam as it is an excellent means for one to obtain lawful provision for themselves and their dependents yet, it is not enough to safely guide them through their religious life. For example, in most cases, worldly knowledge will not teach someone how to safely journey through a difficulty or a test in a way which pleases Allah, the Exalted, so that they gain reward in both worlds. The obligatory duties and traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, cannot be acted on by a muslim who only possesses worldly knowledge. In fact, religious knowledge has the power to guide one to success in both worlds whereas worldly knowledge will only aid someone in this world. The one who possesses religious knowledge will adhere to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, which will result in such blessings and grace that they will find success in both worlds. Whereas, worldly knowledge will inspire one to deduce their own path in religion instead of acting according to the teachings of the rightly guided namely, the righteous predecessors. Religion is not about creating one's own path it is simply to adhere to Islamic teachings.

Unfortunately, many muslims who possess worldly knowledge do not realise this important point which only reduces their chances of achieving success in both worlds. Therefore, muslims should strive to obtain and act on both religious and useful worldly knowledge if they desire success in both worlds. This is why gaining useful knowledge is a duty on all muslims according to a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224.

“And recite to them the news of him to whom We gave [knowledge of] Our signs, but he detached himself from them...”

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2645, that when Allah, the Exalted, desires to give someone good He provides them with Islamic knowledge.

There is no doubt that every muslim irrespective of the strength of their faith desires good in both worlds. Even though many muslims incorrectly believe that this good which they desire lies in fame, wealth, authority, companionship and their career this Hadith makes it crystal clear that true lasting good lies in gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge. It is important to note a branch of religious knowledge is useful worldly knowledge whereby one earns lawful provision in order to fulfil their necessities and the necessities of their dependents. Even though the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has pointed out where good lies yet it is a shame how many muslims do not place much value in this. They in most cases only strive to obtain the bare minimum of Islamic knowledge in order to fulfil their obligatory duties and fail to acquire and act on more such as the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Instead they dedicate their efforts on worldly things believing true good is found there. Many muslims fail to appreciate that the righteous predecessors had to journey for weeks on end just to learn a single verse or Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, whereas today one can study Islamic teachings without leaving their home. Yet, many fail to make use of this blessing given to the modern day muslims. Out of His infinite mercy Allah, the Exalted, through his Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be

upon him, has not only pointed out where true good lies but He has also placed this good at one's finger tips. Allah, the Exalted, has informed mankind of where an eternal buried treasure is located which can solve all the problems they may encounter in both worlds. But muslims will only obtain this good once they struggle to acquire and act on it.

“And recite to them the news of him to whom We gave [knowledge of] Our signs, but he detached himself from them; so Satan pursued him, and he became of the deviators. And if We had willed, We could have elevated him thereby, but he adhered [instead] to the earth and followed his own desire...”

This verse warns against adopting a bad intention in respect to gaining religious knowledge.

In a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 253, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that the one who obtains religious knowledge in order to show off to scholars, argue with others or attract attention to themselves will go to Hell.

Even though, the foundation of all good in both worldly and religious matters is knowledge Muslims must understand that knowledge will only benefit them when they firstly correct their intention. Meaning, they strive to obtain and act on knowledge in order to please Allah, the Exalted. All other reasons will only lead to a loss of reward and even punishment if a Muslim fails to sincerely repent.

In reality, knowledge is like rain water which falls on different types of trees. Some trees grow by this water in order to benefit others such as a fruit tree. Whereas, other trees grow by this water and become a nuisance to others

such as a thorny tree. Even though, the rain water is the same in both cases but the outcome is very different. Similarly, religious knowledge is the same for people but if one adopts the incorrect intention then it will become a means of their destruction. Conversely, if one adopts the correct intention it will become a means of their salvation.

Muslims should therefore correct their intention in all matters as they will be judged on this. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1. And they should remember that one of the first people to enter Hell will be a scholar who only obtained knowledge in order to show off to others. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 4923.

To conclude, only obtaining and acting on useful knowledge with the correct intention is true beneficial knowledge.

“And recite to them the news of him to whom We gave [knowledge of] Our signs, but he detached himself from them; so Satan pursued him, and he became of the deviators. And if We had willed, We could have elevated him thereby, but he adhered [instead] to the earth and followed his own desire...”

These verses indicate the importance of acting on one’s knowledge.

A muslim must strive to act on their knowledge as knowledge without action is of no value or benefit. This is like the one who possesses knowledge of a path to safety but does not take it and instead remains in an area full of dangers. This is why knowledge can be split into two categories. The first is when one acts on their knowledge, which leads to piety and an increase in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted. The second is when one fails to act on their knowledge. This type will not increase one’s obedience to Allah, the Exalted, in fact, it will only increase them in arrogance believing they are superior to others even though they are like donkeys which carry books that do not benefit it. Chapter 62 Al Jumu’ah, verse 5:

“...and then did not take it on (did not act on their knowledge) is like that of a donkey who carries volumes [of books]...”

“And recite to them the news of him to whom We gave [knowledge of] Our signs, but he detached himself from them; so Satan pursued him, and he became of the deviators. And if We had willed, We could have elevated him thereby, but he adhered [instead] to the earth and followed his own desire...”

These verses indicate the importance of acting on one’s knowledge and belief.

Disbelief can be a literal rejecting of Islam or through actions, which involves disobeying Allah, the Exalted, even though one believes in Him. This can be clearly understood by an example. If an unaware person is warned by another of an approaching lion and the unaware person takes practical steps to obtain safety they will be considered someone who believed in the warning given to them as they adapted their behaviour based on the warning. Whereas, if the unaware person does not practically change their behaviour after being warned, people will suspect that they do not believe in the warning given to them even if the unaware person verbally claims belief in the warning given to them.

Even though there is no doubt that the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, is infinite and can overcome all sins. And giving up hope in the infinite mercy of Allah, the Exalted, is defined as unbelief in chapter 12 Yusuf, verse 87:

“...Indeed, no one despairs of relief from Allah except the disbelieving people.”

Yet, none the less it is extremely important for muslims to understand a fact. Namely, a muslim has not been guaranteed to leave this world with their faith meaning, a muslim is in danger of dying as a non-muslim. This is the greatest loss. If this happens it does not take a scholar to conclude where this person will reside in the hereafter. This can occur when a muslim persists on sins especially, major sins, such as drinking alcohol and failing to offer their obligatory prayers and reaches their end without sincerely repenting from their sins. This is the reason why muslims must sincerely repent from all their sins and strive to fulfil all their obligatory duties as this is a task they can undoubtedly fulfil. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 286:

“Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity...”

They should not be fooled into believing they possess hope in the mercy of Allah, the Exalted. As true hope in the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, is supported by obedience to Allah, the Exalted, through actions. This involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience. Failing to do this and then expecting the mercy and forgiveness of Allah, the Exalted, is not hope in His mercy it is merely wishful thinking which has no weight or significance. This has been clearly

warned by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2459.

“And recite to them the news of him to whom We gave [knowledge of] Our signs, but he detached himself from them; so Satan pursued him, and he became of the deviators. And if We had willed, We could have elevated him thereby, but he adhered [instead] to the earth and followed his own desire. So his example is like that of the dog: if you chase him, he pants, or if you leave him, he [still] pants...”

These verses also indicate that when one abandons divine guidance through divine knowledge then the Devil will influence them to fall deeper into misguidance. The root cause of abandoning divine guidance is worldly desires. The metaphor given for the intense greed this person possesses is that of a dog.

A Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 3294, advises that whichever path the second rightly guided Caliph of Islam, Umar Bin Khataab, may Allah be pleased with him, took the Devil would take a different path, meaning, out of fear of him. One of the reasons why the Devil acted in this way was because he had little influence over Umar Bin Khataab, may Allah be pleased with him. The Devil cannot physically force someone to commit sins. He instead encourages them to do so through whisperings. But in order for them to be effective he requires a person to possess some sort of worldly desire. Then through his whisperings he encourages the growth of this worldly desire until it drives the person to act on it thereby committing a sin. The reason the Devil had little effect on Umar Bin Khataab, may Allah be pleased with him, was because he had removed worldly desires from his heart. His only desires were connected to pleasing Allah, the Exalted. Therefore, if muslims desire to minimise the effect the Devil has on them they should remove unnecessary desires from their heart. This only occurs when one refrains from indulging in the excess and unnecessary aspects of

this material world. The more they do this the more these worldly desires will leave their heart until they reach a point where they only desire to please Allah, the Exalted, in all their actions. The Devil will flee from this person as he knows he will have little effect on them. But the more one indulges in the unnecessary aspects of this material world the more worldly desires they will possess and therefore, the more influence the Devil will have over them.

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It is important to understand that no matter how much religious knowledge one obtains or how much worship and righteous deeds they perform they will never be safe from the attacks and traps of the Devil. This is because the Devil attacks each person according to how much knowledge they possess and how much righteous deeds they perform. For example, he will try to convince the muslim who is strict in offering their obligatory prayers not to offer them in congregation at the Mosque or by convincing them to delay their obligatory prayers beyond their starting times as he knows he will not be able to convince them to completely abandon the obligatory prayers. Whereas, in respect to the muslim who is struggling to establish their obligatory prayers he will attempt to convince them that they are too difficult to establish therefore they should only offer them when they are completely free. He tries to convince those who perform many voluntary righteous deeds not to gain and act on Islamic knowledge in order to improve their character so that they continue to destroy their good deeds through bad characteristics such as, lying and backing.

The Devil aims to prevent a person from reaching a higher level if he cannot convince them to fall in rank through disobedience to Allah, the Exalted. Therefore, Muslims should always be on guard against his attacks and traps by persistently striving to increase in rank, improve their character and avoid acts of disobedience which is all achieved by gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge.

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In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2376, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that craving for wealth and status is more destructive to one's faith than the destruction caused by two hungry wolves which are set free on a herd of sheep.

This shows that hardly any of a muslim's faith remains secure if they crave after wealth and fame in this world just as hardly any of the sheep will be saved from two hungry wolves. So this great similitude contains a severe warning against the evil of craving after excess wealth and social status in the world.

The first type of craving for wealth is when one has extreme love for wealth and strives without fatigue to acquire it through lawful means. To behave in such a manner is not the sign of wise person as a muslim should firmly believe their provision is guaranteed to them and this allotment can never change. In fact, the provision of the creation was allocated over fifty thousand years before the creation of the Heavens and the Earth. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6748. This person will undoubtedly neglect their duties as they are too preoccupied with obtaining wealth. A body which is too busy acquiring wealth will never prepare adequately for the hereafter. In fact, this person will dedicate so much effort to acquiring wealth that they may not even get a chance to enjoy it. Instead, they will depart this world and leave it behind for other people to enjoy even though they will be held accountable for it. This person may acquire wealth lawfully but they will still not find peace of mind as no matter how much they obtain they will only desire more. This person is needy and therefore, a real pauper even if they possess much wealth.

The only craving which is beneficial is craving for accumulating true wealth namely, righteous deeds in order to prepare for one's day of return.

The second type of craving for wealth is similar to the first type but in addition to it this type of person acquires wealth through unlawful means and fails to fulfil the rights of people, such as the obligatory charity. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has warned against this in many Hadiths. For example, in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6576, he warned that this attitude destroyed the past nations as they made unlawful things lawful, withheld the rights of others and killed others for the sake of excess wealth. This person strives for the wealth they are not entitled to which leads to countless major sins. When

one adopts this attitude they become intensely greedy. As warned by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1961, the greedy person is far from Allah, the Exalted, far from Paradise, far from people and close to Hell. In fact, a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 3114, warns that extreme greed and true faith will never combine in the heart of a true muslim.

If a muslim adopts this type of craving then the extreme danger of it is clear even to an uneducated muslim. It will destroy their faith until nothing except a little remains just like the main Hadith under discussion warns that this destruction to one's faith is more severe than the destruction caused by two hungry wolves which are let loose on a herd of sheep. This muslim risks losing the little faith they possess at the moment of their death, which is the greatest loss. A person's craving for fame and status is arguably more destructive to one's faith than craving for excess wealth. A person will often spend their beloved wealth on obtaining fame and prestige.

It is rare for someone to obtain status and fame and still remain firm on the correct path whereby they prioritise the hereafter over the material world. In fact, a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6723, warns that a person who seeks status in society, such as leadership, will be left to deal with it themselves but if someone receives it without asking for it they will be aided by Allah, the Exalted, in remaining obedient to Him. This is the reason the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, would not appoint a person who requested to be appointed in a position of authority or even showed desire for it. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6923. Another Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 7148, warns that people will be keen to obtain status and authority but it will be a great regret for them on the Day of Judgment. This is a dangerous

craving as it forces one to strive intensely to obtain it and then strive further in order to hold on to it even if it encourages them to commit oppression and other sins.

The worse type of craving for status is when one obtains this through religion. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has warned in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2654, that this person will go to Hell.

Therefore, it is safer for a muslim to avoid the craving for excess wealth and high social status as they are two things which can lead to the destruction of their faith by distracting them from preparing adequately for the hereafter.

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In a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3997, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that he did not fear poverty for the muslim nation. Instead he feared that the world would become easy to obtain and plentiful for them. This would cause them to compete for it which would lead to their destruction as this same competition destroyed the previous nations.

It is important to understand that this does not only apply to wealth. But this warning applies to all aspects of people's worldly desires which can be encompassed by the desire for fame, wealth, authority and the social aspects of one's life, such as family, friends and a career. Whenever one aims to fulfil their desires by pursuing these things, even if they are lawful, beyond their needs it will distract them from preparing for the hereafter. It will lead them to bad character such as being wasteful and extravagant and

may even take them towards sins in order to obtain these things. Failing to obtain them may lead to impatience and other acts of defiance and disobedience towards Allah, the Exalted. It is obvious these desires have taken control over many muslims as they would happily get up in the middle of the night in order to obtain these things such as wealth or go on a holiday but will fail to do so when advised to offer the voluntary night prayer or attend the morning obligatory prayer at the Mosque with congregation.

There is no harm in obtaining these things as long as they are lawful and required in order to fulfil a person's needs and the needs of their dependents. But when a person goes beyond this then they will become preoccupied with them at the loss of their hereafter as the more one pursues their desires the less they will strive in preparing for the hereafter. And therefore, the warning given in this Hadith will apply to them.

“And recite to them the news of him to whom We gave [knowledge of] Our signs, but he detached himself from them; so Satan pursued him, and he became of the deviators. And if We had willed, We could have elevated him thereby, but he adhered [instead] to the earth and followed his own desire. So his example is like that of the dog: if you chase him, he pants, or if you leave him, he [still] pants...”

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In a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4297, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that a day would soon come when other nations would attack the muslim nation and even though they would be great in number they would be deemed insignificant by the world. Allah, the Exalted, would remove the fear of muslims from the hearts' of the other nations. This would occur because of the muslim nation's love for the material world and their hatred for death.

The Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, were small in number yet, they overcame entire nations whereas the muslims today are greater in number yet, have no social or political influence in the world. This is because the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, lived their lives according to the teachings of Islam thereby, favouring and preparing for the hereafter over enjoying the lawful pleasures of this world. Whereas, most of

the muslims today have adopted the opposite mind-set. It is important to understand that the root of all sins is the love of the material world. This is because any sin which is committed is done out of love and desire for it. The material world can be split into four aspects: fame, fortune, authority and one's social life, such as their relatives and friends. It is in the excess pursuit of these things which lead to sins, such as earning unlawful wealth out of love for fortune. It is why a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2376, warns that love for wealth and authority is more destructive to one's faith than the destruction two hungry wolves would cause if they were let loose on a herd of sheep. Whenever people seek the excess of these aspects of the material world it always leads to disobedience of Allah, the Exalted. When this occurs the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, is removed which leads to nothing but trouble.

Even though, some muslims believe pursuing the excess things of the material world is harmless it is something the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned against in many Hadiths such as the one found in Sahih Bukhari, number 3158. He warned that he did not fear poverty for muslims. What he feared was that muslims would pursue the excess of this material world, such as excess wealth, and this would cause them to compete with each other over it and this would lead to their destruction. As warned in this Hadith this was the behaviour of the past nations.

As the material world is limited it is obvious that people would have to compete over it if they desired more than their necessities. This competition would cause them to adopt the characteristics which contradict the character of a true muslim, such as envy and enmity for others. They would stop caring for each other as they are too busy competing in gathering and

hoarding the material world. And they would contradict the advice given in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6011, which advises that muslims should act like one body when any part of the body suffers from an illness the rest of the body shares in the pain. This competition would drive a muslim to stop loving for others what they love for themselves which is a characteristic of a true believer according to a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2515, as they desire to outdo their fellow muslims in worldly things. Persisting on this competition will cause a muslim to love, hate, give and withhold all for the sake of the material world instead of for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, which is an aspect of perfecting one's faith according to a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4681. This competition is the difference between the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, and many of the muslims today.

If muslims desire to regain the strength and influence Islam once had they must strive and prioritise preparing for the hereafter over striving for obtaining and hoarding the excess of this material world. This must occur from an individual level until it affects the whole nation.

“And recite to them the news of him to whom We gave [knowledge of] Our signs, but he detached himself from them; so Satan pursued him, and he became of the deviators. And if We had willed, We could have elevated him thereby, but he adhered [instead] to the earth and followed his own desire. So his example is like that of the dog: if you chase him, he pants, or if you leave him, he [still] pants...”

These verses also indicate that when one abandons divine guidance through divine knowledge then the Devil will influence them to fall deeper into misguidance. The root cause of abandoning divine guidance is worldly desires. The metaphor given for the intense greed this person possesses is that of a dog. This is the reason why Islam encourages Muslims to detach from their unnecessary desires as attaching to desires leads to detaching from divine guidance and detaching from desires leads to attaching to divine guidance. This has been indicated in the main verses quoted.

It is important to note, the material world which one should detach from actually refers to one's desires. It does not refer to the physical world, such as the mountains. This is indicated by chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 14:

“Beautiful for people is the love of that which they desire - of women and sons, heaped-up sums of gold and silver, fine branded horses, and cattle and tilled land. That is the enjoyment of worldly life, but Allah has with Him the best return [i.e., Paradise].”

These things are connected to the desires of people and by them one becomes distracted from preparing for the hereafter. When one abstains from their desires they are in fact detaching from the material world. This is why a muslim who does not possess worldly things can still be regarded a worldly person because of their inner desire and love for it. Whereas, a muslim who possesses worldly things, like some of the righteous predecessors, can be considered detached from the material world as they do not desire and occupy their minds, hearts and actions with them. Instead they desire lies in the eternal hereafter.

The first level of abstinence is turning away from unlawful and vain desires which are not connected to the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted. This person busies themselves in fulfilling their duties and responsibilities all the while focusing on the hereafter. They turn away from things and people who prevent them from fulfilling this important deed.

The next stage of abstinence is when one takes only the things they need from the material world in order to fulfil their necessities and responsibilities. They do not occupy their time on things which will not derive them benefit in the next world. This is the advice given by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6416. He advised a muslim to live in this material world as a stranger or a traveller. Both types of people will only take what they need from the material world in order to reach their destination meaning, the hereafter safely. A muslim can achieve this by understanding how close their death and departure to the hereafter is. Not only can death pounce on a person at any time but even if one lives a long life it seems as though it passed in a moment. By realising this reality one sacrifices the moment for the sake of the eternal hereafter. Shortening one's hope for a

long life in this material world will encourage them to perform righteous deeds, sincerely repent from their sins and prioritise preparing for the hereafter over all else. The one who hopes for a long life will be inspired to behave in the opposite manner.

The one who is truly abstinent in the material world neither blames it nor praises it. They do not rejoice when they gain it nor do they grieve when it passes them by. The mind of this pious muslim is too focused on the eternal hereafter to greedily notice the small material world.

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Islam teaches Muslims that every blessing they possess, such as wealth or children, should be contained in their hand not their heart. An excellent way of achieving this is that each blessing should be used according to the commands of Allah, the Exalted, not one's own desire. For example, one should strive to only spend their wealth on things commanded and recommended by Islam, such as a person's own necessities and on the necessities of their dependents while avoiding waste, extravagance and excessiveness. This attitude will prevent one from becoming attached to the blessing meaning, it will ensure the blessing remains in their hands instead of their heart. This is an important concept to understand and act on as it prevents one from becoming too attached to the blessing. As each worldly blessing is bound to pass away this attitude will prevent one from becoming overly sad meaning, becoming grieved and depressed when it

eventually does. Keeping the blessing in one's hand might lead to sadness when one eventually lose it but this sadness is acceptable in Islam and does not lead to impatience and mental disorders, such as depression, which severe sadness namely, grief, leads to.

In addition, this attitude prevents one from misusing the blessing which often occurs when it is within one's heart instead of their hands. For example, unnecessarily hoarding wealth and greedily amassing more. This concept has been indicated in chapter 57 Al Hadid, verse 23:

“In order that you not despair over what has eluded you and not exult [in pride] over what He has given you...”

Keeping things in one's hand instead of their heart will ensure they always remember that the blessing belongs to Allah, the Exalted, and not them. This again prevents impatience when one eventually loses it. This has been indicated in chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 156:

“Who, when disaster strikes them, say, “Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return.”

So a muslim must strive to use each blessing according to the teachings of Islam thereby, ensuring it remains in their hands instead of their heart which in fact should contain only the love of Allah, the Exalted.

“And recite to them the news of him to whom We gave [knowledge of] Our signs, but he detached himself from them; so Satan pursued him, and he became of the deviators. And if We had willed, We could have elevated him thereby, but he adhered [instead] to the earth and followed his own desire. So his example is like that of the dog: if you chase him, he pants, or if you leave him, he [still] pants...”

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In a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4108, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that the material world compared to the hereafter is like a drop of water compared to an ocean.

In reality, this parable was given in order for people to understand how small the material world is compared to the hereafter. But in reality they cannot be compared as the material world is temporal whereas the hereafter is eternal. Meaning, the limited cannot be compared to the

unlimited. The material world can be split into four categories: fame, fortune, authority and one's social life, such as their family and friends. No matter what worldly blessing one obtains which falls within these groups it will always be imperfect, transient and death will cut a person off from the blessing. On the other hand, the blessings in the hereafter are lasting and perfect. So in this respect the material world is no more than a drop compared to an endless ocean.

In addition, a person is not guaranteed to experience a long life in this world as the time of death is unknown. Whereas, everyone is guaranteed to experience death and reach the hereafter. So it is foolish to strive for a day, such as one's retirement, which they may never reach over striving for the hereafter which they are guaranteed to reach.

This does not mean one should abandon the world as it is a bridge which must be crossed in order to reach the hereafter safely. Instead, a muslim should take from this material world enough to fulfill their necessities and the necessities of their dependents according to the teachings of Islam without waste, excessiveness or extravagance. And then dedicate the rest of their efforts in preparing for the eternal hereafter by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the teachings of Islam.

An intelligent person will not prioritize the drop of water over an endless ocean and an intelligent muslim would not prioritize the temporal material world over the eternal hereafter.

“And recite to them the news of him to whom We gave [knowledge of] Our signs, but he detached himself from them; so Satan pursued him, and he became of the deviators. And if We had willed, We could have elevated him thereby, but he adhered [instead] to the earth and followed his own desire. So his example is like that of the dog: if you chase him, he pants, or if you leave him, he [still] pants...”

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It is important for Muslims to develop the correct perception so that they can increase their obedience to Allah, the Exalted, which involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience. This is what the righteous predecessors possessed and it encouraged them to avoid the excess luxuries of the material world and instead prepare for the hereafter. This is an important characteristic to possess and it can be explained with a worldly example. Two people are extremely thirsty and come across a cup of murky water. They both desire to drink it even though it is not pure and even if it means they have to argue over it. As their thirst grows the more focused on the cup of murky water they become to the point they lose focus on everything else. But if one of

them shifted their focus and observed a river of pure water which was only a short distance ahead they would immediately lose focus on the cup of water to the point they would no longer care about it and no longer argue over it. And instead they would endure their thirst patiently knowing a river of pure water is close. The person who is unaware of the river would probably believe the other person is crazy after observing their change in attitude. This is the case of the two types of people in this world. One group greedily focuses on the material world. The other group has shifted their focus to the hereafter and the pure and eternal blessings therein. When one shifts their focus to the bliss of the hereafter worldly problems do not seem like such a big deal. Therefore, patience becomes easier to adopt. But if one keeps their focus on this world then it will seem like everything to them. They will argue, fight, love and hate for it. Just like the person in the example mentioned earlier who only focuses on the cup of murky water.

This correct perception is only achieved through gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge found within the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 53:

“We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth...”

“And recite to them the news of him to whom We gave [knowledge of] Our signs, but he detached himself from them; so Satan pursued him, and he became of the deviators. And if We had willed, We could have elevated him thereby, but he adhered [instead] to the earth and followed his own desire...Whoever Allāh guides - he is the [rightly] guided; and whoever He sends astray - it is those who are the losers.”

Allah, the Exalted, guides those who sincerely try to obey Him. But those who persistently disobey Him are left to wander blindly in misguidance. Therefore, it is vital for Muslims to sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, as persistent disobedience leads to corruption of the spiritual heart and one's actions.

This is similar to a person who is warned by a judge not to behave in an unlawful way but after the person persists on this behaviour the judge gives the order for them to be locked up in prison. Therefore, Allah, the Exalted, has not wronged them they have only wronged themselves.

But it is important to note that as being abandoned in misguidance is a spiritual thing and therefore hidden to mankind, it is important for Muslims not to assume certain people have reached this point. Instead they should think positively about all people and therefore sincerely practically aid them in reforming their belief and behaviour.

Allah, the Exalted, has created human beings with the best possible capabilities. He gave them knowledge and power to differentiate between good and evil and even placed in them an innate inclination to like what is good and to dislike and avoid what is evil. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2389. Allah, the Exalted, has also granted mankind free will to choose between good and evil. This choice plays a role in enhancing or diminishing a person's natural faculties of reason. Chapter 91 Ash Shams, verses 9-10:

“He has succeeded who purifies it [the spiritual heart – the greatest faculty of reason]. And he has failed who instills it [with corruption].”

When a person chooses a path of goodness their natural potential develops and Allah, the Exalted, grants them further support in their efforts. Chapter 29 Al Ankabut, verse 69:

“And those who strive for Us - We will surely guide them to Our ways...”

But if one follows their evil desires and chooses the evil path gradually their spiritual hearts will become engrossed with darkness and no good will remain therein. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3334. If a person fails to repent then the main verse under discussion comes into effect. This person becomes so engrossed in

evil that they find joy in their evil mentality and actions. They absolutely hate anything good.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 52, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that if one's spiritual heart is sound the whole body will become sound but if their spiritual heart is corrupt then the whole body will become corrupt.

First of all, this Hadith refutes the foolish belief where one claims to have a purified heart even though their speech and actions are bad. This is because what is inside will eventually manifest outwardly.

The purification of the spiritual heart is only possible when one eliminates evil characteristics from themselves and replaces them with good characteristics discussed in Islamic teachings. This is only possible when one learns and acts on Islamic teachings so that they can sincerely fulfill the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refrain from His prohibitions and face destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Behaving in this manner will lead to a purified spiritual heart. This purification will then reflect in the outward limbs of the body, such as one's tongue and eyes. Meaning, they will only use their organs in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. This is in fact a sign showing the love Allah, the Exalted, has for His righteous servant according to a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6502.

It is important to note, that this purification will guide one through all worldly difficulties successfully so that they achieve both worldly and religious success.

“And if We had willed, We could have elevated him thereby, but he adhered [instead] to the earth and followed his own desire...”

This verse is connected to chapter 47 Muhammad, verse 7:

“O you who have believed, if you support Allah, He will support you and plant firmly your feet.”

This verse means that if one aids Islam then Allah, the Exalted, will help them in both worlds. It is strange how countless people desire the help of Allah, the Exalted, yet do not fulfil the first part of this verse through the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience. The excuse most people give is that they do not have time to perform righteous deeds. They desire the help of Allah, the Exalted, yet will not make time to do the things which please Him. Does this make sense? Those who do not fulfil the obligatory duties and then expect the aid of Allah, the Exalted, in their moment of need are quite foolish. And those who do fulfil the obligatory duties yet refuse to go beyond them will find that the aid they receive is limited. How one behaves is how they are treated. The more time and energy dedicated to Allah, the Exalted, the more support they will receive. It really is that simple.

A muslim needs to understand that the majority of the obligatory duties, such as the five daily prayers, only takes a small amount of time in one's day. A muslim cannot expect to barely dedicate an hour a day to offering the obligatory prayers and then neglect Allah, the Exalted, for the rest of the day and still expect His continuous support through all difficulties. A person would dislike a friend who treated them in such a manner. How then can one treat Allah, the Exalted, the Lord of the worlds, like this then?

Some only dedicate extra time to pleasing Allah, the Exalted, when they encounter a worldly problem then demand Him to fix it as if they done Allah, the Exalted, a favour by performing voluntary good deeds. This foolish mentality clearly contradicts servanthood to Allah, the Exalted. It is amazing how this type of person finds time to do all their other leisurely activities, such as spending time with family and friends, watching TV and attending social functions yet finds no time to dedicate to pleasing Allah, the Exalted. They cannot seem to find time to recite and adopt the teachings of the Holy Quran. They do not seem to find time to study and act on the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. These people somehow find wealth to spend on their unnecessary luxuries yet seem to find no wealth to donate in voluntary charity.

It is important to understand that a muslim will be treated according to how they behave. Meaning, if a Muslim dedicates extra time to please Allah, the Exalted, then they will find the support they need to journey through all difficulties safely. But if they fail to fulfil the obligatory duties or only fulfil them without dedicating any other time to pleasing Allah, the Exalted, then they will find a similar response from Allah, the Exalted. Put simply, the

more one gives the more they shall receive. If one does not give much they should not expect much in return.

“...but he adhered [instead] to the earth and followed his own desire. So his example is like that of the dog: if you chase him, he pants, or if you leave him, he [still] pants. That is the example of the people who denied Our signs...How evil an example [is that of] the people who denied Our signs and used to wrong themselves.”

The purpose of mankind is to sincerely obey and worship Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 51 Adh Dhariyat, verse 56:

“And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me.”

This is only possible to achieve when one sincerely follows the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, and the divine revelation sent to them. Whereas, the purpose of all other creations, such as animals, is to serve humans. Chapter 31 Luqman, verse 20:

“Do you not see that Allāh has made subject to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth and amply bestowed upon you His favors, [both] apparent and unapparent?...”

But when one abandons their purpose meaning, following divine guidance, then they fall to the level of animals. This is why the man mentioned in the

main verses under discussion, who abandoned divine guidance even though he possessed knowledge, is compared to a dog.

Furthermore, when one abandons divine guidance they will not obtain real success in both worlds. So no matter what condition they are in, whether they gain worldly blessings or lose them, it makes no difference to them as they are walking the road of failure either way and the worldly blessings they possess will only become a source of their stress, anxiety and depression.

Muslims must therefore avoid this attitude and outcome by sincerely obeying and following the two greatest signs of Allah, the Exalted.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim number 196, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that Islam is sincerity towards the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

Sincerity towards the Holy Quran includes having deep respect and love for the words of Allah, the Exalted. This sincerity is proven when one fulfils the three aspects of the Holy Quran. The first is to recite it correctly and regularly. The second is to understand its teachings through a reliable source and teacher. The final aspect is to act on the teachings of the Holy Quran with the aim of pleasing Allah, the Exalted. The sincere muslim gives

priority to acting on its teachings over acting on their desires which contradict the Holy Quran. Modelling one's character on the Holy Quran is the sign of true sincerity towards the book of Allah, the Exalted. This is the tradition of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, which is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 1342.

The next thing mentioned in the main Hadith under discussion is sincerity towards the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This includes striving to acquire knowledge in order to act on his traditions. These traditions include the ones related to Allah, the Exalted, in the form of worship, and his blessed noble character towards the creation. Chapter 68 Al Qalam, verse 4:

"And indeed, you are of a great moral character."

It includes to accept his commands and prohibitions at all times. This has been made a duty by Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 59 Al Hashr, verse 7:

"...And whatever the Messenger has given you - take; and what he has forbidden you - refrain from..."

Sincerity includes to give priority to his traditions over the actions of anyone else as all paths to Allah, the Exalted, are closed except the path of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 31:

"Say, [O Muḥammad], "If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins..."

One must love all those who supported him during his life and after his passing, whether they are from his Family or his Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all. Supporting those who walk on his path and teach his traditions is a duty on those who desire to be sincere to him. Sincerity also includes loving those who love him and disliking those who criticise him irrespective, of one's relationship with these people. This is all summarised in a single Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 16. It advises that a person cannot have true faith until they love Allah, the Exalted, and the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, more than the entire creation. This love must be shown through actions not just words.

“...but he adhered [instead] to the earth and followed his own desire. So his example is like that of the dog: if you chase him, he pants, or if you leave him, he [still] pants. That is the example of the people who denied Our signs...How evil an example [is that of] the people who denied Our signs and used to wrong themselves.”

First of all, it is important to understand, that the major thing which separates a human from an animal is the fact that people live by a higher moral code. If people abandoned this and simply acted on their desires then there would be no difference between them and animals. In fact, people would be worse as they possess the higher level of thinking yet, still choose to live like animals.

Secondly, whether people want to admit it or not in reality, every person is a servant of something or someone. Some are servants of others, such as Hollywood executives and do whatever they command them to do even if it challenges modesty and shame. Others are servants of their relatives and friends and do whatever it takes to please them. Others are the worse by being servants of their own desires as this is the attitude of animals who generally act to please themselves. The best and highest form of servanthood is being a servant of Allah, the Exalted. This is quite evident if one turns the pages of history which clearly shows that those who were the servants of Allah, the Exalted, such as the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, were granted the highest honour and respect in this world and will be granted this in the next. Centuries and millennia have passed yet their names are remembered as the pillars and beacons of history. Whereas those who became servants of others especially, their own desires were eventually disgraced in this world even if they achieved some worldly status and they became mere footnotes in history. The media barely remembers those who

pass away for more than a few days before moving onto the next person to report on. During their lives these people eventually become sad, lonely, depressed and even suicidal as selling their souls and decency to their worldly masters did not grant them the contentment they were looking for. One does not need to be a scholar to understand this obvious truth. So if people must be servants they should be the servants of Allah, the Exalted, as lasting honour, greatness and true success lies only in this.

“...but he adhered [instead] to the earth and followed his own desire. So his example is like that of the dog: if you chase him, he pants, or if you leave him, he [still] pants. That is the example of the people who denied Our signs...How evil an example [is that of] the people who denied Our signs and used to wrong themselves.”

Those who disbelieve or avoid acting on their faith in Islam do so out of love for the material world and the things within it. They believe that believing or acting on their faith will prevent them from enjoying worldly blessings meaning, for them faith is something that restricts their desires and therefore they turn away from it either literally or practically. Instead they turn towards the material world and strive to fulfill their desires without restrictions believing that true peace lies in this. They look down at those who accept and actualize their faith by controlling their actions and using their worldly blessings in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. They believe that these pious Muslims are lowly slaves who been restricted from enjoying themselves whereas they, the disbelievers and the misguided, are free. But in actual fact this could not be further from the truth as the real slaves are those who fail to accept and submit to Allah, the Exalted, and the superior ones are those who have done this as they become free of slavery to the world. This can be understood by an example. A good parent will restrict the type of food their child eats meaning, they will only let them eat junk and unhealthy food once in a while and instead force them to follow a healthy diet. This child therefore believes that their parent has placed undesirable restrictions on them and that they have become slaves to their parent and their healthy diet. On the other hand another child has been given permission from their parent to eat whatever they desire, whenever they desire and how much they desire. So this child believes that they are completely free of all restrictions. When these children come together the child who has been given complete freedom criticizes and looks down on the child who has been restricted by their parent. The latter child will also feel sorry for themselves when they observe the other child has

been given free reign to behave however they wish. Outwardly it appears the child who has been granted freedom has obtained happiness whereas the other child is too tied up with restrictions to enjoy life. But years down the line the truth will become manifest. The child who had no restrictions grows up to become extremely unhealthy e.g. obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, etc. As a result of this they even become mentally unhealthy as they lose confidence in their body and the way they look. Because of this they become a slave of medications, diseases, mental and social problems. All these things restrict their happiness and life. Whereas, the child who was restricted by their parent grows up healthy in mind and body. As a result they become confident in their body and ability, which aids them to succeed in life. They become free of any slavery to medications, diseases, mental and social problems as they grew up with the correct balance and guidance. So the child who had no restrictions grew up becoming a slave to many things, whereas the child who had restrictions grew up independent of all restrictions.

To conclude, the real slave is the one who becomes a slave to all other things except Allah, the Exalted, such as social media, society, fashion and culture, and this leads to mental, physical and social problems, whereas the real free person is the one who submits only to Allah, the Exalted, thereby achieving peace of mind and body.

“...but he adhered [instead] to the earth and followed his own desire. So his example is like that of the dog: if you chase him, he pants, or if you leave him, he [still] pants. That is the example of the people who denied Our signs...How evil an example [is that of] the people who denied Our signs and used to wrong themselves.”

It is important for muslims to strive in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience as Allah, the Exalted, has guaranteed a good life in both worlds for the one who behaves in this manner. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

“Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do.”

This good life will protect a muslim from severe grief, depression and other extreme moods and mental disorders which can destroy a person's life. Even though, muslims will face difficulties which will sadden them but if they obey Allah, the Exalted, this sadness will never become extreme and effect their entire life on a long term basis. This is because a muslim who strives in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, has an excellent reason to continue moving forward through their difficulty without giving up and turning to depression and even suicide. For example, they look forward to the countless reward which will be granted to the patient. Chapter 39 Az Zumar, verse 10:

“...Indeed, the patient will be given their reward without account [i.e., limit].”

Whereas, the muslim who does not strive in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, and only claims the title of being a muslim with their tongue will not be granted this attitude and a good life. And whenever they face difficulties it will drive them to extreme moods and mental disorders which will destroy their entire life.

“...but he adhered [instead] to the earth and followed his own desire. So his example is like that of the dog: if you chase him, he pants, or if you leave him, he [still] pants. That is the example of the people who denied Our signs...How evil an example [is that of] the people who denied Our signs and used to wrong themselves.”

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2465, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that whoever prioritises the hereafter over this material world will be granted contentment, their affairs will be corrected for them and they will receive their destined provision in an easy way.

This half of the Hadith means that whoever correctly fulfils their duties in respect to Allah, the Exalted, and to the creation, such as providing for their family in a lawful manner while avoiding the excess of this material world will be granted contentment. This is when one is pleased with what they possess without being greedy and actively striving to obtain more worldly things. In reality, the one who is content with what they possess is a truly rich person even if they possess little wealth as they become independent of things. Independence of anything makes one rich in respect to it.

In addition, this attitude will allow one to comfortably deal with any worldly issues which may arise during their life. This is because the less one interacts with the material world and focuses on the hereafter the less worldly issues they will face. The less worldly issues a person faces the more comfortable their life will become. For example, the one who possesses one house will have fewer issues to deal with in respect to it,

such as a broken cooker, than the one who possesses ten houses. Finally, this person will easily and pleasantly obtain their lawful provision. Not only this but Allah, the Exalted, will place such grace in their provision that it will cover all their responsibilities and necessities meaning, it will satisfy them and their dependents.

But as mentioned in the other half of this Hadith the one who prioritises the material world over the hereafter meaning, by neglecting their duties or striving for the unnecessary and excess of this material world will find that their need, meaning greed, for worldly things is never satisfied which by definition makes them poor even if they possess much wealth. These people will go from one worldly issue to another throughout the day failing to achieve contentment as they have opened too many worldly doors. This is indicated in the main verses under discussion. And they will receive their destined provision with difficulty and it will not give them satisfaction and never seem enough to fill their greed. This may even push them towards the unlawful which only leads to a loss in both worlds.

“...but he adhered [instead] to the earth and followed his own desire. So his example is like that of the dog: if you chase him, he pants, or if you leave him, he [still] pants. That is the example of the people who denied Our signs...How evil an example [is that of] the people who denied Our signs and used to wrong themselves.”

This was also a warning to the people of the book living in Medina in the time of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, who rejected him and the Holy Quran even though they were fully convinced of their truthfulness.

The scholars from the people of the Book (Jews and Christians) living in Medina were fully aware of the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, as they had been described in their divine scriptures. Chapter 6 Al An'am, verse 20:

“Those to whom We have given the Scripture recognize it [the Holy Quran] as they recognize their [own] sons...”

And chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 146:

“Those to whom We gave the Scripture know him [Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him] as they know their own sons...”

It is important to note, that all the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, came with the same religion, Islam – submission to Allah, the Exalted. The only thing they differed in were smaller issues but their core and fundamental teachings were one in the same. As the Holy Quran was in harmony with the unaltered teachings of the previous divine scriptures there was no good reason why the people of the book should have rejected the Holy Quran and the one to whom it was given namely, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. In fact, it was more appropriate for them to accept Islam as the scholars of the people of the book possessed knowledge which allowed them to recognize the truth easily.

In addition, the fact that the Holy Quran confirmed the unaltered teachings of the previous divine scriptures meant that when one rejected the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, they were in essence rejecting their previous divine scriptures and their Holy Prophets, such as the Holy Prophet Musa, peace be upon them, also.

After all these signs verifying the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, many of the scholars of the people of the book still concealed and misinterpreted their divine teachings out of envy and fear of losing the social status and wealth they had obtained as leaders of their societies.

For example, in the ninth year after the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, migrated to Medina a delegation visited the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This Christian delegation did not accept Islam but agreed to a peace treaty with the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. When the delegation left Medina two brothers, Abu Haritha and Kurz Bin Alqama, were riding near each other. The mule of Abu Haritha stumbled and Kurz in frustration rebuked the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, indirectly. Abu Haritha in response rebuked him. When Kurz asked about his response Abu Haritha told him that the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, was undoubtedly the final Holy Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, they had been waiting for and who had been described in their divine scriptures. When Kurz asked him why he rejected Islam even though he knew it was the truth Abu Haritha replied that he did so because of the honor, wealth and authority their people had given them and he was afraid he would lose it all if he accepted Islam. This has been discussed in Imam Ibn Kathir's, the Life of the Prophet, Volume 4, Pages 75-76.

“...So relate the stories that perhaps they will give thought.”

Merely performing worship will not raise someone to the highest levels of faith. Muslims can only reach this level by purifying their inner beings. This is achieved by removing the negative characteristics they possess and replacing them with good characteristics. But this is only achieved through serious reflection and self-assessment.

When one recognises their own reality this will encourage them to live like a servant and fulfil the purpose of their creation. This will lead them to recognising Allah, the Exalted, as their Lord, which is the ultimate goal. Chapter 51 Adh Dhariyat, verse 56:

“And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me.”

This self-assessment is vital for triggering one to take the steps needed to purify their character and soul of evil characteristics which is the path of success in both worlds. Some are so lost in the material world they never perform this important deed and therefore decades pass by without them changing one single bit. Muslims must use the time of strength they have been given in order to self-assess and change for the better before they reach the final stage of weakness. At this point they will desire to change but they will not possess the intelligence or strength to do so. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6412.

One only needs to turn the pages of history to observe those who were given great power and wealth but eventually a time came when their moment of strength ran out and because of their persistent disobedience they were destroyed.

Those who used their moments of strength in the correct way by pleasing Allah, the Exalted, will be blessed by Him in such a way that even after departing from this world they will still be honoured by society.

As the majority of muslims do not understand the Arabic language an abundant amount of worship will not trigger this inner purification. One can only reach it by reflecting on this material world, death, the grave and Hell. Because of this a single moment of reflection can become better than sixty years of voluntary worship.

Those who live without wisdom or reflection habitually make mistakes which only lead to constant stress. It is these people who lead an aimless life with no higher aspirations and move through each day without understanding their true purpose.

The pious always take time out of their day to reflect on their aims, what actions they have performed and whether they have pleased Allah, the exalted, or not. This mentality will ensure that one avoids sins, performs righteous deeds and if they happen to commit sins to sincerely repent. This mentality fits the advice given by the second rightly guided Caliph of Islam, Omar Bin Khataab, may Allah be pleased with him, which is recorded in Imam Asfahani's, Hilyat Al Awliya, number 98. He advised that one should judge their own actions before someone else judges them namely, Allah, the exalted, on the Day of Judgement.

This self-assessment is the key which inspires one to sincerely repent and change for the better. This is the best stage compared to the stage where one only realises their mistakes when another points it out to them. But even this stage requires one to possess good friends and relatives who are wise and sincerely concerned over their eternal welfare instead of only being concerned with the material world. A truly blessed muslim is the one who possesses these types of relatives and friends who aid them to adopt piety.

Reflecting at the start of one's day also ensures a person prioritises their daily tasks and saves time by avoiding those tasks which should be delayed.

The following verse describes the state of successful muslims. They reflect on and are deeply affected by the teachings of Islam and strive to implement them in their lives. If one is affected in this way they should be grateful to Allah, the Exalted, and show no signs of pride. But if one is not

affected in this way they must repent and change before it is too late. Chapter 5 Al Ma'idah, verse 83:

“And when they hear what has been revealed to the Messenger, you see their eyes overflowing with tears because of what they have recognized of the truth...”

A lack of self-reflection has caused muslims to become lost in the material world even though Islamic knowledge is more readily available than it ever was. Voluntary worship will only take one so far but to reach the height of faith they must reflect and assess their character. This will inspire them to abandon their evil traits and replace them with good ones. The vital ingredient needed to stimulate this self-assessment and reflection is Islamic knowledge which must be obtained from a reliable source. This is one of the reasons the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, declared in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224, that obtaining this type of knowledge is obligatory on all muslims.

“How evil an example [is that of] the people who denied Our signs and used to wrong themselves.”

It is important to understand that the prohibitions and commands of Allah, the Exalted, do not exist to make people's life harder. They only exist in order to benefit people in both this world and in the next even if these benefits are not apparent to people. For example, the negative effects of alcohol, which science has proven, was not always apparent such as its negative effect on the organs of the body. It only became unlawful in Islam to protect people from this and other harms. In addition, It is an aspect of faith to accept something without understanding its wisdoms. If all the wisdoms of the commands and prohibitions were made apparent then it would not allow muslims to possess complete faith. Allah, the Exalted, does not benefit from these commands and prohibitions only people do.

“Whoever Allāh guides - he is the [rightly] guided; and whoever He sends astray - it is those who are the losers.”

The correct path is mentioned in the singular while the misguided paths are mentioned in the plural. This is because the path to success in both worlds is singular namely, the path of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

In a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4606, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that any matter which is not based on Islam will be rejected.

If muslims desire lasting success in both worldly and religious matters they must strictly adhere to the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Even though, certain actions which are not directly taken from these two sources of guidance can still be considered a righteous deed it is important to prioritize these two sources of guidance over all else. Because the fact is that the more one acts on things which are not taken from these two sources even if it is a righteous deed the less they will act on these two sources of guidance. An obvious example is how many muslims have adopted cultural practices into their lives which do not have a foundation in these two sources of guidance. Even if these cultural practices are not sins they have preoccupied muslims from learning and acting on these two sources of guidance as they feel satisfied with their behaviour. This leads to ignorance of the two sources of guidance which in turn will only lead to misguidance.

This is why a muslim must learn and act on these two sources of guidance which have been established by the leaders of guidance and only then act on other voluntary righteous deeds if they have the time and energy to do so. But if they choose ignorance and made up practices even if they are not sins over learning and acting on these two sources of guidance they will not achieve success.

“Whoever Allāh guides - he is the [rightly] guided; and whoever He sends astray - it is those who are the losers.”

The correct path is mentioned in the singular while the misguided paths are mentioned in the plural. This is because the path to success in both worlds is singular namely, the path of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

Muslims should not follow and adopt the customary practices of non-muslims. The more muslims do this the less they will follow the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This is quite evident in this day and age as many muslims have adopted the cultural practices of other nations which has caused them to become distant from the teachings of Islam. For example, one only needs to observe the modern muslim wedding to observe how many non-muslim cultural practices have been adopted by muslims. What makes this worse is that many muslims cannot differentiate between Islamic practices based on the Holy Quran and traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and the cultural practices of non-muslims. Because of this non-muslims cannot differentiate between them either which has caused great problems for Islam. For example, honour killings is a cultural practice which has nothing to do with Islam yet because of the ignorance of muslims and their habit of adopting non-muslim cultural practices Islam is blamed every time an honour killing occurs in society. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, removed the social barriers in the form of casts and brotherhoods in order to unite people yet ignorant muslims have resurrected them by adopting the cultural practices of non-muslims. Simply put, the more cultural practices muslims adopt the less they will act on the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

“...it is those who are the losers.”

It is important for muslims to understand that they should not define a situation as good or bad according to worldly definitions. For example, according to a worldly definition being wealthy is good whereas being poor is bad. Instead, muslims should ascribe good and bad to events and things according to the teachings of Islam. Meaning, anything which takes one closer to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in the form of fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience, is good even if it is seen as bad from a worldly point of view. And anything which takes one away from the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, is bad even if it appears good.

There are many examples throughout the teachings of Islam which demonstrate this. For example, Qarun was an extremely wealthy person who lived in the time of the Holy Prophet Mosa, peace be upon him. Many people then and now may consider his wealth to be a good thing but as it led him to pride it became a means of his destruction. So in his case being wealthy was a bad thing. Chapter 28 Al Qasas, verses 79-81.

“So he came out before his people in his adornment. Those who desired the worldly life said, "Oh, would that we had like what was given to Qārūn. Indeed, he is one of great fortune. But those who had been given knowledge said, "Woe to you! The reward of Allah is better for he who believes and does righteousness. And none are granted it except the patient." And We caused the earth to swallow him and his home. And there

was for him no company to aid him other than Allah, nor was he of those who [could] defend themselves.”

On the other hand, the third rightly guided Caliph of Islam, Usman Bin Affan, may Allah be pleased with him, was also wealthy yet he used his wealth in the correct way. In fact, once after donating a large amount of wealth he was told by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, that nothing could harm his faith after that day. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3701. So in his case wealth was a good thing.

To conclude, a muslim should remember that every difficulty they face has wisdoms behind it even if they do not observe them. So they should not believe something is good or bad from a worldly point of view. Meaning, if the thing encourages them towards the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, then it is good even if it looks bad. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

Parable 13

Chapter 7 – Al A'raf, Verse 179

وَلَقَدْ ذَرَأْنَا لِجَهَنَّمَ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَالإِنسِ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ لَّا يَفْقَهُونَ بِهَا
وَلَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ لَّا يُبْصِرُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ آذَانٌ لَّا يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا أُولَئِكَ كَالْأَنْعَامِ بَلَّ هُمْ
أَضَلُّ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْغَافِلُونَ ﴿١٧٩﴾

“And We have certainly created for Hell many of the jinn and mankind. They have hearts with which they do not understand, they have eyes with which they do not see, and they have ears with which they do not hear. Those are like livestock; rather, they are more astray. It is they who are the heedless.”

“And We have certainly created for Hell many of the jinn and mankind...”

The thing to remember is that in reality each person who will end up in Hell takes the fire, which they will encounter in Hell, with them from this world in the form of their sins. When a muslim engraves this reality into their mind they will observe each sin, major or minor, as a piece of unbearable fire. The same way a person avoids fire in this world they should avoid sins as in reality sins are like hidden fire which will be shown to them in the hereafter.

In addition, a muslim should not live in heedlessness and believe they can simply claim love for Allah, the Exalted, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, without supporting this verbal declaration with actions. If this was true then the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, would not have strived so hard in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, and they undoubtedly understood Islam and Judgment Day better than the people after them. Simply put, a declaration of love without actions will not save one from Hell. In fact, it has been made clear that some muslims will enter Hell on Judgment Day. The muslim who abandons acting on Islamic teachings should understand that their attitude may cause them to lose their faith before their death so that they enter Judgment Day as a non-muslim, which is the greatest loss.

The same way one would not enter a battle without armour and a shield a muslim should not enter Judgment Day without the armour and shield of

righteous deeds. Otherwise, the same way the soldier who has no protection will most likely be harmed so will a muslim who reaches Judgment Day without the protection provided by the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, which involves fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience. A muslim should remember that the luxuries and pleasures of the material world they enjoyed will not make them feel better if they end up in Hell. In fact, it will only make them feel worse.

“And We have certainly created for Hell many of the jinn and mankind...”

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 7232, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that people will be resurrected on Judgment Day in the same state they died on Earth.

This means that if a person dies on good they will be resurrected on good. But if they die on evil they will be raised in an evil way.

A muslim should not live in heedlessness by believing just because they have faith in Islam it guarantees they will die and therefore be raised in a good state on Judgment Day. If they persist on the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted, and then die in this state without sincerely repenting then they will be raised in an evil way. It does not take a scholar to determine what will happen to this person on Judgment Day.

From this Hadith one can understand that the way they will die will be in the same state they have lived. Meaning, if they lived in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by sincerely fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, then they will die in a good state and therefore be raised in a good state which includes being raised with the righteous as they practically followed in their

footsteps. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 3688.

A muslim should therefore not walk the path to Hell by disobeying Allah, the Exalted, and believe that they will somehow be raised with the pious and end up in Paradise.

“...They have hearts with which they do not understand...”

The corruption and hardness of the spiritual heart is an extremely important matter which has been discussed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 52. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that when the spiritual heart becomes corrupt then the whole body becomes corrupt. This corruption is then reflected in one's speech and actions. Similarly, the Holy Quran has highlighted the importance of a soft and sound heart by advising that one will not derive benefit from their possessions or relatives on Judgment Day unless they possess a sound spiritual heart. Chapter 26 Ash Shu'ara, verses 88-89:

“The Day when there will not benefit [anyone] wealth or children. But only one who comes to Allah with a sound heart.”

The one with a hard spiritual heart can be described as a person who rejects the truth when it is presented to them believing they are superior in knowledge. They lack submission and the fear of Allah, the Exalted, which leads to abandoning good deeds, committing sins, excessive love and striving for the material world while remaining heedless to preparing for the eternal hereafter. The hard hearted are easily influenced by the Devil into committing sins and rejecting good deeds. Chapter 22 Al Hajj, verse 53:

“[That is] so He may make what Satan throws in [i.e., asserts] a trial for those within whose hearts is disease and those hard of heart...”

Two specific blameworthy characteristics are adopted by the one who possesses a hard spiritual heart. They intentionally misinterpret divine scriptures in order to fulfil their own desires such as obtaining fame. They criticise those who strive to adhere to the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, as they desire people to follow their thinking and love for the material world. The second is that they cherry pick verses and Hadiths which suit their desires. They label those who strive to adopt and act on all verses and Hadiths as extremists thereby making their own attitude seem pleasing to others. Chapter 5 Al Ma'idah, verse 13:

“So for their breaking of the covenant We cursed them and made their hearts hardened. They distort words from their [proper] places [i.e., usages] and have forgotten a portion of that of which they were reminded. And you will still observe deceit among them, except a few of them...”

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has warned that those who talk excessively without mentioning Allah, the Exalted, are prone to adopting a spiritual hard heart. The one who possesses a hard spiritual heart is furthest from Allah, the Exalted. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2411.

As mentioned earlier those who abandon the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, which involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience, will be cursed with a hard heart. Chapter 5 Al Ma'idah, verse 13:

“So for their breaking of the covenant We cursed them and made their hearts hardened...”

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2305, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that the one who laughs excessively will become hard hearted. It is important to understand this does not mean one cannot smile as this has been classified as an act of charity by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1970. Laughing excessively causes one to adopt a mentality whereby they only discuss funny issues. This causes one to avoid serious issues such as death and Judgment Day. If one avoids these important issues how can they prepare for them? A lack of preparation will lead to one's spiritual heart becoming hard.

Some say over eating can cause hardness of the spiritual heart. This is because over eating causes one to become lazy. Laziness leads to a reduction in good deeds which can cause the spiritual heart to become hard.

As warned by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3334, when a person sins a black spot is etched on their spiritual heart. If the number of sins increases then this blackness increases which leads to a hard spiritual heart. Chapter 83 Al Mutaffifin, verse 14:

“No! Rather, the stain has covered their hearts of that which they were earning.”

This is why it has been said persistently sinning can cause the spiritual heart to die.

It is important for muslims to strive to soften their heart as it leads to its purification. As advised by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 4094, when the spiritual heart is purified all the limbs of the body become purified also. This purification will encourage one to perform righteous deeds and abandon sins for the sake of Allah, the Exalted.

“...They have hearts with which they do not understand...”

It is important for a muslim to understand a key truth namely, nothing in creation occurs without a wise reason even if people do not observe this wisdom immediately. A muslim should treat everything which occurs, whether they are in times of ease or difficulty, as a message in a bottle. They should not get too caught up in assessing and examining the bottle as it is merely a messenger which delivers the important message. This occurs when muslims either exult over the good things which occur thereby becoming heedless to the message within the good thing. Or they become grieved during difficulties thereby becoming too distracted to understand the message within the difficulty. They should instead concentrate on following the advice of the Holy Quran and approach each situation in a balanced way. Chapter 57 Al Hadid, verse 23:

“In order that you not despair over what has eluded you and not exult [in pride] over what He has given you...”

This verse does not prohibit being happy or sad in different situations as this is a part of human nature. But it advises a balanced approach whereby one avoids extreme emotions namely, exultant which is excessive happiness or grief which is excessive sadness. This balanced approach will allow one to focus their mind on the more important message inside the bottle meaning, inside the situation whether it is a situation of ease or difficulty. Through assessing, understanding and acting on the hidden message a muslim can improve their worldly and religious life for the better. Sometimes the message will be a wakeup call to turn back to Allah, the

Exalted, before their time runs out. Sometimes it will be a way of raising their rank. Other times a way of erasing their sins and sometimes a reminder not to attach themselves to the temporal material world and the things in it. Without this assessment one will merely journey through events without improving their worldly or religious life.

“...They have hearts with which they do not understand...”

A great distraction which prevents one from submitting to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, is ignorance. It can be argued that it is the origin of every sin as the one who truly knows the consequences of sins would never commit them. This refers to true beneficial knowledge which is knowledge that is acted upon. In reality, all knowledge which is not acted on is not beneficial knowledge. The example of the one who behaves in this manner is described in the Holy Quran as a donkey which carries books of knowledge which do not benefit it. Chapter 62 Al Jumu'ah, verse 5:

“...and then did not take it on (did not act upon knowledge) is like that of a donkey who carries volumes [of books]...”

A person who acts on their knowledge rarely slips up and commits sins intentionally. In fact, when this occurs it is only caused by a moment of ignorance where a person forgets to act on their knowledge which results in them sinning.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, once highlighted the seriousness of ignorance in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2322. He declared that everything in the material world is cursed except for the remembrance of Allah, the Exalted, whatever is

connected to this remembrance, the scholar and the student of knowledge. This means that all the blessings in the material world will become a curse for the one who is ignorant as they will misuse them thereby committing sins.

In fact, ignorance can be considered a person's worse enemy as it prevents them from protecting themselves from harm and gaining benefit all of which can only be achieved through acting on knowledge. The ignorant commits sins without being aware of them. How can one avoid a sin if they do not know what is considered a sin? Ignorance causes one to neglect their obligatory duties. How can one fulfil their duties if they are unaware of what their duties are?

It is therefore a duty on all Muslims to gain enough knowledge to fulfil all their obligatory duties and avoid sins. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224.

“...they have eyes with which they do not see...”

It is important for a muslim to be observant in their daily life and avoid being too self-absorbed in their own worldly matters so that they become heedless over the things which are occurring around them and the things which have already occurred. This is an important quality to possess as it is an excellent way to strengthen one's faith which in turn helps one to remain obedient to Allah, the Exalted, at all times. For example, when a muslim observes a sick person they should not only aid them by whatever means they possess, even if it is only a supplication, but they should reflect on their own health and understand that they too will eventually lose their good health either by an illness, ageing or even death. This should inspire them to be grateful for their good health and show this through their actions by taking advantage of their good health in both worldly and religious matters which are pleasing to Allah, the Exalted.

When they observe the death of a rich person they should not only feel sad for the deceased and their family but realise that one day which is unknown to them they will die also. They should understand that just like the rich person was abandoned by their wealth, fame and family at their grave so will they too be left only with their deeds in their grave. This will encourage them to prepare for their grave and the hereafter.

This attitude can and should be applied to all things one observes. A muslim should learn a lesson from everything around them which has been advised in the Holy Quran. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 191:

*“...and give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth, [saying],
"Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly; exalted are You [above such a
thing]; then protect us from the punishment of the Fire.””*

Those who behave in this manner will strengthen their faith on a daily basis whereas those who are too self-absorbed in their worldly life will remain heedless which may lead them to their destruction.

“...they have eyes with which they do not see...”

Unfortunately, they are some who claim that faith is not required in this world and others who are muslims claim it is enough to profess Islam without supporting it with sincere obedience to Allah, the Exalted. But this increase in crimes proves the importance of faith and strengthening it through knowledge and action. This is because crimes and sins only occur as a person feels they will either face no consequences for their actions, such as prison, or they will somehow escape them for example, by fleeing the country. But the person who believes that no matter what action they perform, whether open or secret, big or small, and no matter what tricks they attempt a day will undoubtedly come where they will be held accountable for all their deeds will always think twice before committing a crime or a sin. If this belief is strengthened through gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge it will deter one from committing crimes and sins. If people acted in this way peace and justice would spread across society. The crime rate would decrease and the times would closely match the times of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and his rightly guided Caliphs, may Allah be pleased with them. This fact alone indicates the importance of faith and strengthening it through gaining and acting on knowledge within society. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 90:

“Indeed, Allah orders justice and good conduct and giving [help] to relatives and forbids immorality and bad conduct and oppression. He admonishes you that perhaps you will be reminded.”

“...they have eyes with which they do not see...”

It is important for muslims to develop the correct perception so that they can increase their obedience to Allah, the Exalted, which involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience. This is what the righteous predecessors possessed and it encouraged them to avoid the excess luxuries of the material world and instead prepare for the hereafter. This is an important characteristic to possess and it can be explained with a worldly example. Two people are extremely thirsty and come across a cup of murky water. They both desire to drink it even though it is not pure and even if it means they have to argue over it. As their thirst grows the more focused on the cup of murky water they become to the point they lose focus on everything else. But if one of them shifted their focus and observed a river of pure water which was only a short distance ahead they would immediately lose focus on the cup of water to the point they would no longer care about it and no longer argue over it. And instead they would endure their thirst patiently knowing a river of pure water is close. The person who is unaware of the river would probably believe the other person is crazy after observing their change in attitude. This is the case of the two types of people in this world. One group greedily focuses on the material world. The other group has shifted their focus to the hereafter and the pure and eternal blessings therein. When one shifts their focus to the bliss of the hereafter worldly problems do not seem like such a big deal. Therefore, patience becomes easier to adopt. But if one keeps their focus on this world then it will seem like everything to them. They will argue, fight, love and hate for it. Just like the person in the example mentioned earlier who only focuses on the cup of murky water.

This correct perception is only achieved through gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge found within the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 53:

“We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth...”

“...and they have ears with which they do not hear...”

Even though, the number of preachers has increased over time and accessing information has become easier yet the strength of muslims has only weakened. One of the reasons is that many muslims have adopted a mentality which has hindered them from learning and acting on Islamic knowledge namely, they believe merely listening to Islamic knowledge is good enough to succeed. This is a trap of the Devil and completely contradicts the attitude of the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, and the righteous predecessors. They not only listened to religious knowledge but they fully intended and fulfilled this intention by acting on the knowledge they heard. Failing to act in this way has caused the faith of muslims to weaken. It is the reason why some muslims have spent decades attending religious gatherings and talks yet have not changed for the better at all. The danger of this attitude is that eventually people will fall lower by believing that they can simply declare Islam with their tongues without the need to listen or act on religious teachings. Muslims will be left with ignorance as their guide which will only lead them to destruction.

“...They have hearts with which they do not understand, they have eyes with which they do not see, and they have ears with which they do not hear. Those are like livestock; rather, they are more astray. It is they who are the heedless.”

When one abandons using their senses in the correct way and instead blindly follow their desires, fashion and culture then they become worse than cattle, each blindly following the other.

First of all, it is important to understand, that the major thing which separates a human from an animal is the fact that people live by a higher moral code. If people abandoned this and simply acted on their desires then they would be no difference between them and animals. In fact, people would be worse as they possess the higher level of thinking yet, still choose to live like animals.

Secondly, whether people want to admit it or not in reality, every person is a servant of something or someone. Some are servants of others, such as Hollywood executives and do whatever they command them to do even if it challenges modesty and shame. Others are servants of their relatives and friends and do whatever it takes to please them. Others are the worse by being servants of their own desires as this is the attitude of animals who generally act to please themselves. The best and highest form of servanthood is being a servant of Allah, the Exalted. This is quite evident if one turns the pages of history which clearly shows that those who were the servants of Allah, the Exalted, such as the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, were granted the highest honour and respect in this world and will be granted

this in the next. Centuries and millennia have passed yet their names are remembered as the pillars and beacons of history. Whereas those who became servants of others especially, their own desires were eventually disgraced in this world even if they achieved some worldly status and they became mere footnotes in history. The media barely remembers those who pass away for more than a few days before moving onto the next person to report on. During their lives these people eventually become sad, lonely, depressed and even suicidal as selling their souls and decency to their worldly masters did not grant them the contentment they were looking for. One does not need to be a scholar to understand this obvious truth. So if people must be servants they should be the servants of Allah, the Exalted, as lasting honour, greatness and true success lies only in this.

“...They have hearts with which they do not understand, they have eyes with which they do not see, and they have ears with which they do not hear. Those are like livestock; rather, they are more astray. It is they who are the heedless.”

When one abandons using their senses in the correct way and instead blindly follow their desires, fashion and culture then they become worse than cattle, each blindly following the other.

Those who disbelieve or avoid acting on their faith in Islam do so out of love for the material world and the things within it. They believe that believing or acting on their faith will prevent them from enjoying worldly blessings meaning, for them faith is something that restricts their desires and therefore they turn away from it either literally or practically. Instead they turn towards the material world and strive to fulfill their desires without restrictions believing that true peace lies in this. They look down at those who accept and actualize their faith by controlling their actions and using their worldly blessings in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. They believe that these pious Muslims are lowly slaves who been restricted from enjoying themselves whereas they, the disbelievers and the misguided, are free. But in actual fact this could not be further from the truth as the real slaves are those who fail to accept and submit to Allah, the Exalted, and the superior ones are those who have done this as they become free of slavery to the world. This can be understood by an example. A good parent will restrict the type of food their child eats meaning, they will only let them eat junk and unhealthy food once in a while and instead force them to follow a healthy diet. This child therefore believes that their parent has placed undesirable restrictions on them and that they have become slaves to their parent and their healthy diet. On the other hand another child has

been given permission from their parent to eat whatever they desire, whenever they desire and how much they desire. So this child believes that they are completely free of all restrictions. When these children come together the child who has been given complete freedom criticizes and looks down on the child who has been restricted by their parent. The latter child will also feel sorry for themselves when they observe the other child has been given free reign to behave however they wish. Outwardly it appears the child who has been granted freedom has obtained happiness whereas the other child is too tied up with restrictions to enjoy life. But years down the line the truth will become manifest. The child who had no restrictions grows up to become extremely unhealthy e.g. obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, etc. As a result of this they even become mentally unhealthy as they lose confidence in their body and the way they look. Because of this they become a slave of medications, diseases, mental and social problems. All these things restrict their happiness and life. Whereas, the child who was restricted by their parent grows up healthy in mind and body. As a result they become confident in their body and ability, which aids them to succeed in life. They become free of any slavery to medications, diseases, mental and social problems as they grew up with the correct balance and guidance. So the child who had no restrictions grew up becoming a slave to many things, whereas the child who had restrictions grew up independent of all restrictions.

To conclude, the real slave is the one who becomes a slave to all other things except Allah, the Exalted, such as social media, society, fashion and culture, and this leads to mental, physical and social problems, whereas the real free person is the one who submits only to Allah, the Exalted, thereby achieving peace of mind and body.

“...They have hearts with which they do not understand, they have eyes with which they do not see, and they have ears with which they do not hear. Those are like livestock; rather, they are more astray. It is they who are the heedless.”

When one abandons using their senses in the correct way and instead blindly follow their desires, fashion and culture then they become worse than cattle, each blindly following the other.

A Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4049, indicates the importance of not blindly imitating others in accepting Islam, such as one's family, without gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge so that one surpasses blind imitation and obeys Allah, the Exalted, while truly recognising his Lordship and their own servanthood. This is in fact the purpose of mankind. Chapter 51 Adh Dhariyat, verse 56:

“And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me.”

How can one truly worship someone they do not even recognize? Blind imitation is acceptable for children but adults must follow in the footsteps of the righteous predecessors by truly understanding the purpose of their creation through knowledge. Ignorance is the very reason why the muslims who fulfil their obligatory duties still feel disconnected from Allah, the Exalted. This recognition aids a muslim to behave as a true servant of

Allah, the Exalted, throughout the day not just during the five daily obligatory prayers. Only through this will muslims fulfil true servanthood to Allah, the Exalted. And this is the weapon which overcomes all difficulties a muslim faces during their life. If they do not possess this they will face difficulties without gaining reward. In fact, it will only lead to more difficulties in both worlds. Performing the obligatory duties through blind imitation may fulfil the obligation but it will not safely guide one through every difficulty in order to reach the proximity of Allah, the Exalted, in both worlds. In fact, in most cases blind imitation will lead to one eventually abandoning their obligatory duties. This muslim will only fulfil their duties in times of difficulty and turn away from them in times of ease or vice versa.

“...They have hearts with which they do not understand, they have eyes with which they do not see, and they have ears with which they do not hear. Those are like livestock; rather, they are more astray. It is they who are the heedless.”

When one abandons using their senses in the correct way and instead blindly follow their desires, fashion and culture then they become worse than cattle, each blindly following the other.

Muslims should not follow and adopt the customary practices of non-muslims. The more muslims do this the less they will follow the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This is quite evident in this day and age as many muslims have adopted the cultural practices of other nations which has caused them to become distant from the teachings of Islam. For example, one only needs to observe the modern muslim wedding to observe how many non-muslim cultural practices have been adopted by muslims. What makes this worse is that many muslims cannot differentiate between Islamic practices based on the Holy Quran and traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and the cultural practices of non-muslims. Because of this non-muslims cannot differentiate between them either which has caused great problems for Islam. For example, honour killings is a cultural practice which has nothing to do with Islam yet because of the ignorance of muslims and their habit of adopting non-muslim cultural practices Islam is blamed every time an honour killing occurs in society. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, removed the social barriers in the form of casts and brotherhoods in order to unite people yet ignorant muslims have resurrected them by adopting the cultural practices of non-muslims. Simply

put, the more cultural practices muslims adopt the less they will act on the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

“...They have hearts with which they do not understand, they have eyes with which they do not see, and they have ears with which they do not hear. Those are like livestock; rather, they are more astray. It is they who are the heedless.”

When one abandons using their senses in the correct way and instead blindly follow their desires, fashion and culture then they become worse than cattle, each blindly following the other.

Disbelief can be a literal rejecting of Islam or through actions, which involves disobeying Allah, the Exalted, even though one believes in Him. This can be clearly understood by an example. If an unaware person is warned by another of an approaching lion and the unaware person takes practical steps to obtain safety they will be considered someone who believed in the warning given to them as they adapted their behaviour based on the warning. Whereas, if the unaware person does not practically change their behaviour after being warned, people will suspect that they do not believe in the warning given to them even if the unaware person verbally claims belief in the warning given to them.

Some people claim that their belief and obedience to their God is in their hearts and they therefore do not need to demonstrate it practically. Unfortunately, this foolish mentality has infected many Muslims who believe they possess a pure faithful heart even though they fail to fulfil the obligatory duties of Islam. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and

blessings be upon him, has clearly declared in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3984, that when one's heart is pure the body becomes pure which means their actions become correct. But if one's heart is corrupt the body becomes corrupt which means their actions will be corrupt and incorrect. Therefore, the one who does not obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling their duties practically can never have a pure heart.

In addition, demonstrating one's faith in Allah, the Exalted, practically is their proof and evidence which is required on Judgment Day in order to be granted Paradise. Not having this practical evidence is as silly as a student who hands back a blank exam paper to their teacher claiming their knowledge is in their mind so they therefore do not need to write it down by answering the exam questions. The same way this student would undoubtedly fail so will a person who reaches Judgment Day without the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in the form of fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience, even if they possess faith in their heart.

Parable 14

Chapter 10 – Yunus, Verse 24

إِنَّمَا مَثَلُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا كَمَاءٍ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ فَاخْتَلَطَ بِهِ نَبَاتُ الْأَرْضِ مِمَّا يَأْكُلُ النَّاسُ
وَالْأَنْعَامُ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَخَذَتِ الْأَرْضُ زُخْرُفَهَا وَازَّيَّنَتْ وَظَنَّ أَهْلُهَا أَنَّهُمْ قَدِرُونَ عَلَيْهَا
أَتَاهَا أَمْرُنَا لَيْلًا أَوْ نَهَارًا فَجَعَلْنَاهَا حَصِيدًا كَأَن لَّمْ تَغْنَ بِالْأَمْسِ كَذَلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ
لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

“The example of [this] worldly life is but like rain which We have sent down from the sky that the plants of the earth absorb - [those] from which men and livestock eat - until, when the earth has taken on its adornment and is beautified and its people suppose that they have capability over it, there comes to it Our command by night or by day, and We make it as a harvest, as if it had not flourished yesterday. Thus do We explain in detail the signs for a people who give thought.”

“The example of [this] worldly life is but like rain which We have sent down from the sky that the plants of the earth absorb - [those] from which men and livestock eat - until, when the earth has taken on its adornment and is beautified and its people suppose that they have capability over it, there comes to it Our command by night or by day, and We make it as a harvest, as if it had not flourished yesterday. Thus do We explain in detail the signs for a people who give thought.”

This verse indicates the short and imperfect nature of this material world. When one adopts the correct perception and understanding they will prioritize preparing for the hereafter over gaining, misusing and hoarding the material world.

In a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4108, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that the material world compared to the hereafter is like a drop of water compared to an ocean.

In reality, this parable was given in order for people to understand how small the material world is compared to the hereafter. But in reality they cannot be compared as the material world is temporal whereas the hereafter is eternal. Meaning, the limited cannot be compared to the unlimited. The material world can be split into four categories: fame, fortune, authority and one's social life, such as their family and friends. No matter what worldly blessing one obtains which falls within these groups it will always be imperfect, transient and death will cut a person off from the blessing. On the other hand, the blessings in the hereafter are lasting and

perfect. So in this respect the material world is no more than a drop compared to an endless ocean.

In addition, a person is not guaranteed to experience a long life in this world as the time of death is unknown. Whereas, everyone is guaranteed to experience death and reach the hereafter. So it is foolish to strive for a day, such as one's retirement, which they may never reach over striving for the hereafter which they are guaranteed to reach.

This does not mean one should abandon the world as it is a bridge which must be crossed in order to reach the hereafter safely. Instead, a Muslim should take from this material world enough to fulfill their necessities and the necessities of their dependents according to the teachings of Islam without waste, excessiveness or extravagance. And then dedicate the rest of their efforts in preparing for the eternal hereafter by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the teachings of Islam.

An intelligent person will not prioritize the drop of water over an endless ocean and an intelligent Muslim would not prioritize the temporal material world over the eternal hereafter.

“The example of [this] worldly life is but like rain which We have sent down from the sky that the plants of the earth absorb - [those] from which men and livestock eat - until, when the earth has taken on its adornment and is beautified and its people suppose that they have capability over it, there comes to it Our command by night or by day, and We make it as a harvest, as if it had not flourished yesterday. Thus do We explain in detail the signs for a people who give thought.”

This verse indicates the short and imperfect nature of this material world. When one adopts the correct perception and understanding they will prioritize preparing for the hereafter over gaining, misusing and hoarding the material world.

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2377, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, declared that he was not concerned over the excess of this material world and his example in this world is of a rider who takes a short rest under the shade of a tree and then leaves it behind by moving on.

In reality, each person is a traveller who stays in this world for a very limited time compared to where they came from meaning, the world of the souls and to where they are heading which is the eternal hereafter. In fact, this world in comparison is like waiting at a bus stop. In this Hadith this world has been compared to a shadow. This is because a shadow does not last long and fades away quickly without people even taking notice which is exactly how a person's days and nights pass away. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, did not mention a

traveller's inn or a hotel as these are solid structures which indicate permanence. A fading shadow better describes this material world. This is because no matter how old a person is they always admit that their life flashed by and felt like a moment. Chapter 79 An Naziat, verse 46:

“It will be, on the Day they see it (Judgment Day), as though they had not remained [in the world] except for an afternoon or a morning thereof.”

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, indicated a rider not someone walking as the one who is walking would rest more under the shade of the tree than a rider. This further indicates the limited time people spend in this world.

Taking a rest in the shade indicates the importance of one correctly using the material world in order to obtain the provisions they need just like the rider takes the provision they need namely, rest. A Muslim should therefore prepare for their immediate departure from this world by preparing for the hereafter by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience.

This does not mean one should abandon this world as this Hadith clearly indicates one should make use of the material world in order to prepare for the hereafter. The rider takes a rest and Muslims must gather the things which will benefit them in the hereafter instead of dedicating their time to

unnecessary things which will leave them empty handed on Judgment Day.
Chapter 89 Al Fajar, verses 23-24:

*"And brought [within view], that Day, is Hell - that Day, man will remember,
but how [i.e., what good] to him will be the remembrance? He will say, "Oh,
I wish I had sent ahead [some good] for my life."*

“The example of [this] worldly life is but like rain which We have sent down from the sky that the plants of the earth absorb - [those] from which men and livestock eat - until, when the earth has taken on its adornment and is beautified and its people suppose that they have capability over it, there comes to it Our command by night or by day, and We make it as a harvest, as if it had not flourished yesterday. Thus do We explain in detail the signs for a people who give thought.”

This verse indicates the short and imperfect nature of this material world. When one adopts the correct perception and understanding they will prioritize preparing for the hereafter over gaining, misusing and hoarding the material world.

It is important for Muslims to develop the correct perception so that they can increase their obedience to Allah, the Exalted, which involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience. This is what the righteous predecessors possessed and it encouraged them to avoid the excess luxuries of the material world and instead prepare for the hereafter. This is an important characteristic to possess and it can be explained with a worldly example. Two people are extremely thirsty and come across a cup of murky water. They both desire to drink it even though it is not pure and even if it means they have to argue over it. As their thirst grows the more focused on the cup of murky water they become to the point they lose focus on everything else. But if one of them shifted their focus and observed a river of pure water which was only a short distance ahead they would immediately lose focus on the cup of water to the point they would no longer care about it and no longer argue over it. And instead they would endure their thirst patiently knowing a river of pure water is close. The person who is unaware of the river would

probably believe the other person is crazy after observing their change in attitude. This is the case of the two types of people in this world. One group greedily focuses on the material world. The other group has shifted their focus to the hereafter and the pure and eternal blessings therein. When one shifts their focus to the bliss of the hereafter worldly problems do not seem like such a big deal. Therefore, patience becomes easier to adopt. But if one keeps their focus on this world then it will seem like everything to them. They will argue, fight, love and hate for it. Just like the person in the example mentioned earlier who only focuses on the cup of murky water.

This correct perception is only achieved through gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge found within the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 53:

“We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth...”

“The example of [this] worldly life is but like rain which We have sent down from the sky that the plants of the earth absorb - [those] from which men and livestock eat - until, when the earth has taken on its adornment and is beautified and its people suppose that they have capability over it, there comes to it Our command by night or by day, and We make it as a harvest, as if it had not flourished yesterday. Thus do We explain in detail the signs for a people who give thought.”

This verse indicates the short and imperfect nature of this material world. When one adopts the correct perception and understanding they will prioritize preparing for the hereafter over gaining, misusing and hoarding the material world.

It is strange that even though people believe they can die at any moment yet the vast majority behave as if they will live a long life. Some dedicate their efforts to this material world to such a degree that even if they were guaranteed a long life they could not exert any more effort for the sake of the material world. Unfortunately, Muslims delay preparing for the hereafter believing they can do it in the future. They often keep delaying this preparation until they suddenly encounter death unprepared.

It is important for Muslims to understand that no matter how long they live life goes by in a flash. So they should take every opportunity they have in order to prepare for the eternal hereafter. This does not mean they should abandon the world completely. It means they should prioritize preparing for the hereafter by only taking what they need from the material world in order to fulfil their necessities and responsibilities according to the commands of

Allah, the Exalted. This attitude will allow them to enjoy the lawful pleasures of this world and prepare adequately for the next one also. A Muslim only fails preparing for the hereafter correctly because of their pursuit of the excess of this material world, not by striving to fulfil their necessities and responsibilities.

A Muslim should remember the Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 7424, which warns that only a person's deeds will accompany them in their grave while their family and wealth abandons them at this crucial moment. Therefore, a Muslim should give priority to the thing which will aid them in their moment of need.

Muslims should not delay preparing for the hereafter otherwise they may well encounter death suddenly while unprepared as death does not come at a particular age or time. If they fail to prepare they will be left with nothing but regrets at a time when regrets will not benefit them. Chapter 89 Al Fajr, verse 23:

“And brought [within view], that Day, is Hell - that Day, man will remember, but how [i.e., what good] to him will be the remembrance?”

“The example of [this] worldly life is but like rain which We have sent down from the sky that the plants of the earth absorb - [those] from which men and livestock eat - until, when the earth has taken on its adornment and is beautified and its people suppose that they have capability over it, there comes to it Our command by night or by day, and We make it as a harvest, as if it had not flourished yesterday. Thus do We explain in detail the signs for a people who give thought.”

This verse indicates the short and imperfect nature of this material world. When one adopts the correct perception and understanding they will prioritize preparing for the hereafter over gaining, misusing and hoarding the material world.

Many people strive to achieve more in this material world even though they have already gained much worldly success. Even though, Islam does not prohibit this type of mentality as long as unlawful things are avoided a Muslim should understand an important reality. It is obvious that peace of mind is not obtained with many worldly possessions, such as wealth. In fact, these people are often the ones who end up depressed to the point they even commit suicide. Human worldly desires have been created in such a way that no matter what one obtains they always desire more irrespective of their faith and social status. For example, Pharaoh who lived in the time of the Holy Prophet Musa, peace be upon him, obtained every worldly blessing imaginable yet, he still did not obtain peace of mind and satisfaction. Instead his desire for more pushed him to such a stage that he desired to be worshipped like a God. Chapter 79 An Naziyat, verse 24:

And said, "I am your most exalted lord."

No matter what desires a person fulfils it only leads them to desiring more things. A person who owns two houses wants three; the millionaire wants to become a billionaire. It is why the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6439, that the person who has one valley of gold would only desire another. A Muslim who desires true peace of mind, which is more valuable than the treasures of the Earth, should therefore limit their worldly desires. The more they limit them and only fulfil their necessities and responsibilities the more they will obtain peace of mind. This mentality closes the doors of preoccupation and striving for more worldly things which in turn gives rest to both the mind and body. If a Muslim couples this with striving in the obedience to Allah, the Exalted, which involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience, then they will be granted true peace of mind which extends to every aspect of their life in both worlds. But the more worldly desires they have the more their mind and body will be preoccupied with them and thus the further from true peace of mind they will be.

“The example of [this] worldly life is but like rain which We have sent down from the sky that the plants of the earth absorb - [those] from which men and livestock eat - until, when the earth has taken on its adornment and is beautified and its people suppose that they have capability over it, there comes to it Our command by night or by day, and We make it as a harvest, as if it had not flourished yesterday. Thus do We explain in detail the signs for a people who give thought.”

This verse indicates the short and imperfect nature of this material world. When one adopts the correct perception and understanding they will prioritize preparing for the hereafter over gaining, misusing and hoarding the material world.

A great obstacle to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, is having false hope for a long life. It is an extremely blameworthy characteristic as it is the main cause for a Muslim giving priority to amassing the material world over preparing for the hereafter. One only needs to assess their average 24 hour day and observe how much time they dedicate to the material world and how much time they dedicate to the hereafter in order to realise this truth. In fact, having false hope for a long life is one of the strongest weapons the Devil uses in order to misguide people. When a person believes they will live long they delay preparing for the hereafter falsely believing they can prepare for it in the near future. In most cases, this near future never comes and a person passes away without adequately preparing for the hereafter.

In addition, false hope for a long life causes one to delay sincere repentance and changing one's character for the better as they believe they have much time left to do this. It encourages a person to hoard the things of this material world, such as wealth, as it convinces them they will need these things during their long life on Earth. The Devil scares people into thinking they must hoard wealth for their old age as they may find no one to support them when they become physically weaker and therefore can no longer work for themselves. They forget that the same way Allah, the Exalted, took care of their provision when they were younger He will provide for them in old age too. In fact, the provision of the creation was allocated over fifty thousand years before the creation of the Heavens and the Earth. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6748. It is strange how a person will dedicate 40 years of their life saving for their retirement which very rarely lasts longer than 20 years but fails to prepare in the same way for the eternal hereafter.

Islam does not teach Muslims to not prepare anything for the world. There is no harm in saving for the near future as long as priority is given to the hereafter. Even though, people admit they may die at any time yet, some behave as if they will live forever in this world. Even to the point that if they were given a promise of eternal life on Earth they would not be able to strive harder in order to accumulate more of the material world due to the restrictions of the day and night. How many people have passed away earlier than expected? And how many learn a lesson from this and change their behaviour?

In reality, one of the greatest pains a person will feel at the time of death or any other stage of the hereafter is regret for delaying their preparation for the hereafter. Chapter 63 Al Munafiqun, verses 10-11:

“And spend [in the way of Allah] from what We have provided you before death approaches one of you and he says, “My Lord, if only You would delay me for a brief term so I would give charity and be of the righteous.” But never will Allah delay a soul when its time has come. And Allah is Aware of what you do.”

A person would be labelled a fool if they dedicated more time and wealth on a house which they were only going to live in for a short while compared to a house they were planning to live in for a very long time. This is the example of giving priority to the temporal world over the eternal hereafter.

Muslims should work for both the world and the hereafter but know that death does not come to a person at a time, situation or age known to them but it is certain to come. Therefore, preparing for it and what it leads to should take priority over preparing for a future in this world which is not certain to occur.

“The example of [this] worldly life is but like rain which We have sent down from the sky that the plants of the earth absorb - [those] from which men and livestock eat - until, when the earth has taken on its adornment and is beautified and its people suppose that they have capability over it, there comes to it Our command by night or by day, and We make it as a harvest, as if it had not flourished yesterday. Thus do We explain in detail the signs for a people who give thought.”

This verse indicates the short and imperfect nature of this material world. When one adopts the correct perception and understanding they will prioritize preparing for the hereafter over gaining, misusing and hoarding the material world. This involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted.

In reality, in most cases nothing in this material world in itself is good or bad, such as wealth. What makes a thing good or bad is the way it is used. It is important to understand that the very purpose of everything which was created by Allah, the Exalted, was for it to be used correctly according to the teachings of Islam. When something is not used correctly it in reality becomes useless. For example, wealth is useful in both worlds when it is used correctly such as being spent on the necessities of a person and their dependents. But it can become useless and even a curse for its bearer if it is not used correctly, such as being hoarded or spent on sinful things. Simply hoarding wealth causes wealth to lose value. How can paper and metal coins one tucks away be useful? In this respect, there is no difference between a blank piece of paper and a note of money. It is only useful when it is used correctly.

So if a Muslim desires all their worldly possessions to become a blessing for them in both worlds all they have to do is use them correctly according to the teachings found in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. But if they use them incorrectly then the same blessing will become a burden and curse for them in both worlds. It is as simple as that.

“The example of [this] worldly life is but like rain which We have sent down from the sky that the plants of the earth absorb - [those] from which men and livestock eat - until, when the earth has taken on its adornment and is beautified and its people suppose that they have capability over it, there comes to it Our command by night or by day, and We make it as a harvest, as if it had not flourished yesterday. Thus do We explain in detail the signs for a people who give thought.”

This verse indicates the short and imperfect nature of this material world. When one adopts the correct perception and understanding they will prioritize preparing for the hereafter over gaining, misusing and hoarding the material world. This involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. One can adopt this correct attitude when they understand the purpose of these blessings.

Every worldly blessing a Muslim possesses is only a means which should aid them in reaching the hereafter safely. It is not an end in itself. For example, wealth is a means one should use in order to obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, fulfilling their necessities and the necessities of their dependents. It is not an end or an ultimate goal in itself.

This not only aids a Muslim in maintaining their focus on the hereafter but it also aids them whenever they lose worldly blessings. When a Muslim treats each worldly blessing, such as a child, as a means to please Allah, the Exalted, and reach the hereafter safely then losing it will not have such a detrimental impact on them. They may become sad, which is an acceptable

emotion, but they will not become grieved which leads to impatience and other mental problems, such as depression. This is because they firmly believe the worldly blessing they possessed was only a means so losing it does not cause a loss in the ultimate goal namely, Paradise, the loss of which is disastrous. Therefore, still possessing and concentrating on the ultimate goal will prevent them from becoming grieved.

In addition, they will understand that just like the thing they lost was only a means they firmly believe they will be provided with another means to reach and fulfil their ultimate goal by Allah, the Exalted. This will also prevent them from grieving. Whereas, the one who believes their worldly blessing is the end instead of a means will experience severe grief when losing it as their whole purpose and objective has been lost. This grief will lead to depression and other mental issues.

To conclude, Muslims should treat each blessing they possess as a means to reach the hereafter safely not as an end in itself. This is how one can possess things without being possessed by them. This is how they can keep worldly things in their hands and not in their hearts.

“...Thus do We explain in detail the signs for a people who give thought.”

The signs within divine knowledge and the universe will positively affect a person when they strive to gain and act on Islamic knowledge.

A great distraction which prevents one from submitting to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, is ignorance. It can be argued that it is the origin of every sin as the one who truly knows the consequences of sins would never commit them. This refers to true beneficial knowledge which is knowledge that is acted upon. In reality, all knowledge which is not acted on is not beneficial knowledge. The example of the one who behaves in this manner is described in the Holy Quran as a donkey which carries books of knowledge which do not benefit it. Chapter 62 Al Jumu'ah, verse 5:

“...and then did not take it on (did not act upon knowledge) is like that of a donkey who carries volumes [of books]...”

A person who acts on their knowledge rarely slips up and commits sins intentionally. In fact, when this occurs it is only caused by a moment of ignorance where a person forgets to act on their knowledge which results in them sinning.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, once highlighted the seriousness of ignorance in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2322. He declared that everything in the material world is cursed except for the remembrance of Allah, the Exalted, whatever is connected to this remembrance, the scholar and the student of knowledge. This means that all the blessings in the material world will become a curse for the one who is ignorant as they will misuse them thereby committing sins.

In fact, ignorance can be considered a person's worse enemy as it prevents them from protecting themselves from harm and gaining benefit all of which can only be achieved through acting on knowledge. The ignorant commits sins without being aware of them. How can one avoid a sin if they do not know what is considered a sin? Ignorance causes one to neglect their obligatory duties. How can one fulfil their duties if they are unaware of what their duties are?

It is therefore a duty on all Muslims to gain enough knowledge to fulfil all their obligatory duties and avoid sins. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224.

“...Thus do We explain in detail the signs for a people who give thought.”

The signs within divine knowledge and the universe will positively affect a person when they strive to gain and act on Islamic knowledge. This leads to certainty of faith.

All Muslims have faith in Islam but the strength of their faith varies from person to person. For example, the one who follows the teachings of Islam because their family told them to is not the same as the one who believes in it through evidence. A person who has heard about something will not believe in it in the same way as the one who has witnessed the thing with their own eyes.

As confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224, gaining useful knowledge is a duty on all Muslims. One of the reasons for this is that it is the best way a Muslim can strengthen their faith in Islam. This is important to pursue as the stronger one's certainty of faith the greater the chance they will remain steadfast on the correct path, especially when facing difficulties. In addition, having certainty of faith has been described as one of the best things one can possess in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3849. This knowledge should be obtained by studying the Holy Quran and the Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, through a reliable source.

Allah, the Exalted, did not only declare a truth in the Holy Quran but He also provided evidence for it through examples. Not only examples which are to be found in the past nations but examples which have been placed in one's very own life. For example, in the Holy Quran Allah, the Exalted, advises that sometimes a person loves a thing even though it will cause them trouble if they obtained it. Similarly, they might hate a thing while there is much hidden good in it for them. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

There are many examples of this truth in history such as the Pact of Hudaiba. Some Muslims believed this pact, which was made with the non-Muslims of Mecca, would completely favour the latter group. Yet, history clearly shows that it favoured Islam and the Muslims. This event is discussed in the Hadiths found in Sahih Bukhari, numbers 2731 and 2732.

If one reflects on their own life they will find many examples when they believed something was good when it was actually bad for them and vice versa. These examples prove the authenticity of this verse and help one's faith strengthen.

Another example is found in chapter 79 An Naziyat, verse 46:

“It will be, on the Day they see it (Judgement Day) as though they had not remained [in the world] except for an afternoon or a morning thereof.”

If one turns the pages of history they will clearly observe how great empires came and went. But when they left they passed away in such a way as if they were only on Earth for a moment. All but a few of their signs have faded away as if they were never present on Earth in the first place. Similarly, when one reflects on their own life they will realise that no matter how old they are and no matter how slow certain days might have felt overall their life so far has passed in a flash. Understanding the truthfulness of this verse strengthens one's certainty of faith and this inspires them to prepare for the hereafter before their time runs out.

The Holy Quran and the Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, are full of such examples. Therefore, one should strive to learn and act on these divine teachings so that they adopt certainty of faith. The one who achieves this will not be shaken by any difficulty they face and will remain steadfast on the path which leads to the gates of Paradise. Chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 53:

“We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth...”

Parable 15

Chapter 11 – Hud, Verse 24

﴿مَثَلُ الْفَرِيقَيْنِ كَالْأَعْمَى وَالْأَصْمَى وَالْبَصِيرِ وَالسَّمِيعِ هَلْ يَسْتَوِيَانِ مَثَلًا أَفَلَا﴾

﴿نَذَكَّرُونَ﴾

“The example of the two parties is like the blind and deaf, and the seeing and hearing. Are they equal in comparison? Then, will you not remember?”

“The example of the two parties is like the blind and deaf, and the seeing and hearing. Are they equal in comparison?...”

The two parties refers to those who sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, and those who do not.

It is important for Muslims to strive in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience as Allah, the Exalted, has guaranteed a good life in both worlds for the one who behaves in this manner. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

“Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do.”

This good life will protect a Muslim from severe grief, depression and other extreme moods and mental disorders which can destroy a person's life. Even though, Muslims will face difficulties which will sadden them but if they obey Allah, the Exalted, this sadness will never become extreme and effect their entire life on a long term basis. This is because a Muslim who strives in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, has an excellent reason to continue moving forward through their difficulty without giving up and

turning to depression and even suicide. For example, they look forward to the countless reward which will be granted to the patient. Chapter 39 Az Zumar, verse 10:

“...Indeed, the patient will be given their reward without account [i.e., limit].”

Whereas, the Muslim who does not strive in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, and only claims the title of being a Muslim with their tongue will not be granted this attitude and a good life. And whenever they face difficulties it will drive them to extreme moods and mental disorders which will destroy their entire life.

“The example of the two parties is like the blind and deaf, and the seeing and hearing. Are they equal in comparison?...”

The two parties refers to those who sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, and those who do not.

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2465, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that whoever prioritises the hereafter over this material world will be granted contentment, their affairs will be corrected for them and they will receive their destined provision in an easy way.

This half of the Hadith means that whoever correctly fulfils their duties in respect to Allah, the Exalted, and to the creation, such as providing for their family in a lawful manner while avoiding the excess of this material world will be granted contentment. This is when one is pleased with what they possess without being greedy and actively striving to obtain more worldly things. In reality, the one who is content with what they possess is a truly rich person even if they possess little wealth as they become independent of things. Independence of anything makes one rich in respect to it.

In addition, this attitude will allow one to comfortably deal with any worldly issues which may arise during their life. This is because the less one interacts with the material world and focuses on the hereafter the less

worldly issues they will face. The less worldly issues a person faces the more comfortable their life will become. For example, the one who possesses one house will have fewer issues to deal with in respect to it, such as a broken cooker, than the one who possesses ten houses. Finally, this person will easily and pleasantly obtain their lawful provision. Not only this but Allah, the Exalted, will place such grace in their provision that it will cover all their responsibilities and necessities meaning, it will satisfy them and their dependents.

But as mentioned in the other half of this Hadith the one who prioritises the material world over the hereafter meaning, by neglecting their duties or striving for the unnecessary and excess of this material world will find that their need, meaning greed, for worldly things is never satisfied which by definition makes them poor even if they possess much wealth. These people will go from one worldly issue to another throughout the day failing to achieve contentment as they have opened too many worldly doors. And they will receive their destined provision with difficulty and it will not give them satisfaction and never seem enough to fill their greed. This may even push them towards the unlawful which only leads to a loss in both worlds.

“The example of the two parties is like the blind and deaf, and the seeing and hearing. Are they equal in comparison?...”

The two parties refers to those who sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, and those who do not.

Even though there is no doubt that the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, is infinite and can overcome all sins. And giving up hope in the infinite mercy of Allah, the Exalted, is defined as unbelief in chapter 12 Yusuf, verse 87:

“...Indeed, no one despairs of relief from Allah except the disbelieving people.”

Yet, none the less it is extremely important for Muslims to understand a fact. Namely, a Muslim has not been guaranteed to leave this world with their faith meaning, a Muslim is in danger of dying as a non-Muslim. This is the greatest loss. If this happens it does not take a scholar to conclude where this person will reside in the hereafter. This can occur when a Muslim persists on sins especially, major sins, such as drinking alcohol and failing to offer their obligatory prayers and reaches their end without sincerely repenting from their sins. This is the reason why Muslims must sincerely repent from all their sins and strive to fulfil all their obligatory duties as this is a task they can undoubtedly fulfil. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 286:

“Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity...”

They should not be fooled into believing they possess hope in the mercy of Allah, the Exalted. As true hope in the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, is supported by obedience to Allah, the Exalted, through actions. This involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience. Failing to do this and then expecting the mercy and forgiveness of Allah, the Exalted, is not hope in His mercy it is merely wishful thinking which has no weight or significance. This has been clearly warned by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2459.

“The example of the two parties is like the blind and deaf, and the seeing and hearing. Are they equal in comparison?...”

The two parties refers to those who sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, and those who do not.

Those who disbelieve or avoid acting on their faith in Islam do so out of love for the material world and the things within it. They believe that believing or acting on their faith will prevent them from enjoying worldly blessings meaning, for them faith is something that restricts their desires and therefore they turn away from it either literally or practically. Instead they turn towards the material world and strive to fulfill their desires without restrictions believing that true peace lies in this. They look down at those who accept and actualize their faith by controlling their actions and using their worldly blessings in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. They believe that these pious Muslims are lowly slaves who been restricted from enjoying themselves whereas they, the disbelievers and the misguided, are free. But in actual fact this could not be further from the truth as the real slaves are those who fail to accept and submit to Allah, the Exalted, and the superior ones are those who have done this as they become free of slavery to the world. This can be understood by an example. A good parent will restrict the type of food their child eats meaning, they will only let them eat junk and unhealthy food once in a while and instead force them to follow a healthy diet. This child therefore believes that their parent has placed undesirable restrictions on them and that they have become slaves to their parent and their healthy diet. On the other hand another child has been given permission from their parent to eat whatever they desire, whenever they desire and how much they desire. So this child believes that they are completely free of all restrictions. When these children come

together the child who has been given complete freedom criticizes and looks down on the child who has been restricted by their parent. The latter child will also feel sorry for themselves when they observe the other child has been given free reign to behave however they wish. Outwardly it appears the child who has been granted freedom has obtained happiness whereas the other child is too tied up with restrictions to enjoy life. But years down the line the truth will become manifest. The child who had no restrictions grows up to become extremely unhealthy e.g. obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, etc. As a result of this they even become mentally unhealthy as they lose confidence in their body and the way they look. Because of this they become a slave of medications, diseases, mental and social problems. All these things restrict their happiness and life. Whereas, the child who was restricted by their parent grows up healthy in mind and body. As a result they become confident in their body and ability, which aids them to succeed in life. They become free of any slavery to medications, diseases, mental and social problems as they grew up with the correct balance and guidance. So the child who had no restrictions grew up becoming a slave to many things, whereas the child who had restrictions grew up independent of all restrictions.

To conclude, the real slave is the one who becomes a slave to all other things except Allah, the Exalted, such as social media, society, fashion and culture, and this leads to mental, physical and social problems, whereas the real free person is the one who submits only to Allah, the Exalted, thereby achieving peace of mind and body.

“The example of the two parties is like the blind and deaf, and the seeing and hearing. Are they equal in comparison?...”

The two parties refers to those who sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, and those who do not.

First of all, it is important to understand, that the major thing which separates a human from an animal is the fact that people live by a higher moral code. If people abandoned this and simply acted on their desires then there would be no difference between them and animals. In fact, people would be worse as they possess the higher level of thinking yet, still choose to live like animals.

Secondly, whether people want to admit it or not in reality, every person is a servant of something or someone. Some are servants of others, such as Hollywood executives and do whatever they command them to do even if it challenges modesty and shame. Others are servants of their relatives and friends and do whatever it takes to please them. Others are the worse by being servants of their own desires as this is the attitude of animals who generally act to please themselves. The best and highest form of servanthood is being a servant of Allah, the Exalted. This is quite evident if one turns the pages of history which clearly shows that those who were the servants of Allah, the Exalted, such as the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, were granted the highest honour and respect in this world and will be granted this in the next. Centuries and millennia have passed yet their names are remembered as the pillars and beacons of history. Whereas those who became servants of others especially, their own desires were eventually

disgraced in this world even if they achieved some worldly status and they became mere footnotes in history. The media barely remembers those who pass away for more than a few days before moving onto the next person to report on. During their lives these people eventually become sad, lonely, depressed and even suicidal as selling their souls and decency to their worldly masters did not grant them the contentment they were looking for. One does not need to be a scholar to understand this obvious truth. So if people must be servants they should be the servants of Allah, the Exalted, as lasting honour, greatness and true success lies only in this.

“The example of the two parties is like the blind and deaf, and the seeing and hearing. Are they equal in comparison?...”

The two parties refers to those who sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, and those who do not.

In a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4031, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that a person who imitates a people is counted as one of them.

All Muslims irrespective of the strength of their faith desire to be counted and end up with the righteous in the next world. But this Hadith clearly warns that a Muslim will only be considered a righteous person and end up with them if they imitate the righteous. This imitation is a practical thing not only a declaration through words. This imitation is correctly done by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

But those who verbally declare their love for the righteous and fail to imitate them and instead imitate the characteristics found in hypocrites and the sinful will be considered and judged as one of them. This does not mean they will lose their faith but it means they will be judged as disobedient Muslims. How can a disobedient Muslim be counted as an obedient Muslim

and end up with the righteous? This is only wishful thinking which has no value in Islam. Chapter 59 Al Hashr, verse 20:

“Not equal are the companions of the Fire and the companions of Paradise. The companions of Paradise - they are the attainers [of success].”

“The example of the two parties is like the blind and deaf, and the seeing and hearing. Are they equal in comparison?...”

The two parties refers to those who sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, and those who do not. This involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted.

In reality, in most cases nothing in this material world in itself is good or bad, such as wealth. What makes a thing good or bad is the way it is used. It is important to understand that the very purpose of everything which was created by Allah, the Exalted, was for it to be used correctly according to the teachings of Islam. When something is not used correctly it in reality becomes useless. For example, wealth is useful in both worlds when it is used correctly such as being spent on the necessities of a person and their dependents. But it can become useless and even a curse for its bearer if it is not used correctly, such as being hoarded or spent on sinful things. Simply hoarding wealth causes wealth to lose value. How can paper and metal coins one tucks away be useful? In this respect, there is no difference between a blank piece of paper and a note of money. It is only useful when it is used correctly.

So if a Muslim desires all their worldly possessions to become a blessing for them in both worlds all they have to do is use them correctly according to the teachings found in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. But if they use them incorrectly then the same blessing will become a burden and curse for them in both worlds. It is as simple as that.

“The example of the two parties is like the blind and deaf, and the seeing and hearing. Are they equal in comparison?...”

The two parties refers to those who sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, and those who do not. This involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. One can adopt this correct attitude when they understand the purpose of these blessings.

Every worldly blessing a Muslim possesses is only a means which should aid them in reaching the hereafter safely. It is not an end in itself. For example, wealth is a means one should use in order to obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, fulfilling their necessities and the necessities of their dependents. It is not an end or an ultimate goal in itself.

This not only aids a Muslim in maintaining their focus on the hereafter but it also aids them whenever they lose worldly blessings. When a Muslim treats each worldly blessing, such as a child, as a means to please Allah, the Exalted, and reach the hereafter safely then losing it will not have such a detrimental impact on them. They may become sad, which is an acceptable emotion, but they will not become grieved which leads to impatience and other mental problems, such as depression. This is because they firmly believe the worldly blessing they possessed was only a means so losing it does not cause a loss in the ultimate goal namely, Paradise, the loss of which is disastrous. Therefore, still possessing and concentrating on the ultimate goal will prevent them from becoming grieved.

In addition, they will understand that just like the thing they lost was only a means they firmly believe they will be provided with another means to reach and fulfil their ultimate goal by Allah, the Exalted. This will also prevent them from grieving. Whereas, the one who believes their worldly blessing is the end instead of a means will experience severe grief when losing it as their whole purpose and objective has been lost. This grief will lead to depression and other mental issues.

To conclude, Muslims should treat each blessing they possess as a means to reach the hereafter safely not as an end in itself. This is how one can possess things without being possessed by them. This is how they can keep worldly things in their hands and not in their hearts.

“The example of the two parties is like the blind and deaf, and the seeing and hearing. Are they equal in comparison?...”

The two parties refers to those who sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, and those who do not. The difference involves adopting the correct perception and understanding in respect to this material world and the hereafter.

It is important for Muslims to develop the correct perception so that they can increase their obedience to Allah, the Exalted, which involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience. This is what the righteous predecessors possessed and it encouraged them to avoid the excess luxuries of the material world and instead prepare for the hereafter. This is an important characteristic to possess and it can be explained with a worldly example. Two people are extremely thirsty and come across a cup of murky water. They both desire to drink it even though it is not pure and even if it means they have to argue over it. As their thirst grows the more focused on the cup of murky water they become to the point they lose focus on everything else. But if one of them shifted their focus and observed a river of pure water which was only a short distance ahead they would immediately lose focus on the cup of water to the point they would no longer care about it and no longer argue over it. And instead they would endure their thirst patiently knowing a river of pure water is close. The person who is unaware of the river would probably believe the other person is crazy after observing their change in attitude. This is the case of the two types of people in this world. One group greedily focuses on the material world. The other group has shifted their focus to the hereafter and the pure and eternal blessings therein. When one shifts their focus to the bliss of the hereafter worldly problems do not seem like such a big deal. Therefore, patience becomes easier to adopt.

But if one keeps their focus on this world then it will seem like everything to them. They will argue, fight, love and hate for it. Just like the person in the example mentioned earlier who only focuses on the cup of murky water.

This correct perception is only achieved through gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge found within the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 53:

“We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth...”

“The example of the two parties is like the blind and deaf, and the seeing and hearing. Are they equal in comparison?...”

The two parties refers to those who sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, and those who do not. The difference involves adopting the correct perception and understanding in respect to this material world and the hereafter.

In a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4108, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that the material world compared to the hereafter is like a drop of water compared to an ocean.

In reality, this parable was given in order for people to understand how small the material world is compared to the hereafter. But in reality they cannot be compared as the material world is temporal whereas the hereafter is eternal. Meaning, the limited cannot be compared to the unlimited. The material world can be split into four categories: fame, fortune, authority and one's social life, such as their family and friends. No matter what worldly blessing one obtains which falls within these groups it will always be imperfect, transient and death will cut a person off from the blessing. On the other hand, the blessings in the hereafter are lasting and perfect. So in this respect the material world is no more than a drop compared to an endless ocean.

In addition, a person is not guaranteed to experience a long life in this world as the time of death is unknown. Whereas, everyone is guaranteed to experience death and reach the hereafter. So it is foolish to strive for a day, such as one's retirement, which they may never reach over striving for the hereafter which they are guaranteed to reach.

This does not mean one should abandon the world as it is a bridge which must be crossed in order to reach the hereafter safely. Instead, a Muslim should take from this material world enough to fulfill their necessities and the necessities of their dependents according to the teachings of Islam without waste, excessiveness or extravagance. And then dedicate the rest of their efforts in preparing for the eternal hereafter by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the teachings of Islam.

An intelligent person will not prioritize the drop of water over an endless ocean and an intelligent Muslim would not prioritize the temporal material world over the eternal hereafter.

“The example of the two parties is like the blind and deaf, and the seeing and hearing. Are they equal in comparison?...”

The two parties refers to those who sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, and those who do not.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6407, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that the difference between the person who remembers Allah, the Exalted, and the one who does not is like a living person compared to a dead person.

It is important for Muslims who desire to create a strong connection with Allah, the Exalted, so that they can overcome all difficulties in this world and in the hereafter successfully to remember Allah, the Exalted, as much as possible. Put simply, the more they remember Him the more they will achieve this vital goal.

This is achieved by practically acting on the three levels of the remembrance of Allah, the Exalted. The first level is to remember Allah, the Exalted, internally and silently. This includes correcting one's intention so that they only act in order to please Allah, the Exalted. The second is by remembering Allah, the Exalted, through one's tongue. But the highest and most effective way of strengthening one's bond with Allah, the Exalted, is practically remembering Him with one's limbs. This is achieved by fulfilling

His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This requires one to gain and act on Islamic knowledge which in turn is the root of all good and success in both worlds.

Those who remain on the first two levels will receive reward depending on their intention but they are unlikely to increase the strength of their faith and piety unless they move to the third and highest level of the remembrance of Allah, the Exalted.

“...Then, will you not remember?”

The root of heedlessness is ignorance.

A great distraction which prevents one from submitting to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, is ignorance. It can be argued that it is the origin of every sin as the one who truly knows the consequences of sins would never commit them. This refers to true beneficial knowledge which is knowledge that is acted upon. In reality, all knowledge which is not acted on is not beneficial knowledge. The example of the one who behaves in this manner is described in the Holy Quran as a donkey which carries books of knowledge which do not benefit it. Chapter 62 Al Jumu'ah, verse 5:

“...and then did not take it on (did not act upon knowledge) is like that of a donkey who carries volumes [of books]...”

A person who acts on their knowledge rarely slips up and commits sins intentionally. In fact, when this occurs it is only caused by a moment of ignorance where a person forgets to act on their knowledge which results in them sinning.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, once highlighted the seriousness of ignorance in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2322. He declared that everything in the material world is cursed except for the remembrance of Allah, the Exalted, whatever is connected to this remembrance, the scholar and the student of knowledge. This means that all the blessings in the material world will become a curse for the one who is ignorant as they will misuse them thereby committing sins.

In fact, ignorance can be considered a person's worse enemy as it prevents them from protecting themselves from harm and gaining benefit all of which can only be achieved through acting on knowledge. The ignorant commits sins without being aware of them. How can one avoid a sin if they do not know what is considered a sin? Ignorance causes one to neglect their obligatory duties. How can one fulfil their duties if they are unaware of what their duties are?

It is therefore a duty on all Muslims to gain enough knowledge to fulfil all their obligatory duties and avoid sins. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224.

Parable 16

Chapter 13 – Ar Ra'd, Verse 17

أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَسَالَتْ أَوْدِيَةٌ بِقَدَرِهَا فَاحْتَمَلَ السَّيْلُ زَبَدًا رَابِيًا وَمِمَّا
يُوقَدُونَ عَلَيْهِ فِي النَّارِ ابْتِغَاءَ حِلْيَةٍ أَوْ مَتَاعٍ زَبَدٌ مِثْلُهُ كَذَلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْحَقَّ
وَالْبَاطِلَ فَأَمَّا الزَّبَدُ فَيَذْهَبُ جُفَاءً وَأَمَّا مَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ فَيَمْكُثُ فِي الْأَرْضِ
كَذَلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ

“He sends down from the sky, rain, and valleys flow according to their capacity, and the torrent carries a rising foam. And from that [ore] which they heat in the fire, desiring adornments and utensils, is a foam like it. Thus Allah presents [the example of] truth and falsehood. As for the foam, it vanishes, [being] cast off; but as for that which benefits the people, it remains on the earth. Thus does Allah present examples.”

“He sends down from the sky, rain, and valleys flow according to their capacity...”

Allah, the Exalted, is the Creator and Allocator of provision to the entire creation which they need to preserve their physical and spiritual constitutions. In fact, according to a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6748, the provision of the entire creation was allocated over fifty thousand years before the creation of the Heavens and the Earth.

The one who understands this divine name will rely on Allah, the Exalted, to provide for them as He has planned for them before they were created. They will prove this reliance by striving to gain lawful provision as commanded by Allah, the Exalted, while refraining from anything which is unlawful and doubtful.

It is important to note that as people require physical provision in the form of food and drink. Similarly, the soul of a muslim requires provision also. This provision strengthens it and leads it to eternal bliss. This provision is in the form of sincere obedience to Allah, the Exalted, which involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience. The foundation of all this is gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge. Therefore, muslims should strive to gain this important provision of the soul as well as provision for their physical body. Two elements should be remembered in this respect. Do not exert unlawful and unnecessary efforts in gaining one’s guaranteed provision. And do not misuse or waste the provision one gains.

A muslim, should act on this divine name by fulfilling their duty by providing for their dependents according to the teachings of Islam. This includes providing them with both physical and spiritual provision through education. A muslim should also do the same for the needy according to their capacity without fearing poverty for themselves. They should remember the Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4893, which advises that Allah, the Exalted, will fulfil the needs of the muslim who takes care of the needs of others.

“He sends down from the sky, rain, and valleys flow according to their capacity...”

The rain from the sky can be describing divine knowledge which is absorbed by the hearts of people depending on their capacities.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6853, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that whoever follows a path seeking knowledge Allah, the Exalted, will make the path to Paradise easy for them.

This indicates both a physical path someone takes seeking knowledge, such as attending lectures and classes, and a path whereby someone seeks knowledge without a physical journey. It encompasses all forms of knowledge, such as listening, reading, studying and writing about knowledge. The path to Paradise has many obstacles preventing a muslim from reaching it. Only the one who possesses knowledge of them and how to overcome them will reach Paradise safely. In addition, it easily understood that a person cannot reach a city in this world without knowledge of its location and the route which leads to it. Similarly, Paradise cannot be obtained without knowing these things about it, such as the path leading to it.

But the important thing to note is that a muslim's intention to seek and act on knowledge must be to please Allah, the Exalted. Whoever seeks religious knowledge for a worldly reason, such as showing off, will end up in Hell if they fail to sincerely repent. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 253.

In addition, a muslim must strive to act on their knowledge as knowledge without action is of no value or benefit. This is like the one who possesses knowledge of a path to safety but does not take it and instead remains in an area full of dangers. This is why knowledge can be split into two categories. The first is when one acts on their knowledge, which leads to piety and an increase in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted. The second is when one fails to act on their knowledge. This type will not increase one's obedience to Allah, the Exalted, in fact, it will only increase them in arrogance believing they are superior to others even though they are like donkeys which carry books that do not benefit it. Chapter 62 Al Jumu'ah, verse 5:

“...and then did not take it on (did not act on their knowledge) is like that of a donkey who carries volumes [of books]...”

“He sends down from the sky, rain, and valleys flow according to their capacity...”

The rain from the sky can be describing divine knowledge which is absorbed by the hearts of people depending on their capacities. This capacity is also dependent on their intention.

In a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 253, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that the one who obtains religious knowledge in order to show off to scholars, argue with others or attract attention to themselves will go to Hell.

Even though, the foundation of all good in both worldly and religious matters is knowledge Muslims must understand that knowledge will only benefit them when they firstly correct their intention. Meaning, they strive to obtain and act on knowledge in order to please Allah, the Exalted. All other reasons will only lead to a loss of reward and even punishment if a Muslim fails to sincerely repent.

In reality, knowledge is like rain water which falls on different types of trees. Some trees grow by this water in order to benefit others such as a fruit tree. Whereas, other trees grow by this water and become a nuisance to others such as a thorny tree. Even though, the rain water is the same in both cases but the outcome is very different. Similarly, religious knowledge is

the same for people but if one adopts the incorrect intention then it will become a means of their destruction. Conversely, if one adopts the correct intention it will become a means of their salvation.

Muslims should therefore correct their intention in all matters as they will be judged on this. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1. And they should remember that one of the first people to enter Hell will be a scholar who only obtained knowledge in order to show off to others. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 4923.

To conclude, only obtaining and acting on useful knowledge with the correct intention is true beneficial knowledge.

Whoever conceals knowledge without a valid reason will be bridled with fire on Judgment Day. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2649. Therefore, muslims must share the useful knowledge they gain with others. It is simply foolish not to as this is one of the righteous deeds which will benefit a muslim even after they die. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 241. Those who hoarded knowledge were forgotten by history but those who shared it with others became known as the scholars and teachers of mankind.

“He sends down from the sky, rain, and valleys flow according to their capacity, and the torrent carries a rising foam. And from that [ore] which they heat in the fire, desiring adornments and utensils, is a foam like it. Thus Allah presents [the example of] truth and falsehood. As for the foam, it vanishes, [being] cast off; but as for that which benefits the people, it remains on the earth...”

Just like an intelligent person does not get fooled by the useless foam which is found on top of water and ores a muslim must adopt the correct perception so that they do not get fooled by the superficial glamour and pomp of this material world.

It is important for muslims to develop the correct perception so that they can increase their obedience to Allah, the Exalted, which involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience. This is what the righteous predecessors possessed and it encouraged them to avoid the excess luxuries of the material world and instead prepare for the hereafter. This is an important characteristic to possess and it can be explained with a worldly example. Two people are extremely thirsty and come across a cup of murky water. They both desire to drink it even though it is not pure and even if it means they have to argue over it. As their thirst grows the more focused on the cup of murky water they become to the point they lose focus on everything else. But if one of them shifted their focus and observed a river of pure water which was only a short distance ahead they would immediately lose focus on the cup of water to the point they would no longer care about it and no longer argue over it. And instead they would endure their thirst patiently knowing a river of pure water is close. The person who is unaware of the river would probably believe the other person is crazy after observing their change in

attitude. This is the case of the two types of people in this world. One group greedily focuses on the material world. The other group has shifted their focus to the hereafter and the pure and eternal blessings therein. When one shifts their focus to the bliss of the hereafter worldly problems do not seem like such a big deal. Therefore, patience becomes easier to adopt. But if one keeps their focus on this world then it will seem like everything to them. They will argue, fight, love and hate for it. Just like the person in the example mentioned earlier who only focuses on the cup of murky water.

This correct perception is only achieved through gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge found within the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 53:

“We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth...”

“He sends down from the sky, rain, and valleys flow according to their capacity, and the torrent carries a rising foam. And from that [ore] which they heat in the fire, desiring adornments and utensils, is a foam like it. Thus Allah presents [the example of] truth and falsehood. As for the foam, it vanishes, [being] cast off; but as for that which benefits the people, it remains on the earth...”

Just like an intelligent person does not get fooled by the useless foam which is found on top of water and ores a muslim must adopt the correct perception so that they do not get fooled by the superficial glamour and pomp of this material world.

In a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4108, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that the material world compared to the hereafter is like a drop of water compared to an ocean.

In reality, this parable was given in order for people to understand how small the material world is compared to the hereafter. But in reality they cannot be compared as the material world is temporal whereas the hereafter is eternal. Meaning, the limited cannot be compared to the unlimited. The material world can be split into four categories: fame, fortune, authority and one's social life, such as their family and friends. No matter what worldly blessing one obtains which falls within these groups it will always be imperfect, transient and death will cut a person off from the blessing. On the other hand, the blessings in the hereafter are lasting and

perfect. So in this respect the material world is no more than a drop compared to an endless ocean.

In addition, a person is not guaranteed to experience a long life in this world as the time of death is unknown. Whereas, everyone is guaranteed to experience death and reach the hereafter. So it is foolish to strive for a day, such as one's retirement, which they may never reach over striving for the hereafter which they are guaranteed to reach.

This does not mean one should abandon the world as it is a bridge which must be crossed in order to reach the hereafter safely. Instead, a muslim should take from this material world enough to fulfill their necessities and the necessities of their dependents according to the teachings of Islam without waste, excessiveness or extravagance. And then dedicate the rest of their efforts in preparing for the eternal hereafter by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the teachings of Islam.

An intelligent person will not prioritize the drop of water over an endless ocean and an intelligent muslim would not prioritize the temporal material world over the eternal hereafter.

“He sends down from the sky, rain, and valleys flow according to their capacity, and the torrent carries a rising foam. And from that [ore] which they heat in the fire, desiring adornments and utensils, is a foam like it. Thus Allah presents [the example of] truth and falsehood. As for the foam, it vanishes, [being] cast off; but as for that which benefits the people, it remains on the earth...”

Just like an intelligent person does not get fooled by the useless foam which is found on top of water and ores a muslim must adopt the correct perception so that they do not get fooled by the superficial glamour and pomp of this material world.

It is important for muslims to understand that they should not define a situation as good or bad according to worldly definitions. For example, according to a worldly definition being wealthy is good whereas being poor is bad. Instead, muslims should ascribe good and bad to events and things according to the teachings of Islam. Meaning, anything which takes one closer to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in the form of fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience, is good even if it is seen as bad from a worldly point of view. And anything which takes one away from the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, is bad even if it appears good.

There are many examples throughout the teachings of Islam which demonstrate this. For example, Qarun was an extremely wealthy person who lived in the time of the Holy Prophet Mosa, peace be upon him. Many people then and now may consider his wealth to be a good thing but as it

led him to pride it became a means of his destruction. So in his case being wealthy was a bad thing. Chapter 28 Al Qasas, verses 79-81.

“So he came out before his people in his adornment. Those who desired the worldly life said, “Oh, would that we had like what was given to Qārūn. Indeed, he is one of great fortune. But those who had been given knowledge said, “Woe to you! The reward of Allah is better for he who believes and does righteousness. And none are granted it except the patient.” And We caused the earth to swallow him and his home. And there was for him no company to aid him other than Allah, nor was he of those who [could] defend themselves.”

On the other hand, the third rightly guided Caliph of Islam, Usman Bin Affan, may Allah be pleased with him, was also wealthy yet he used his wealth in the correct way. In fact, once after donating a large amount of wealth he was told by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, that nothing could harm his faith after that day. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3701. So in his case wealth was a good thing.

To conclude, a muslim should remember that every difficulty they face has wisdoms behind it even if they do not observe them. So they should not believe something is good or bad from a worldly point of view. Meaning, if the thing encourages them towards the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, then it is good even if it looks bad. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

“He sends down from the sky, rain, and valleys flow according to their capacity, and the torrent carries a rising foam. And from that [ore] which they heat in the fire, desiring adornments and utensils, is a foam like it. Thus Allah presents [the example of] truth and falsehood. As for the foam, it vanishes, [being] cast off; but as for that which benefits the people, it remains on the earth...”

The foam which flows above the flowing water and is found on the surface of precious ores such as gold appear to be superior in rank compared to the water underneath it or the ores it is found on the surface of. But in reality, what is truly precious is what is hidden underneath the foam. This is similar to people. Some stand out from the general population because of their fame and fortune while others are hidden. In reality, what makes someone precious to Allah, the Exalted, is not standing out from the rest because of worldly things. It is instead being obedient to Him by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. It is these people whose efforts, affects and name remains on the Earth and is solidified in the Heavens while those who appear superior to others through worldly things simply become footnotes in history.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6543, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that Allah, the Exalted, does not judge people based on their outward appearance or their wealth instead He observes and judges people's inward intention and their physical actions.

The first thing to note is that a muslim should always correct their intention when performing any deed as Allah, the Exalted, will only reward them when they perform righteous deeds for His sake. Those who perform deeds for the sake of other people and things will be told to gain their reward from those who they acted for on Judgment Day, which will not be possible. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3154.

In addition, this Hadith indicates the importance of equality in Islam. A person is not superior to others by worldly things such as their ethnicity or wealth. Even though, many muslims have erected these barriers such as social castes and sects thereby believing some are better than others Islam has clearly rejected this concept and declared that in this respect all people are equal in the sight of Islam. The only thing which makes one muslim superior to another is their piety meaning, how much they fulfill the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refrain from His prohibitions and face destiny with patience. Chapter 49 Al Hujurat, verse 13:

“...Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you...”

A muslim should therefore busy themselves in obeying Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His rights and the rights of people and not believe that something they possess or belong to will somehow save them from punishment. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has made it clear in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6853, that the muslim who

lacks in righteous deeds meaning, the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, will not be increased in rank because of their lineage. In reality, this applies to all worldly things such as wealth, ethnicity, gender or social brotherhoods and castes.

“He sends down from the sky, rain, and valleys flow according to their capacity, and the torrent carries a rising foam. And from that [ore] which they heat in the fire, desiring adornments and utensils, is a foam like it. Thus Allah presents [the example of] truth and falsehood. As for the foam, it vanishes, [being] cast off; but as for that which benefits the people, it remains on the earth...”

The foam which flows above the flowing water and is found on the surface of precious ores such as gold appear to be superior in rank compared to the water underneath it or the ores it is found on the surface of. But in reality, what is truly precious is what is hidden underneath the foam. This is similar to people. Some stand out from the general population because of their fame and fortune while others are hidden. In reality, what makes someone precious to Allah, the Exalted, is not standing out from the rest because of worldly things. It is instead being obedient to Him by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. It is these people whose efforts, affects and name remains on the Earth and is solidified in the Heavens while those who appear superior to others through worldly things simply become footnotes in history.

Many people have come and gone who have stood up for some sort of cause whether it was to do with women's rights, human rights, the poor, or something else, yet only a small per cent of these people had a positive impact on society. The majority had no positive effect and instead became footnotes in history. One of the reasons for this is a lack of sincerity. If one turns the pages of history they will observe that those who acted with the correct intention meaning, to truly benefit society without any ulterior

motives were granted success even if they were not muslims. Benefit to others is something Allah, the Exalted, loves and He therefore grants success to all those who sincerely strive for this end.

Those who did not achieve a positive effect on society lacked this good intention as they desired something else, such as fame. In most cases their bad intention is quite evident as their words and actions clearly contradict each other. For example, some claim to stand up for the rights of women then happily take part in advertising campaigns which show women to be nothing except ornaments to be gawked at. If their actions supported their claims they would have instead taught the advertising companies that a woman's intelligence, good character and inner strength are what should be displayed to the world through their advertising campaigns.

Many of these people who claim to stand up for different causes are in a position of political and social influence and they possess much wealth yet, their positive influence on society is minimal and very short lived. On the other hand, those who may not have possessed such influence changed the attitude of millions through their sincerity. They only desired to benefit society; they did not seek anything else. Because of their sincerity their positive influence and remembrance endured long after they departed this world whereas, those whose intention was corrupt were quickly forgotten even while they were still alive.

So if one desires to succeed in the material world or more importantly in matters of faith they should strive to correct their intention. It is why the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that

Allah, the Exalted, judges people based on their intention. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1.

“He sends down from the sky, rain, and valleys flow according to their capacity, and the torrent carries a rising foam. And from that [ore] which they heat in the fire, desiring adornments and utensils, is a foam like it. Thus Allah presents [the example of] truth and falsehood. As for the foam, it vanishes, [being] cast off; but as for that which benefits the people, it remains on the earth...”

The rain from the sky could be referring to divine knowledge which is absorbed in the hearts of the people. The foam could be a representation of doubt which dissipates when one absorbs and acts on this knowledge. Therefore, this verse indicates the importance of certainty of faith.

All muslims have faith in Islam but the strength of their faith varies from person to person. For example, the one who follows the teachings of Islam because their family told them to is not the same as the one who believes in it through evidence. A person who has heard about something will not believe in it in the same way as the one who has witnessed the thing with their own eyes.

As confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224, gaining useful knowledge is a duty on all muslims. One of the reasons for this is that it is the best way a muslim can strengthen their faith in Islam. This is important to pursue as the stronger one’s certainty of faith the greater the chance they will remain steadfast on the correct path, especially when facing difficulties. In addition, having certainty of faith has been described as one of the best things one can possess in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3849. This knowledge should be obtained by studying the

Holy Quran and the Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, through a reliable source.

Allah, the Exalted, did not only declare a truth in the Holy Quran but He also provided evidence for it through examples. Not only examples which are to be found in the past nations but examples which have been placed in one's very own life. For example, in the Holy Quran Allah, the Exalted, advises that sometimes a person loves a thing even though it will cause them trouble if they obtained it. Similarly, they might hate a thing while there is much hidden good in it for them. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

There are many examples of this truth in history such as the Pact of Hudaiba. Some muslims believed this pact, which was made with the non-muslims of Mecca, would completely favour the latter group. Yet, history clearly shows that it favoured Islam and the muslims. This event is discussed in the Hadiths found in Sahih Bukhari, numbers 2731 and 2732.

If one reflects on their own life they will find many examples when they believed something was good when it was actually bad for them and vice versa. These examples prove the authenticity of this verse and help one's faith strengthen.

Another example is found in chapter 79 An Naziat, verse 46:

“It will be, on the Day they see it (Judgement Day) as though they had not remained [in the world] except for an afternoon or a morning thereof.”

If one turns the pages of history they will clearly observe how great empires came and went. But when they left they passed away in such a way as if they were only on Earth for a moment. All but a few of their signs have faded away as if they were never present on Earth in the first place. Similarly, when one reflects on their own life they will realise that no matter how old they are and no matter how slow certain days might have felt overall their life so far has passed in a flash. Understanding the truthfulness of this verse strengthens one's certainty of faith and this inspires them to prepare for the hereafter before their time runs out.

The Holy Quran and the Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, are full of such examples. Therefore, one should strive to learn and act on these divine teachings so that they adopt certainty of faith. The one who achieves this will not be shaken by any difficulty they face and will remain steadfast on the path which leads to the gates of Paradise. Chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 53:

“We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth...”

“He sends down from the sky, rain, and valleys flow according to their capacity, and the torrent carries a rising foam. And from that [ore] which they heat in the fire, desiring adornments and utensils, is a foam like it. Thus Allah presents [the example of] truth and falsehood. As for the foam, it vanishes, [being] cast off; but as for that which benefits the people, it remains on the earth...”

This verse also indicates a subtle truth namely, no matter how much falsehood may occasionally rise about the truth the truth will always ultimately prevail.

It is important for muslims to understand a simple yet profound lesson namely, they will never succeed in this world or the next in worldly or religious matters through the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted. Since the dawn of time to this age and till the end of time no person has ever achieved true success nor will they ever through the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted. This is quite obvious when one turns the pages of history. Therefore, when a muslim is in a situation which they desire to achieve a positive and successful outcome from they should never choose to disobey Allah, the Exalted, irrespective of how tempting or easy it may seem to be. Even if one is advised by their close friends and relatives to do so as there is no obedience to the creation if it means disobedience to the Creator. And in truth they will never be able to protect them from Allah, the Exalted, and His punishment in either this world or the next. The same way Allah, the Exalted, grants success to those who obey Him He removes a successful outcome from those who disobey Him even if this removal takes time to witness. A muslim should not be fooled as this will occur sooner or later. The Holy Quran has made it extremely clear that an evil plan or action only

encompasses the doer even if this punishment is delayed. Chapter 35
Fatir, verse 43:

“...but the evil plot does not encompass except its own people...”

Therefore, no matter how difficult the situation and choice muslims should always choose the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in both worldly and religious matters as this alone will lead to true success in both worlds even if this success is not obvious immediately.

“...Thus does Allāh present examples.”

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2645, that when Allah, the Exalted, desires to give someone good He provides them with Islamic knowledge.

There is no doubt that every muslim irrespective of the strength of their faith desires good in both worlds. Even though many muslims incorrectly believe that this good which they desire lies in fame, wealth, authority, companionship and their career this Hadith makes it crystal clear that true lasting good lies in gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge. It is important to note a branch of religious knowledge is useful worldly knowledge whereby one earns lawful provision in order to fulfil their necessities and the necessities of their dependents. Even though the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has pointed out where good lies yet it is a shame how many muslims do not place much value in this. They in most cases only strive to obtain the bare minimum of Islamic knowledge in order to fulfil their obligatory duties and fail to acquire and act on more such as the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Instead they dedicate their efforts on worldly things believing true good is found there. Many muslims fail to appreciate that the righteous predecessors had to journey for weeks on end just to learn a single verse or Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, whereas today one can study Islamic teachings without leaving their home. Yet, many fail to make use of this blessing given to the modern day muslims. Out of His infinite mercy Allah, the Exalted, through his Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has not only pointed out where true good lies but He has also

placed this good at one's finger tips. Allah, the Exalted, has informed mankind of where an eternal buried treasure is located which can solve all the problems they may encounter in both worlds. But muslims will only obtain this good once they struggle to acquire and act on it.

“...Thus does Allāh present examples.”

A person will only benefit from this examples when they gain and act on Islamic knowledge.

A great distraction which prevents one from submitting to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, is ignorance. It can be argued that it is the origin of every sin as the one who truly knows the consequences of sins would never commit them. This refers to true beneficial knowledge which is knowledge that is acted upon. In reality, all knowledge which is not acted on is not beneficial knowledge. The example of the one who behaves in this manner is described in the Holy Quran as a donkey which carries books of knowledge which do not benefit it. Chapter 62 Al Jumu'ah, verse 5:

“...and then did not take it on (did not act upon knowledge) is like that of a donkey who carries volumes [of books]...”

A person who acts on their knowledge rarely slips up and commits sins intentionally. In fact, when this occurs it is only caused by a moment of ignorance where a person forgets to act on their knowledge which results in them sinning.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, once highlighted the seriousness of ignorance in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2322. He declared that everything in the material world is cursed except for the remembrance of Allah, the Exalted, whatever is connected to this remembrance, the scholar and the student of knowledge. This means that all the blessings in the material world will become a curse for the one who is ignorant as they will misuse them thereby committing sins.

In fact, ignorance can be considered a person's worse enemy as it prevents them from protecting themselves from harm and gaining benefit all of which can only be achieved through acting on knowledge. The ignorant commits sins without being aware of them. How can one avoid a sin if they do not know what is considered a sin? Ignorance causes one to neglect their obligatory duties. How can one fulfil their duties if they are unaware of what their duties are?

It is therefore a duty on all Muslims to gain enough knowledge to fulfil all their obligatory duties and avoid sins. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224.

Parable 17

Chapter 14 – Ibrahim, Verse 18

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ كَرَمَادٍ اشْتَدَّتْ بِهِ الرِّيحُ فِي يَوْمٍ
عَاصِفٍ لَا يَقْدِرُونَ مِمَّا كَسَبُوا عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ هُوَ الضَّلَالُ الْبَعِيدُ



“The example of those who disbelieve in their Lord is [that] their deeds are like ashes which the wind blows forcefully on a stormy day; they are unable [to keep] from what they earned a [single] thing. That is what is extreme error.”

“The example of those who disbelieve in their Lord is [that] their deeds are like ashes which the wind blows forcefully on a stormy day; they are unable [to keep] from what they earned a [single] thing. That is what is extreme error.”

This means that no matter what they obtain in this world the fruits of their labour will never lead them to peace and real success.

It is important for muslims to strive in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience as Allah, the Exalted, has guaranteed a good life in both worlds for the one who behaves in this manner. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

“Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do.”

This good life will protect a muslim from severe grief, depression and other extreme moods and mental disorders which can destroy a person's life. Even though, muslims will face difficulties which will sadden them but if they obey Allah, the Exalted, this sadness will never become extreme and effect their entire life on a long term basis. This is because a muslim who

strives in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, has an excellent reason to continue moving forward through their difficulty without giving up and turning to depression and even suicide. For example, they look forward to the countless reward which will be granted to the patient. Chapter 39 Az Zumar, verse 10:

“...Indeed, the patient will be given their reward without account [i.e., limit].”

Whereas, the muslim who does not strive in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, and only claims the title of being a muslim with their tongue will not be granted this attitude and a good life. And whenever they face difficulties it will drive them to extreme moods and mental disorders which will destroy their entire life.

“The example of those who disbelieve in their Lord is [that] their deeds are like ashes which the wind blows forcefully on a stormy day; they are unable [to keep] from what they earned a [single] thing. That is what is extreme error.”

This means that no matter what they obtain in this world the fruits of their labour will never lead them to peace and real success.

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2465, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that whoever prioritises the hereafter over this material world will be granted contentment, their affairs will be corrected for them and they will receive their destined provision in an easy way.

This half of the Hadith means that whoever correctly fulfils their duties in respect to Allah, the Exalted, and to the creation, such as providing for their family in a lawful manner while avoiding the excess of this material world will be granted contentment. This is when one is pleased with what they possess without being greedy and actively striving to obtain more worldly things. In reality, the one who is content with what they possess is a truly rich person even if they possess little wealth as they become independent of things. Independence of anything makes one rich in respect to it.

In addition, this attitude will allow one to comfortably deal with any worldly issues which may arise during their life. This is because the less one interacts with the material world and focuses on the hereafter the less worldly issues they will face. The less worldly issues a person faces the more comfortable their life will become. For example, the one who possesses one house will have fewer issues to deal with in respect to it, such as a broken cooker, than the one who possesses ten houses. Finally, this person will easily and pleasantly obtain their lawful provision. Not only this but Allah, the Exalted, will place such grace in their provision that it will cover all their responsibilities and necessities meaning, it will satisfy them and their dependents.

But as mentioned in the other half of this Hadith the one who prioritises the material world over the hereafter meaning, by neglecting their duties or striving for the unnecessary and excess of this material world will find that their need, meaning greed, for worldly things is never satisfied which by definition makes them poor even if they possess much wealth. These people will go from one worldly issue to another throughout the day failing to achieve contentment as they have opened too many worldly doors. And they will receive their destined provision with difficulty and it will not give them satisfaction and never seem enough to fill their greed. This may even push them towards the unlawful which only leads to a loss in both worlds.

“The example of those who disbelieve in their Lord is [that] their deeds are like ashes which the wind blows forcefully on a stormy day; they are unable [to keep] from what they earned a [single] thing. That is what is extreme error.”

This means that no matter what they obtain in this world the fruits of their labour will never lead them to peace and real success.

Those who disbelieve or avoid acting on their faith in Islam do so out of love for the material world and the things within it. They believe that believing or acting on their faith will prevent them from enjoying worldly blessings meaning, for them faith is something that restricts their desires and therefore they turn away from it either literally or practically. Instead they turn towards the material world and strive to fulfill their desires without restrictions believing that true peace lies in this. They look down at those who accept and actualize their faith by controlling their actions and using their worldly blessings in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. They believe that these pious Muslims are lowly slaves who been restricted from enjoying themselves whereas they, the disbelievers and the misguided, are free. But in actual fact this could not be further from the truth as the real slaves are those who fail to accept and submit to Allah, the Exalted, and the superior ones are those who have done this as they become free of slavery to the world. This can be understood by an example. A good parent will restrict the type of food their child eats meaning, they will only let them eat junk and unhealthy food once in a while and instead force them to follow a healthy diet. This child therefore believes that their parent has placed undesirable restrictions on them and that they have become slaves to their parent and their healthy diet. On the other hand another child has been given permission from their parent to eat whatever they desire,

whenever they desire and how much they desire. So this child believes that they are completely free of all restrictions. When these children come together the child who has been given complete freedom criticizes and looks down on the child who has been restricted by their parent. The latter child will also feel sorry for themselves when they observe the other child has been given free reign to behave however they wish. Outwardly it appears the child who has been granted freedom has obtained happiness whereas the other child is too tied up with restrictions to enjoy life. But years down the line the truth will become manifest. The child who had no restrictions grows up to become extremely unhealthy e.g. obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, etc. As a result of this they even become mentally unhealthy as they lose confidence in their body and the way they look. Because of this they become a slave of medications, diseases, mental and social problems. All these things restrict their happiness and life. Whereas, the child who was restricted by their parent grows up healthy in mind and body. As a result they become confident in their body and ability, which aids them to succeed in life. They become free of any slavery to medications, diseases, mental and social problems as they grew up with the correct balance and guidance. So the child who had no restrictions grew up becoming a slave to many things, whereas the child who had restrictions grew up independent of all restrictions.

To conclude, the real slave is the one who becomes a slave to all other things except Allah, the Exalted, such as social media, society, fashion and culture, and this leads to mental, physical and social problems, whereas the real free person is the one who submits only to Allah, the Exalted, thereby achieving peace of mind and body.

“The example of those who disbelieve in their Lord is [that] their deeds are like ashes which the wind blows forcefully on a stormy day; they are unable [to keep] from what they earned a [single] thing. That is what is extreme error.”

This means that no matter what they obtain in this world the fruits of their labour will never lead them to peace and real success.

Disbelief can be a literal rejecting of Islam or through actions, which involves disobeying Allah, the Exalted, even though one believes in Him. This can be clearly understood by an example. If an unaware person is warned by another of an approaching lion and the unaware person takes practical steps to obtain safety they will be considered someone who believed in the warning given to them as they adapted their behaviour based on the warning. Whereas, if the unaware person does not practically change their behaviour after being warned, people will suspect that they do not believe in the warning given to them even if the unaware person verbally claims belief in the warning given to them.

Some people claim that their belief and obedience to their God is in their hearts and they therefore do not need to demonstrate it practically. Unfortunately, this foolish mentality has infected many Muslims who believe they possess a pure faithful heart even though they fail to fulfil the obligatory duties of Islam. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has clearly declared in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3984, that when one's heart is pure the body becomes pure which means their actions become correct. But if one's heart is corrupt the

body becomes corrupt which means their actions will be corrupt and incorrect. Therefore, the one who does not obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling their duties practically can never have a pure heart.

In addition, demonstrating one's faith in Allah, the Exalted, practically is their proof and evidence which is required on Judgment Day in order to be granted Paradise. Not having this practical evidence is as silly as a student who hands back a blank exam paper to their teacher claiming their knowledge is in their mind so they therefore do not need to write it down by answering the exam questions. The same way this student would undoubtedly fail so will a person who reaches Judgment Day without the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in the form of fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience, even if they possess faith in their heart.

“The example of those who disbelieve in their Lord is [that] their deeds are like ashes which the wind blows forcefully on a stormy day; they are unable [to keep] from what they earned a [single] thing. That is what is extreme error.”

This occurs when one fails to use the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted.

In reality, in most cases nothing in this material world in itself is good or bad, such as wealth. What makes a thing good or bad is the way it is used. It is important to understand that the very purpose of everything which was created by Allah, the Exalted, was for it to be used correctly according to the teachings of Islam. When something is not used correctly it in reality becomes useless. For example, wealth is useful in both worlds when it is used correctly such as being spent on the necessities of a person and their dependents. But it can become useless and even a curse for its bearer if it is not used correctly, such as being hoarded or spent on sinful things. Simply hoarding wealth causes wealth to lose value. How can paper and metal coins one tucks away be useful? In this respect, there is no difference between a blank piece of paper and a note of money. It is only useful when it is used correctly.

So if a muslim desires all their worldly possessions to become a blessing for them in both worlds all they have to do is use them correctly according to the teachings found in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. But if they use

them incorrectly then the same blessing will become a burden and curse for them in both worlds. It is as simple as that.

“The example of those who disbelieve in their Lord is [that] their deeds are like ashes which the wind blows forcefully on a stormy day; they are unable [to keep] from what they earned a [single] thing. That is what is extreme error.”

This occurs when one fails to use the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. One can adopt this correct attitude when they understand the purpose of these blessings.

Every worldly blessing a muslim possesses is only a means which should aid them in reaching the hereafter safely. It is not an end in itself. For example, wealth is a means one should use in order to obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, fulfilling their necessities and the necessities of their dependents. It is not an end or an ultimate goal in itself.

This not only aids a muslim in maintaining their focus on the hereafter but it also aids them whenever they lose worldly blessings. When a muslim treats each worldly blessing, such as a child, as a means to please Allah, the Exalted, and reach the hereafter safely then losing it will not have such a detrimental impact on them. They may become sad, which is an acceptable emotion, but they will not become grieved which leads to impatience and other mental problems, such as depression. This is because they firmly believe the worldly blessing they possessed was only a means so losing it does not cause a loss in the ultimate goal namely, Paradise, the loss of which is disastrous. Therefore, still possessing and concentrating on the ultimate goal will prevent them from becoming grieved.

In addition, they will understand that just like the thing they lost was only a means they firmly believe they will be provided with another means to reach and fulfil their ultimate goal by Allah, the Exalted. This will also prevent them from grieving. Whereas, the one who believes their worldly blessing is the end instead of a means will experience severe grief when losing it as their whole purpose and objective has been lost. This grief will lead to depression and other mental issues.

To conclude, muslims should treat each blessing they possess as a means to reach the hereafter safely not as an end in itself. This is how one can possess things without being possessed by them. This is how they can keep worldly things in their hands and not in their hearts.

Parables 18 & 19

Chapter 14 – Ibrahim, Verses 24-27

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا كَلِمَةً طَيِّبَةً كَشَجَرَةٍ طَيِّبَةٍ أَصْلُهَا
ثَابِتٌ وَفُرْعُهَا فِي السَّمَاءِ ﴿٢٤﴾

تُؤْتِي أُكْلَهَا كُلَّ حِينٍ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهَا وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ
يَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾

وَمَثَلُ كَلِمَةٍ خَبِيثَةٍ كَشَجَرَةٍ خَبِيثَةٍ اجْتُثَّتْ مِنْ فَوْقِ الْأَرْضِ مَا لَهَا مِنْ
قَرَارٍ ﴿٢٦﴾

يُثَبِّتُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا بِالْقَوْلِ الثَّابِتِ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي
الْآخِرَةِ وَيُضِلُّ اللَّهُ الظَّالِمِينَ وَيَفْعَلُ اللَّهُ مَا يَشَاءُ ﴿٢٧﴾

“Have you not considered how Allah presents an example, [making] a good word like a good tree, whose root is firmly fixed and its branches [high] in the sky?”

It produces its fruit all the time, by permission of its Lord. And Allah presents examples for the people that perhaps they will be reminded.

And the example of a bad word is like a bad tree, uprooted from the surface of the earth, not having any stability.

Allah keeps firm those who believe, with the firm word, in worldly life and in the Hereafter. And Allah sends astray the wrongdoers. And Allah does what He wills.”

“Have you not considered how Allah presents an example...And Allah presents examples for the people that perhaps they will be reminded...”

A great distraction which prevents one from submitting to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, is ignorance. It can be argued that it is the origin of every sin as the one who truly knows the consequences of sins would never commit them. This refers to true beneficial knowledge which is knowledge that is acted upon. In reality, all knowledge which is not acted on is not beneficial knowledge. The example of the one who behaves in this manner is described in the Holy Quran as a donkey which carries books of knowledge which do not benefit it. Chapter 62 Al Jumu'ah, verse 5:

“...and then did not take it on (did not act upon knowledge) is like that of a donkey who carries volumes [of books]...”

A person who acts on their knowledge rarely slips up and commits sins intentionally. In fact, when this occurs it is only caused by a moment of ignorance where a person forgets to act on their knowledge which results in them sinning.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, once highlighted the seriousness of ignorance in a Hadith found in Jami At

Tirmidhi, number 2322. He declared that everything in the material world is cursed except for the remembrance of Allah, the Exalted, whatever is connected to this remembrance, the scholar and the student of knowledge. This means that all the blessings in the material world will become a curse for the one who is ignorant as they will misuse them thereby committing sins.

In fact, ignorance can be considered a person's worse enemy as it prevents them from protecting themselves from harm and gaining benefit all of which can only be achieved through acting on knowledge. The ignorant commits sins without being aware of them. How can one avoid a sin if they do not know what is considered a sin? Ignorance causes one to neglect their obligatory duties. How can one fulfil their duties if they are unaware of what their duties are?

It is therefore a duty on all Muslims to gain enough knowledge to fulfil all their obligatory duties and avoid sins. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224.

“Have you not considered how Allāh presents an example, [making] a good word like a good tree, whose root is firmly fixed and its branches [high] in the sky? It produces its fruit all the time, by permission of its Lord...”

The good word represents the Islamic testimony of faith and the good tree represents a believer. As indicated by these verses, when this testimony is actualized by a muslim then they will benefit themselves and others in both worlds.

There are many Hadiths of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, which advise mankind that whoever testifies that there is none worthy of worship except Allah, the Exalted, and that the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, is the servant and final messenger of Allah, the Exalted, will be saved from the fire of Hell. One such example is found in Sahih Bukhari, number 128.

The meaning of these Hadiths is that whoever dies while believing in this testimony will either enter Paradise and escape Hell or they will enter Hell to the extent of their sins and then eventually be allowed into Paradise where they will dwell forever. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 7510.

It is important to note, that those who desire to enter Paradise without entering Hell first must not only declare their belief in Islam verbally but they must also fulfil its conditions and obligations. The testimony of faith is undoubtedly the key to Paradise but a key needs teeth in order to unlock a specific door. The teeth of the key to Paradise are its obligations and duties. Without them meaning, the key without its teeth, will not open the door to Paradise. This is proven through many Hadiths which indicate entry into Paradise requires one to fulfil the conditions and duties of Islam. For example, a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1397, indicates that the testimony must be supported by actions in the form of the pillars of Islam, such as establishing the obligatory prayers.

The first part of the testimony namely, there is none worthy of worship save Allah, the Exalted, means that Allah, the Exalted, is the only One who must be obeyed and never disobeyed. When one accepts Allah, the Exalted, as their God they must not obey anything which leads to His disobedience as Allah, the Exalted, alone is their Master and they are only His slaves. But the moment one obeys anything which leads to the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted, then they have corrupted their belief in His Oneness which has been indicated in chapter 45 Al Jathiyah, verse 23:

“Have you seen he who has taken as his god his [own] desire...”

The Holy Quran has warned muslims that whoever commits sins is in reality worshipping the Devil as they have obeyed him over the obedience of Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 36 Yaseen, verse 60:

“Did I not enjoin upon you, O children of Adam, that you not worship Satan - [for] indeed, he is to you a clear enemy.”

The muslims who reject their desires, the desires of others and the commands of the Devil and instead only obey Allah, the Exalted, have truly taken Allah, the Exalted, as their God. These muslims have been granted the protection of Allah, the Exalted, in both worlds. These muslims have practically actualised the testimony of Islam as they supported their verbal and internal claim with sincere actions according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. When one acts according to his traditions they have fulfilled the second aspect of the testimony namely, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, is the servant and final messenger of Allah, the Exalted. These muslims are the ones referred to in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 128. It advises they will be saved from the Hellfire by Allah, the Exalted.

The person who declares Islam with the tongue and internally accepts it is undoubtedly a muslim but their true sincere belief in the Oneness of Allah, the Exalted, is diminished according to their sins.

An aspect of truly acting on the testimony is sincerely loving Allah, the Exalted. In fact, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has indicated this in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud,

number 4681. It advises that this is an aspect of perfecting one's faith. This is when one loves what Allah, the Exalted, loves and hates what He hates. As this was the characteristic of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, according to a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 2333, muslims have been commanded to follow him. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 31:

“Say, [O Muhammad], “If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins...”

It is clear from Islamic teachings that loving what Allah, the Exalted, hates and disliking what Allah, the Exalted, loves is a clear indication of a person following their own desires and obeying them over Allah, the Exalted. This attitude reduces one's belief in the Oneness of Allah, the Exalted. The following verse makes it clear that adopting this mentality is a deviation from true belief in the testimony of Islam. Chapter 9 At Tawbah, verse 24:

“Say, [O Muhammad], “If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your wives, your relatives, wealth which you have obtained, commerce wherein you fear decline, and dwellings with which you are pleased are more beloved to you than Allah and His Messenger and striving in His cause, then wait until Allah executes His command. And Allah does not guide the defiantly disobedient people.””

The one who worships Allah, the Exalted, according to their own desires worships Him on the edge. Meaning, when they face times of ease they become pleased but when they encounter difficulties they turn away from His obedience in anger. Chapter 22 Al Hajj, verse 11:

“And of the people is he who worships Allah on an edge. If he is touched by good, he is reassured by it; but if he is struck by trial, he turns on his face [to unbelief]. He has lost [this] world and the Hereafter. That is what is the manifest loss.”

A Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6502, informs muslims how to correctly believe and act on the testimony of faith, which prevents one being harmed by the fire of Hell in the next world. This is to first complete the obligatory duties correctly while fulfilling all their conditions and etiquettes. Then one must add to this by performing voluntary righteous deeds, the best of which are the established traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This leads to the love of Allah, the Exalted, and causes Allah, the Exalted, to empower every organ of their body so that they only obey Him. This true and sincere obedience is the fulfilment of the testimony of faith. This is the sound heart which contains only the love of Allah, the Exalted, and is free of worldly desires and the love of the material world. Chapter 26 Ash Shu'ara, verses 88-89:

“The Day when there will not benefit [anyone] wealth or children. But only one who comes to Allah with a sound heart.”

It is important to note, this does not mean a muslim becomes free from committing sins but it means they sincerely repent from them whenever they are rarely committed.

To conclude, it is vital for muslims to not only declare the testimony of Islam internally and verbally but they must also show it in their actions as this is the only way to achieve true success in this world and completely escape punishment in the next world also.

“Have you not considered how Allāh presents an example, [making] a good word like a good tree, whose root is firmly fixed and its branches [high] in the sky? It produces its fruit all the time, by permission of its Lord...”

The good word represents the Islamic testimony of faith and the good tree represents a believer. As indicated by these verses, when this testimony is actualized by a muslim then they will benefit themselves and others in both worlds. The deep and firm roots of the tree represent certainty of faith.

All muslims have faith in Islam but the strength of their faith varies from person to person. For example, the one who follows the teachings of Islam because their family told them to is not the same as the one who believes in it through evidence. A person who has heard about something will not believe in it in the same way as the one who has witnessed the thing with their own eyes.

As confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224, gaining useful knowledge is a duty on all muslims. One of the reasons for this is that it is the best way a muslim can strengthen their faith in Islam. This is important to pursue as the stronger one's certainty of faith the greater the chance they will remain steadfast on the correct path, especially when facing difficulties. In addition, having certainty of faith has been described as one of the best things one can possess in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3849. This knowledge should be obtained by studying the Holy Quran and the Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, through a reliable source.

Allah, the Exalted, did not only declare a truth in the Holy Quran but He also provided evidence for it through examples. Not only examples which are to be found in the past nations but examples which have been placed in one's very own life. For example, in the Holy Quran Allah, the Exalted, advises that sometimes a person loves a thing even though it will cause them trouble if they obtained it. Similarly, they might hate a thing while there is much hidden good in it for them. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

There are many examples of this truth in history such as the Pact of Hudaiba. Some muslims believed this pact, which was made with the non-muslims of Mecca, would completely favour the latter group. Yet, history clearly shows that it favoured Islam and the muslims. This event is discussed in the Hadiths found in Sahih Bukhari, numbers 2731 and 2732.

If one reflects on their own life they will find many examples when they believed something was good when it was actually bad for them and vice versa. These examples prove the authenticity of this verse and help one's faith strengthen.

Another example is found in chapter 79 An Naziat, verse 46:

“It will be, on the Day they see it (Judgement Day) as though they had not remained [in the world] except for an afternoon or a morning thereof.”

If one turns the pages of history they will clearly observe how great empires came and went. But when they left they passed away in such a way as if they were only on Earth for a moment. All but a few of their signs have faded away as if they were never present on Earth in the first place. Similarly, when one reflects on their own life they will realise that no matter how old they are and no matter how slow certain days might have felt overall their life so far has passed in a flash. Understanding the truthfulness of this verse strengthens one's certainty of faith and this inspires them to prepare for the hereafter before their time runs out.

The Holy Quran and the Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, are full of such examples. Therefore, one should strive to learn and act on these divine teachings so that they adopt certainty of faith. The one who achieves this will not be shaken by any difficulty they face and will remain steadfast on the path which leads to the gates of Paradise. Chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 53:

“We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth...”

“Have you not considered how Allāh presents an example, [making] a good word like a good tree, whose root is firmly fixed and its branches [high] in the sky? It produces its fruit all the time, by permission of its Lord...”

The good word represents the Islamic testimony of faith and the good tree represents a believer. As indicated by these verses, when this testimony is actualized by a muslim then they will benefit themselves and others in both worlds. The high branches represent having high aspirations and aims. This is achieved when one adopts the correct perception so that they are encouraged to aim beyond this material world.

In a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4108, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that the material world compared to the hereafter is like a drop of water compared to an ocean.

In reality, this parable was given in order for people to understand how small the material world is compared to the hereafter. But in reality they cannot be compared as the material world is temporal whereas the hereafter is eternal. Meaning, the limited cannot be compared to the unlimited. The material world can be split into four categories: fame, fortune, authority and one's social life, such as their family and friends. No matter what worldly blessing one obtains which falls within these groups it will always be imperfect, transient and death will cut a person off from the blessing. On the other hand, the blessings in the hereafter are lasting and

perfect. So in this respect the material world is no more than a drop compared to an endless ocean.

In addition, a person is not guaranteed to experience a long life in this world as the time of death is unknown. Whereas, everyone is guaranteed to experience death and reach the hereafter. So it is foolish to strive for a day, such as one's retirement, which they may never reach over striving for the hereafter which they are guaranteed to reach.

This does not mean one should abandon the world as it is a bridge which must be crossed in order to reach the hereafter safely. Instead, a muslim should take from this material world enough to fulfill their necessities and the necessities of their dependents according to the teachings of Islam without waste, excessiveness or extravagance. And then dedicate the rest of their efforts in preparing for the eternal hereafter by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the teachings of Islam.

An intelligent person will not prioritize the drop of water over an endless ocean and an intelligent muslim would not prioritize the temporal material world over the eternal hereafter.

“Have you not considered how Allāh presents an example, [making] a good word like a good tree, whose root is firmly fixed and its branches [high] in the sky? It produces its fruit all the time, by permission of its Lord...”

The good word represents the Islamic testimony of faith and the good tree represents a believer. As indicated by these verses, when this testimony is actualized by a muslim then they will benefit themselves and others in both worlds. The final part of these verses remind muslims to remain humble at all times.

A muslim must understand that their righteous deeds are a blessing from Allah, the Exalted, as the inspiration, knowledge, strength and opportunity to perform them comes from Allah, the Exalted. Therefore, muslims will only enter Paradise through the mercy of Allah, the Exalted. Understanding this fact prevents the deadly characteristic of pride. An atom's worth of which is enough to take one to Hell. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 266.

The servants of Allah, the Exalted, have understood that anything good they possess is solely because Allah, the Exalted, granted it to them. And any evil they are saved from is because Allah, the Exalted, protected them. Is it not foolish to be proud of something that does not belong to someone? Just like a person does not boast about a sports car which does not belong to them muslims must realize nothing in reality belongs to them. This attitude ensures one remains humble at all times. The humble servants of Allah, the Exalted, fully believe in the Hadith of the Holy Prophet

Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, found in Sahih Bukhari, number 5673, which declares that the righteous deeds of a person will not take them to Paradise. Only the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, can cause this to occur. This is because every righteous deed is only possible when Allah, the Exalted, provides one with the knowledge, strength, opportunity and inspiration to perform it. Even the acceptance of the deed is dependent on the mercy of Allah, the Exalted. When one bears this in mind it saves them from pride and inspires them to adopt humility. One should always remember that being humble is not a sign of weakness as Islam has encouraged one to defend themselves if necessary. In other words, Islam teaches Muslims to be humble without weakness. In fact, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2029, that whoever humbles themselves before Allah, the Exalted, will be raised by Him. So in reality, humility leads to honor in both worlds. One only needs to reflect on the most humble of the creation to understand this fact namely, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Allah, the Exalted, has clearly ordered people by ordering the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, to adopt this important quality. Chapter 26 Ash Shu'ara, verse 215:

“And lower your wing [i.e., show kindness] to those who follow you of the believers.”

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, led a humble life. For example, he happily carried out the domestic duties at home thereby proving these chores are gender-neutral. This is confirmed in Imam Bukhari's, Adab Al Mufrad, number 538.

Chapter 25 Al Furqan, verse 63, shows that humility is an inner characteristic that manifests outwards such as the way one walks. This is discussed in another verse chapter 31 Luqman, verse 18:

“And do not turn your cheek [in contempt] toward people and do not walk through the earth exultantly...”

Allah, the Exalted, has made it clear that Paradise is for the humble servants who possess no trace of pride. Chapter 28 Al Qasas, verse 83:

“That home of the Hereafter We assign to those who do not desire exaltedness upon the earth or corruption. And the [best] outcome is for the righteous.”

In fact, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1998, that whoever possesses an atom's worth of pride will not enter Paradise. Only Allah, the Exalted, has the right to be proud as He is the Creator, Sustainer and Owner of the entire universe.

It is important to note, pride is when one believes they are superior to others and rejects the truth when it is presented to them as they dislike accepting the truth when it comes from other than them. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4092.

“And the example of a bad word is like a bad tree, uprooted from the surface of the earth, not having any stability.”

This represents the one who does not possess the Islamic testimony of faith or fails to actualize it. Their weak faith is easily shaken by difficulties which in turn leads to the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted.

A great obstacle to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, is weakness of faith. It is a blameworthy characteristic which gives rise to other negative characteristics, such as failing to act on one's knowledge, fearing others, placing the obedience of people above the obedience to Allah, the Exalted, having hope in forgiveness without striving for it and other undesired characteristics. The greatest affliction of weakness of faith is that it allows one to commit sins, such as neglecting the obligatory duties. The root cause of weakness of faith is ignorance of Islam.

One should strive to gain knowledge in order to strengthen their faith. With time they will eventually reach certainty of faith which is so strong that it safeguards a person through all tests and trials and ensures they fulfil their duties both religious and worldly. This knowledge is obtained when one studies the teachings of the Holy Quran and the Hadiths of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Specifically, those teachings which discuss the promises of reward for those who are obedient and the punishment for those who are disobedient to Allah, the Exalted. This creates fear of punishment and hope of reward in a muslim's heart which acts like a pull and push mechanism towards the obedience of Allah, the Exalted.

One can strengthen their faith by reflecting on the creations within the Heavens and the Earth. When done correctly this clearly indicates the Oneness of Allah, the Exalted, and His infinite power. Chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 53:

“We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth...”

For example, if a muslim ponders over the night and day and how perfectly in sync they are and the other things linked to them they will truly believe that this is not a random thing meaning, there is a force which ensures everything runs like clockwork. This is the infinite power of Allah, the Exalted. In addition, if one ponders over the perfect timing of the night and day they will realise it clearly indicates that there is only one God namely, Allah, the Exalted. If there were more than one God each god would desire the night and day to occur according to their own desires. This would lead to utter chaos as one God might desire the Sun to rise whereas the other God might desire the night to continue. The perfect uninterrupted system found within the universe proves there is only one God namely, Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 21 Al Anbiya, verse 22:

“Had there been within them [i.e., the heavens and earth] gods besides Allah, they both would have been ruined...”

Another thing which can strengthen one's faith is to persist in righteous deeds and abstain from all sins. As faith is belief supported by actions it weakens when sins are committed and strengthens when good deeds are performed. For example, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, once warned in a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 5662, that a muslim is not a believer when they drink alcohol.

“And the example of a bad word is like a bad tree, uprooted from the surface of the earth, not having any stability.”

This represents the one who does not possess the Islamic testimony of faith or fails to actualize it. Their weak faith is easily shaken by difficulties which in turn leads to the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted. This leads to a general instability in one's mental and physical state.

It is important for muslims to strive in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience as Allah, the Exalted, has guaranteed a good life in both worlds for the one who behaves in this manner. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

“Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do.”

This good life will protect a muslim from severe grief, depression and other extreme moods and mental disorders which can destroy a person's life. Even though, muslims will face difficulties which will sadden them but if they obey Allah, the Exalted, this sadness will never become extreme and effect their entire life on a long term basis. This is because a muslim who

strives in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, has an excellent reason to continue moving forward through their difficulty without giving up and turning to depression and even suicide. For example, they look forward to the countless reward which will be granted to the patient. Chapter 39 Az Zumar, verse 10:

“...Indeed, the patient will be given their reward without account [i.e., limit].”

Whereas, the muslim who does not strive in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, and only claims the title of being a muslim with their tongue will not be granted this attitude and a good life. And whenever they face difficulties it will drive them to extreme moods and mental disorders which will destroy their entire life.

“And the example of a bad word is like a bad tree, uprooted from the surface of the earth, not having any stability.”

This represents the one who does not possess the Islamic testimony of faith or fails to actualize it. Their weak faith is easily shaken by difficulties which in turn leads to the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted. This leads to a general instability in one's mental and physical state.

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2465, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that whoever prioritises the hereafter over this material world will be granted contentment, their affairs will be corrected for them and they will receive their destined provision in an easy way.

This half of the Hadith means that whoever correctly fulfils their duties in respect to Allah, the Exalted, and to the creation, such as providing for their family in a lawful manner while avoiding the excess of this material world will be granted contentment. This is when one is pleased with what they possess without being greedy and actively striving to obtain more worldly things. In reality, the one who is content with what they possess is a truly rich person even if they possess little wealth as they become independent of things. Independence of anything makes one rich in respect to it.

In addition, this attitude will allow one to comfortably deal with any worldly issues which may arise during their life. This is because the less one interacts with the material world and focuses on the hereafter the less worldly issues they will face. The less worldly issues a person faces the more comfortable their life will become. For example, the one who possesses one house will have fewer issues to deal with in respect to it, such as a broken cooker, than the one who possesses ten houses. Finally, this person will easily and pleasantly obtain their lawful provision. Not only this but Allah, the Exalted, will place such grace in their provision that it will cover all their responsibilities and necessities meaning, it will satisfy them and their dependents.

But as mentioned in the other half of this Hadith the one who prioritises the material world over the hereafter meaning, by neglecting their duties or striving for the unnecessary and excess of this material world will find that their need, meaning greed, for worldly things is never satisfied which by definition makes them poor even if they possess much wealth. These people will go from one worldly issue to another throughout the day failing to achieve contentment as they have opened too many worldly doors. And they will receive their destined provision with difficulty and it will not give them satisfaction and never seem enough to fill their greed. This may even push them towards the unlawful which only leads to a loss in both worlds.

“And the example of a bad word is like a bad tree, uprooted from the surface of the earth, not having any stability.”

This represents the one who does not possess the Islamic testimony of faith or fails to actualize it. Their weak faith is easily shaken by difficulties which in turn leads to the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted. This leads to a general instability in one's mental and physical state.

Disbelief can be a literal rejecting of Islam or through actions, which involves disobeying Allah, the Exalted, even though one believes in Him. This can be clearly understood by an example. If an unaware person is warned by another of an approaching lion and the unaware person takes practical steps to obtain safety they will be considered someone who believed in the warning given to them as they adapted their behaviour based on the warning. Whereas, if the unaware person does not practically change their behaviour after being warned, people will suspect that they do not believe in the warning given to them even if the unaware person verbally claims belief in the warning given to them.

Some people claim that their belief and obedience to their God is in their hearts and they therefore do not need to demonstrate it practically. Unfortunately, this foolish mentality has infected many Muslims who believe they possess a pure faithful heart even though they fail to fulfil the obligatory duties of Islam. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has clearly declared in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3984, that when one's heart is pure the body becomes pure which means their actions become correct. But if one's heart is corrupt the

body becomes corrupt which means their actions will be corrupt and incorrect. Therefore, the one who does not obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling their duties practically can never have a pure heart.

In addition, demonstrating one's faith in Allah, the Exalted, practically is their proof and evidence which is required on Judgment Day in order to be granted Paradise. Not having this practical evidence is as silly as a student who hands back a blank exam paper to their teacher claiming their knowledge is in their mind so they therefore do not need to write it down by answering the exam questions. The same way this student would undoubtedly fail so will a person who reaches Judgment Day without the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in the form of fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience, even if they possess faith in their heart.

“And the example of a bad word is like a bad tree, uprooted from the surface of the earth, not having any stability.”

This represents the one who does not possess the Islamic testimony of faith or fails to actualize it. Their weak faith is easily shaken by difficulties which in turn leads to the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted. This leads to a general instability in one's mental and physical state.

Those who disbelieve or avoid acting on their faith in Islam do so out of love for the material world and the things within it. They believe that believing or acting on their faith will prevent them from enjoying worldly blessings meaning, for them faith is something that restricts their desires and therefore they turn away from it either literally or practically. Instead they turn towards the material world and strive to fulfill their desires without restrictions believing that true peace lies in this. They look down at those who accept and actualize their faith by controlling their actions and using their worldly blessings in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. They believe that these pious Muslims are lowly slaves who been restricted from enjoying themselves whereas they, the disbelievers and the misguided, are free. But in actual fact this could not be further from the truth as the real slaves are those who fail to accept and submit to Allah, the Exalted, and the superior ones are those who have done this as they become free of slavery to the world. This can be understood by an example. A good parent will restrict the type of food their child eats meaning, they will only let them eat junk and unhealthy food once in a while and instead force them to follow a healthy diet. This child therefore believes that their parent has placed undesirable restrictions on them and that they have become slaves to their parent and their healthy diet. On the other hand another child has been given permission from their parent to eat whatever they desire,

whenever they desire and how much they desire. So this child believes that they are completely free of all restrictions. When these children come together the child who has been given complete freedom criticizes and looks down on the child who has been restricted by their parent. The latter child will also feel sorry for themselves when they observe the other child has been given free reign to behave however they wish. Outwardly it appears the child who has been granted freedom has obtained happiness whereas the other child is too tied up with restrictions to enjoy life. But years down the line the truth will become manifest. The child who had no restrictions grows up to become extremely unhealthy e.g. obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, etc. As a result of this they even become mentally unhealthy as they lose confidence in their body and the way they look. Because of this they become a slave of medications, diseases, mental and social problems. All these things restrict their happiness and life. Whereas, the child who was restricted by their parent grows up healthy in mind and body. As a result they become confident in their body and ability, which aids them to succeed in life. They become free of any slavery to medications, diseases, mental and social problems as they grew up with the correct balance and guidance. So the child who had no restrictions grew up becoming a slave to many things, whereas the child who had restrictions grew up independent of all restrictions.

To conclude, the real slave is the one who becomes a slave to all other things except Allah, the Exalted, such as social media, society, fashion and culture, and this leads to mental, physical and social problems, whereas the real free person is the one who submits only to Allah, the Exalted, thereby achieving peace of mind and body.

“Allāh keeps firm those who believe, with the firm word, in worldly life and in the Hereafter...”

True belief involves sincerity. In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim number 196, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that Islam is sincerity towards Allah, the Exalted.

Sincerity towards Allah, the Exalted, includes fulfilling all the duties given by Him in the form of commands and prohibitions, solely for His pleasure. As confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1, all will be judged by their intention. So if one is not sincere towards Allah, the Exalted, when performing good deeds they will gain no reward in this world or in the next. In fact, according to a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3154, those who performed insincere deeds will be told on Judgement Day to seek their reward from those who they acted for, which will not be possible. Chapter 98 Al Bayyinah, verse 5.

"And they were not commanded except to worship Allah, [being] sincere to Him in religion....."

If one is lax in fulfilling their duties towards Allah, the Exalted, it proves a lack of sincerity. Therefore, they should sincerely repent and struggle to fulfil them all. It is important to bear in mind Allah, the Exalted, never

burdens one with duties they cannot perform or handle. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 286.

"Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity...."

Being sincere towards Allah, the Exalted, means that one should always choose His pleasure over the pleasure of themselves and others. A Muslim should always give priority to those actions which are for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, over all else. One should love others and dislike their sins for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, and not for the sake of their own desires. When they help others or refuse to take part in sins it should be for the sake of Allah, the Exalted. The one who adopts this mentality has perfected their faith. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4681.

“Allāh keeps firm those who believe, with the firm word, in worldly life and in the Hereafter...”

In a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 4998, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised the signs of a true muslim and a true believer. A true muslim is the one who keeps their verbal and physical harm away from others. This in fact, includes all people irrespective of their faith. It includes all types of verbal and physical sins which can cause harm or distress to another. This can include failing to give the best advice to others as this contradicts sincerity towards others which has been commanded in a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 4204. It includes advising others to disobey Allah, the Exalted, thereby, inviting them towards sins. A muslim should avoid this behavior as they will be taken account for every person who acts on their bad advice. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 2351.

Physical harm includes causing problems for other people's livelihood, committing fraud, conning others and physical abuse. All of these characteristics contradict Islamic teachings and must be avoided.

A true believer, according to the main Hadith under discussion, is the one who keeps their harm away from the lives and property of others. Again, this applies to all people irrespective of their faith. This includes stealing, misusing or damaging the property and belongings of others. Whenever one is entrusted with someone else's property they must ensure they only use it with the owner's permission and in a way which is pleasing and agreeable to the owner. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and

blessings be upon him, has warned in a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 5421, that whoever illegally takes someone else's property, through a false oath, even if it is as small as a twig of a tree will go to Hell.

To conclude a muslim must support their verbal declaration of belief with actions as they are the physical proof of one's belief which will be needed in order to obtain success on the Day of Judgment. In addition, a muslim should fulfill the characteristics of true belief in respect to Allah, the Exalted, and people. An excellent way of achieving this in respect to people is to simply treat others how they wish to be treated by people, which is with respect and peace.

“Allāh keeps firm those who believe, with the firm word, in worldly life and in the Hereafter...”

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 159, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, gave a short but far reaching piece of advice. He advised people to sincerely declare their belief in Allah, the Exalted, and then remain steadfast on it.

Remaining steadfast on one's faith means that they must strive in the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in all aspects of their life. It consists of fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, which relate to Him, such as the obligatory fasts and those which relate to people, such as treating others kindly. It includes refraining from all the prohibitions of Islam which are between a person and Allah, the Exalted, and those involving others. A muslim must also face destiny with patience truly believing Allah, the Exalted, chooses what is best for His servants. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

Steadfastness can include refraining from both types of polytheism. The major type is when one worships something other than Allah, the Exalted. The minor type is when one shows off their good deeds to others. This has

been warned in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3989. Therefore, an aspect of steadfastness is to always act for the sake of Allah, the Exalted.

It includes obeying Allah, the Exalted, at all times instead of obeying and pleasing oneself or others. If a Muslim disobeys Allah, the Exalted, by pleasing themselves or others they should know neither their desires nor people will protect them from Allah, the Exalted. On the other hand, the one who is sincerely obedient to Allah, the Exalted, will be protected from all things by Him even if this protection is not apparent to them.

Remaining steadfast on one's faith includes following the path set out by the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and not adopting a path which deviates from this. The one who strives to adopt this path will not need anything else as this is enough to keep them steadfast on their faith.

As people are not perfect they will undoubtedly make mistakes and commit sins. So being steadfast in matters of faith does not mean one has to be perfect but it means they must strive to adhere strictly to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, as outlined earlier, and to sincerely repent if they commit a sin. This has been indicated in chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 6:

“...so take a straight course to Him and seek His forgiveness...”

This is further supported by a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1987, which advises to fear Allah, the Exalted, and to erase a (minor) sin which has occurred by performing a righteous deed. In another Hadith found in Imam Malik's Muwatta, book 2, Hadith number 37, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised muslims to try their best to remain steadfast on the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, even though they will not be able to do it perfectly. Therefore, a muslim's duty is to fulfil the potential they have been given through their intention and physical actions in the steadfast obedience of Allah, the Exalted. They have not been commanded to achieve perfection as this is not possible.

It is important to note, that one cannot remain steadfast in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, through their physical actions without purifying their heart first. As indicated in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3984, the limbs of the body will only act in a pure way if the spiritual heart is pure. Purity of heart is only achieved by gaining and acting on the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

Steadfast obedience requires one to control their tongue as it expresses the heart. Without controlling the tongue steadfast obedience to Allah, the Exalted, is not possible. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2407.

Finally, if any deficiency in the steadfast obedience of Allah, the Exalted, occurs one must make sincere repentance to Allah, the Exalted, and seek the forgiveness of people if it involves their rights. Chapter 46 Al Ahqaf, verse 13:

“Indeed, those who have said, “Our Lord is Allah,” and then remained on a right course - there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve.”

“Allāh keeps firm those who believe, with the firm word, in worldly life and in the Hereafter...”

According to the Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3120, this verse indicates that Allah, the Exalted, will keep a muslim firm on their faith when they are questioned in their grave.

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3120, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that each person will be asked three questions in the grave.

The first question will be who is your Lord? In order to answer this question correctly a muslim must not only believe in Allah, the Exalted, but prove this belief through actions. This is only achieved by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing His decrees with patience. It is this very proof which will support a muslim in their grave when they encounter this question. It is important to note, that even some non-muslims believe in Allah, the Exalted, yet they will fail to answer this question correctly as they did not obey Him correctly during their lives. If only believing in Him was enough then these non-muslims would succeed in this question. But it is quite evident they will not succeed.

The next question will be what is your religion? If a muslim desires to answer this correctly they must not only believe in Islam but practically

implement its teachings in their everyday life. This involves sincerely striving to obtain and act on its teachings. It is the reason gaining useful knowledge has been made a duty on all muslims according to a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224.

The final question according to this Hadith will be who is your Prophet? It is important to note, that even some of the past nations believed in their Prophets, peace be upon them, but as they did not follow in their footsteps correctly they will fail in answering this question correctly. If a muslim desires to answer this question correctly they must not only verbally declare their belief in the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, but actively learn and act on his traditions. This is the very purpose of sending Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, meaning, to practically follow them. Chapter 33 Al Ahzab, verse 21:

“There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Last Day and [who] remembers Allah often.”

The mercy, love and forgiveness of Allah, the Exalted, which will help a muslim answer this question correctly is only possible to obtain through this method. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 31:

“Say, [O Muhammad], “If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins. And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.””

“Allāh keeps firm those who believe, with the firm word, in worldly life and in the Hereafter...”

This verse is connected to chapter 47 Muhammad, verse 7:

“O you who have believed, if you support Allah, He will support you and plant firmly your feet.”

This verse means that if one aids Islam then Allah, the Exalted, will help them in both worlds. It is strange how countless people desire the help of Allah, the Exalted, yet do not fulfil the first part of this verse through the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience. The excuse most people give is that they do not have time to perform righteous deeds. They desire the help of Allah, the Exalted, yet will not make time to do the things which please Him. Does this make sense? Those who do not fulfil the obligatory duties and then expect the aid of Allah, the Exalted, in their moment of need are quite foolish. And those who do fulfil the obligatory duties yet refuse to go beyond them will find that the aid they receive is limited. How one behaves is how they are treated. The more time and energy dedicated to Allah, the Exalted, the more support they will receive. It really is that simple.

A muslim needs to understand that the majority of the obligatory duties, such as the five daily prayers, only takes a small amount of time in one's day. A muslim cannot expect to barely dedicate an hour a day to offering the obligatory prayers and then neglect Allah, the Exalted, for the rest of the day and still expect His continuous support through all difficulties. A person would dislike a friend who treated them in such a manner. How then can one treat Allah, the Exalted, the Lord of the worlds, like this then?

Some only dedicate extra time to pleasing Allah, the Exalted, when they encounter a worldly problem then demand Him to fix it as if they done Allah, the Exalted, a favour by performing voluntary good deeds. This foolish mentality clearly contradicts servanthood to Allah, the Exalted. It is amazing how this type of person finds time to do all their other leisurely activities, such as spending time with family and friends, watching TV and attending social functions yet finds no time to dedicate to pleasing Allah, the Exalted. They cannot seem to find time to recite and adopt the teachings of the Holy Quran. They do not seem to find time to study and act on the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. These people somehow find wealth to spend on their unnecessary luxuries yet seem to find no wealth to donate in voluntary charity.

It is important to understand that a muslim will be treated according to how they behave. Meaning, if a Muslim dedicates extra time to please Allah, the Exalted, then they will find the support they need to journey through all difficulties safely. But if they fail to fulfil the obligatory duties or only fulfil them without dedicating any other time to pleasing Allah, the Exalted, then they will find a similar response from Allah, the Exalted. Put simply, the

more one gives the more they shall receive. If one does not give much they should not expect much in return.

“Allāh keeps firm those who believe, with the firm word, in worldly life and in the Hereafter...”

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 7232, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that people will be resurrected on Judgment Day in the same state they died on Earth.

This means that if a person dies on good they will be resurrected on good. But if they die on evil they will be raised in an evil way.

A muslim should not live in heedlessness by believing just because they have faith in Islam it guarantees they will die and therefore be raised in a good state on Judgment Day. If they persist on the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted, and then die in this state without sincerely repenting then they will be raised in an evil way. It does not take a scholar to determine what will happen to this person on Judgment Day.

From this Hadith one can understand that the way they will die will be in the same state they have lived. Meaning, if they lived in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by sincerely fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, then they will die in a good state and therefore be raised in a good state which includes being raised with the righteous as they practically followed in their

footsteps. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 3688.

A muslim should therefore not walk the path to Hell by disobeying Allah, the Exalted, and believe that they will somehow be raised with the pious and end up in Paradise.

“Allāh keeps firm those who believe, with the firm word, in worldly life and in the Hereafter...”

The trumpet blast will lead to the death of the creation. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 7381. The important thing to learn is that this is a call which no one can or will reject responding to. It will lead to the resurrection and final judgment. Therefore, muslims should respond to the call of Allah, the Exalted, through the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, through sincere obedience by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 8 An Anfal, verse 24:

“O you who have believed, respond to Allah and to the Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life...”

Whoever responds to this call in this world will find the final call easy to endure and respond to. Whereas, the one who lives heedless to the call of Allah, the Exalted, in this world will not find peace in it and they will be forced to answer the call of the trumpet which will be a great burden for them to endure and respond to. A person can only ignore the call of Allah, the Exalted, for so long as the final call will occur, sooner or later, and no one will be able to avoid or ignore it. If this is inevitable it makes sense that one respond to it now, today, instead of living in heedlessness. If one hears the trumpet blast while heedless no action or regret will benefit them and what comes after for this person will be even more terrifying.

“...And Allāh sends astray the wrongdoers...”

Allah, the Exalted, guides those who sincerely try to obey Him. But those who persistently disobey Him are left to wander blindly in misguidance. Therefore, it is vital for muslims to sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, as persistent disobedience leads to corruption of the spiritual heart and one's actions.

This is similar to a person who is warned by a judge not to behave in an unlawful way but after the person persists on this behaviour the judge gives the order for them to be locked up in prison. Therefore, Allah, the Exalted, has not wronged them they have only wronged themselves.

But it is important to note that as being abandoned in misguidance is a spiritual thing and therefore hidden to mankind, it is important for Muslims not to assume certain people have reached this point. Instead they should think positively about all people and therefore sincerely practically aid them in reforming their belief and behaviour.

Allah, the Exalted, has created human beings with the best possible capabilities. He gave them knowledge and power to differentiate between good and evil and even placed in them an innate inclination to like what is good and to dislike and avoid what is evil. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2389. Allah, the Exalted, has also

granted mankind free will to choose between good and evil. This choice plays a role in enhancing or diminishing a person's natural faculties of reason. Chapter 91 Ash Shams, verses 9-10:

“He has succeeded who purifies it [the spiritual heart – the greatest faculty of reason]. And he has failed who instills it [with corruption].”

When a person chooses a path of goodness their natural potential develops and Allah, the Exalted, grants them further support in their efforts. Chapter 29 Al Ankabut, verse 69:

“And those who strive for Us - We will surely guide them to Our ways...”

But if one follows their evil desires and chooses the evil path gradually their spiritual hearts will become engrossed with darkness and no good will remain therein. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3334. If a person fails to repent then the main verse under discussion comes into effect. This person becomes so engrossed in evil that they find joy in their evil mentality and actions. They absolutely hate anything good.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 52, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that if one's spiritual heart is sound the whole body will become sound but if their spiritual heart is corrupt then the whole body will become corrupt.

First of all, this Hadith refutes the foolish belief where one claims to have a purified heart even though their speech and actions are bad. This is because what is inside will eventually manifest outwardly.

The purification of the spiritual heart is only possible when one eliminates evil characteristics from themselves and replaces them with good characteristics discussed in Islamic teachings. This is only possible when one learns and acts on Islamic teachings so that they can sincerely fulfill the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refrain from His prohibitions and face destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Behaving in this manner will lead to a purified spiritual heart. This purification will then reflect in the outward limbs of the body, such as one's tongue and eyes. Meaning, they will only use their organs in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. This is in fact a sign showing the love Allah, the Exalted, has for His righteous servant according to a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6502.

It is important to note, that this purification will guide one through all worldly difficulties successfully so that they achieve both worldly and religious success.

“...And Allāh does what He wills.”

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, indicated the infinite and absolute power and authority of Allah, the Exalted, in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2516. This Hadith advises that the entire creation cannot benefit a person if Allah, the Exalted, did not desire them to do so. Similarly, the entire creation together could not harm someone if Allah, the Exalted, did not desire them to. This means only what Allah, the Exalted, decides happens within the universe. It is important to note, that this advice does not indicate one should abandon using means, such as medicine, but it means that one can use the means as they have been created by none other than Allah, the Exalted, but they must understand that Allah, the Exalted, is the only One who decides the outcome of all things. For example, there are many sick people who take medicine and recover from their illness. But there are others who take medicine and do not recover. This indicates that another factor decides the end result namely, the will of Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 9 At Tawbah, verse 51:

“Say, “Never will we be struck except by what Allah has decreed for us...”

The one who understands this knows that anything that affected them could not have been avoided. And those things which missed them could never have been obtained.

It is important to note, that whatever the end result even if it is against a person's desire they should remain patient and truly believe Allah, the Exalted, has chosen the best for them even if they do not observe the wisdom behind the outcome. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

When one truly understands this truth they stop relying on the creation knowing they cannot innately harm or benefit them. Instead, they turn to Allah, the Exalted, seeking His support and protection through sincere obedience by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience. This leads a muslim to trusting in Allah, the Exalted. It also encourages one to only fear Allah, the Exalted, as they know the creation cannot harm them without the will of Allah, the Exalted.

Recognising that all things which occur within one's life and the universe originate from Allah, the Exalted, is a part of understanding the Oneness of Allah, the Exalted. This is a topic which has no end and goes beyond only superficially believing that there is none worthy of worship except Allah, the Exalted. When this is fixed in one's heart then they only hope in Allah, the Exalted, knowing He is the only One who can help them. They will only submit and obey Allah, the Exalted, in all aspects of their life. In reality, a person only obeys another in order to receive protection from harm or gain some benefit. Only Allah, the Exalted, can grant this therefore only He deserves to be obeyed and worshipped. If anyone chooses the obedience of another over the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, this shows they believe

that this other can bring them some sort of benefit or protect them from harm. This is a sign of the weakness of their faith. The source of all things which occur is Allah, the Exalted, so muslims should only obey Him. Chapter 35 Fatir, verse 2:

“Whatever Allah grants to people of mercy - none can withhold it; and whatever He withholds - none can release it thereafter...”

It is important to note, that obeying a person which encourages the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in reality is obeying Allah, the Exalted. For example, obeying the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 80:

“He who obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah...”

Parables 20 & 21

Chapter 16 – An Nahl, Verses 75-76

❁ ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا عَبْدًا مَمْلُوكًا لَا يَقْدِرُ عَلَى شَيْءٍ وَمَنْ رَزَقْنَاهُ مِنَّا
رِزْقًا حَسَنًا فَهُوَ يُنْفِقُ مِنْهُ سِرًّا وَجَهْرًا هَلْ يَسْتَوُونَ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ بَلَّ
أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾

وَضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا رَجُلَيْنِ أَحَدُهُمَا أَبْكَمُ لَا يَقْدِرُ عَلَى شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ
كَلٌّ عَلَى مَوْلَاهُ أَيْنَمَا يُوَجِّههُ لَا يَأْتِ بِخَيْرٍ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي هُوَ وَمَنْ
يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَهُوَ عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٧٦﴾

“Allah presents an example: a slave [who is] owned and unable to do a thing and he to whom We have provided from Us good provision, so he spends from it secretly and publicly. Can they be equal? Praise to Allah! But most of them do not know.

And Allah presents an example of two men, one of them dumb and unable to do a thing, while he is a burden to his guardian. Wherever he directs him, he brings no good. Is he equal to one who commands justice, while he is on a straight path?”

“Allah presents an example...”

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2645, that when Allah, the Exalted, desires to give someone good He provides them with Islamic knowledge.

There is no doubt that every muslim irrespective of the strength of their faith desires good in both worlds. Even though many muslims incorrectly believe that this good which they desire lies in fame, wealth, authority, companionship and their career this Hadith makes it crystal clear that true lasting good lies in gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge. It is important to note a branch of religious knowledge is useful worldly knowledge whereby one earns lawful provision in order to fulfil their necessities and the necessities of their dependents. Even though the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has pointed out where good lies yet it is a shame how many muslims do not place much value in this. They in most cases only strive to obtain the bare minimum of Islamic knowledge in order to fulfil their obligatory duties and fail to acquire and act on more such as the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Instead they dedicate their efforts on worldly things believing true good is found there. Many muslims fail to appreciate that the righteous predecessors had to journey for weeks on end just to learn a single verse or Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, whereas today one can study Islamic teachings without leaving their home. Yet, many fail to make use of this blessing given to the modern day muslims. Out of His infinite mercy Allah, the Exalted, through his Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has not only pointed out where true good lies but He has also

placed this good at one's finger tips. Allah, the Exalted, has informed mankind of where an eternal buried treasure is located which can solve all the problems they may encounter in both worlds. But muslims will only obtain this good once they struggle to acquire and act on it.

“Allāh presents an example: a slave [who is] owned and unable to do a thing and he to whom We have provided from Us good provision, so he spends from it secretly and publicly. Can they be equal?...And Allāh presents an example of two men, one of them dumb and unable to do a thing, while he is a burden to his guardian. Wherever he directs him, he brings no good. Is he equal to one who commands justice, while he is on a straight path?”

This could be referring to the difference between the one who sincerely obeys Allah, the Exalted, thereby benefiting themselves and others by using the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, and the one who disobeys Allah, the Exalted, thereby misusing the blessings they were granted so that they fail to benefit themselves and others.

In reality, in most cases nothing in this material world in itself is good or bad, such as wealth. What makes a thing good or bad is the way it is used. It is important to understand that the very purpose of everything which was created by Allah, the Exalted, was for it to be used correctly according to the teachings of Islam. When something is not used correctly it in reality becomes useless. For example, wealth is useful in both worlds when it is used correctly such as being spent on the necessities of a person and their dependents. But it can become useless and even a curse for its bearer if it is not used correctly, such as being hoarded or spent on sinful things. Simply hoarding wealth causes wealth to lose value. How can paper and metal coins one tucks away be useful? In this respect, there is no difference between a blank piece of paper and a note of money. It is only useful when it is used correctly.

So if a muslim desires all their worldly possessions to become a blessing for them in both worlds all they have to do is use them correctly according to the teachings found in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. But if they use them incorrectly then the same blessing will become a burden and curse for them in both worlds. It is as simple as that.

“Allāh presents an example: a slave [who is] owned and unable to do a thing and he to whom We have provided from Us good provision, so he spends from it secretly and publicly. Can they be equal?...And Allāh presents an example of two men, one of them dumb and unable to do a thing, while he is a burden to his guardian. Wherever he directs him, he brings no good. Is he equal to one who commands justice, while he is on a straight path?”

This could be referring to the difference between the one who sincerely obeys Allah, the Exalted, thereby benefiting themselves and others by using the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, and the one who disobeys Allah, the Exalted, thereby misusing the blessings they were granted so that they fail to benefit themselves and others.

Every worldly blessing a muslim possesses is only a means which should aid them in reaching the hereafter safely. It is not an end in itself. For example, wealth is a means one should use in order to obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, fulfilling their necessities and the necessities of their dependents. It is not an end or an ultimate goal in itself.

This not only aids a muslim in maintaining their focus on the hereafter but it also aids them whenever they lose worldly blessings. When a muslim treats each worldly blessing, such as a child, as a means to please Allah, the Exalted, and reach the hereafter safely then losing it will not have such a detrimental impact on them. They may become sad, which is an acceptable emotion, but they will not become grieved which leads to impatience and

other mental problems, such as depression. This is because they firmly believe the worldly blessing they possessed was only a means so losing it does not cause a loss in the ultimate goal namely, Paradise, the loss of which is disastrous. Therefore, still possessing and concentrating on the ultimate goal will prevent them from becoming grieved.

In addition, they will understand that just like the thing they lost was only a means they firmly believe they will be provided with another means to reach and fulfil their ultimate goal by Allah, the Exalted. This will also prevent them from grieving. Whereas, the one who believes their worldly blessing is the end instead of a means will experience severe grief when losing it as their whole purpose and objective has been lost. This grief will lead to depression and other mental issues.

To conclude, muslims should treat each blessing they possess as a means to reach the hereafter safely not as an end in itself. This is how one can possess things without being possessed by them. This is how they can keep worldly things in their hands and not in their hearts.

“Allāh presents an example: a slave [who is] owned and unable to do a thing and he to whom We have provided from Us good provision, so he spends from it secretly and publicly. Can they be equal?...And Allāh presents an example of two men, one of them dumb and unable to do a thing, while he is a burden to his guardian. Wherever he directs him, he brings no good. Is he equal to one who commands justice, while he is on a straight path?”

This could be referring to the difference between the one who sincerely obeys Allah, the Exalted, thereby benefiting themselves and others by using the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, and the one who disobeys Allah, the Exalted, thereby misusing the blessings they were granted so that they fail to benefit themselves and others.

It is important for Muslims to strive in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience as Allah, the Exalted, has guaranteed a good life in both worlds for the one who behaves in this manner. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

“Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do.”

This good life will protect a muslim from severe grief, depression and other extreme moods and mental disorders which can destroy a person's life. Even though, muslims will face difficulties which will sadden them but if they obey Allah, the Exalted, this sadness will never become extreme and effect their entire life on a long term basis. This is because a muslim who strives in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, has an excellent reason to continue moving forward through their difficulty without giving up and turning to depression and even suicide. For example, they look forward to the countless reward which will be granted to the patient. Chapter 39 Az Zumar, verse 10:

“...Indeed, the patient will be given their reward without account [i.e., limit].”

Whereas, the muslim who does not strive in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, and only claims the title of being a muslim with their tongue will not be granted this attitude and a good life. And whenever they face difficulties it will drive them to extreme moods and mental disorders which will destroy their entire life.

“Allāh presents an example: a slave [who is] owned and unable to do a thing and he to whom We have provided from Us good provision, so he spends from it secretly and publicly. Can they be equal?...And Allāh presents an example of two men, one of them dumb and unable to do a thing, while he is a burden to his guardian. Wherever he directs him, he brings no good. Is he equal to one who commands justice, while he is on a straight path?”

This could be referring to the difference between the one who sincerely obeys Allah, the Exalted, thereby benefiting themselves and others by using the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, and the one who disobeys Allah, the Exalted, thereby misusing the blessings they were granted so that they fail to benefit themselves and others.

Those who disbelieve or avoid acting on their faith in Islam do so out of love for the material world and the things within it. They believe that believing or acting on their faith will prevent them from enjoying worldly blessings meaning, for them faith is something that restricts their desires and therefore they turn away from it either literally or practically. Instead they turn towards the material world and strive to fulfill their desires without restrictions believing that true peace lies in this. They look down at those who accept and actualize their faith by controlling their actions and using their worldly blessings in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. They believe that these pious Muslims are lowly slaves who have been restricted from enjoying themselves whereas they, the disbelievers and the misguided, are free. But in actual fact this could not be further from the truth as the real slaves are those who fail to accept and submit to Allah, the Exalted, and the superior ones are those who have done this as they become free of slavery to the world. This can be understood by an example. A good parent

will restrict the type of food their child eats meaning, they will only let them eat junk and unhealthy food once in a while and instead force them to follow a healthy diet. This child therefore believes that their parent has placed undesirable restrictions on them and that they have become slaves to their parent and their healthy diet. On the other hand another child has been given permission from their parent to eat whatever they desire, whenever they desire and how much they desire. So this child believes that they are completely free of all restrictions. When these children come together the child who has been given complete freedom criticizes and looks down on the child who has been restricted by their parent. The latter child will also feel sorry for themselves when they observe the other child has been given free reign to behave however they wish. Outwardly it appears the child who has been granted freedom has obtained happiness whereas the other child is too tied up with restrictions to enjoy life. But years down the line the truth will become manifest. The child who had no restrictions grows up to become extremely unhealthy e.g. obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, etc. As a result of this they even become mentally unhealthy as they lose confidence in their body and the way they look. Because of this they become a slave of medications, diseases, mental and social problems. All these things restrict their happiness and life. Whereas, the child who was restricted by their parent grows up healthy in mind and body. As a result they become confident in their body and ability, which aids them to succeed in life. They become free of any slavery to medications, diseases, mental and social problems as they grew up with the correct balance and guidance. So the child who had no restrictions grew up becoming a slave to many things, whereas the child who had restrictions grew up independent of all restrictions.

To conclude, the real slave is the one who becomes a slave to all other things except Allah, the Exalted, such as social media, society, fashion and culture, and this leads to mental, physical and social problems, whereas

the real free person is the one who submits only to Allah, the Exalted, thereby achieving peace of mind and body.

“Allāh presents an example: a slave [who is] owned and unable to do a thing and he to whom We have provided from Us good provision, so he spends from it secretly and publicly. Can they be equal?...And Allāh presents an example of two men, one of them dumb and unable to do a thing, while he is a burden to his guardian. Wherever he directs him, he brings no good. Is he equal to one who commands justice, while he is on a straight path?”

The same way the people mentioned in these examples cannot be equal neither can Allah, the Exalted, be compared to anything else as He alone created, owns and sustains the creation.

Allah, the Exalted, is the One who possesses all sovereignty which is free of all defects. It is a sovereignty which has no beginning, no end, no reduction and no limit. Allah, the Exalted, has complete and total control over the creation through management and judgment without any limitations, partners or helpers. The King cannot be hindered or prevented from carrying out His will.

By accepting Allah, the Exalted, as the only King a muslim indirectly accepts their servanthood to Him. Therefore, they must fulfil all His commands and avoid all His prohibitions. A true servant never questions the wise decisions of the King and instead submits with full trust to His choices knowing that the wise King only decrees the best for His servant. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

When a muslim recognises Allah, the Exalted, as the King they will not turn to another when seeking help and instead only seek His support through sincere obedience to Him. They will always remember if they obey the King He will protect them from the creation. But if they obey the creation over Allah, the Exalted, the creation will not be able to protect them from the punishment of the only King. This is indicated in a Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 2625. He declared that there is no obedience to the creation if it leads to the disobedience of the Creator.

A muslim should adopt this characteristic according to their status by purifying their inner spiritual king namely, the spiritual heart through acting on the knowledge found within the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This will cause their servants meaning, their bodily limbs, to obey their spiritual heart in acts of righteousness. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has advised in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 4094, that if the spiritual heart is pure the rest of the body will be pure but if the spiritual heart is corrupt the whole body will become corrupt. One should not become a slave of their evil desires and instead become a true king which controls their desires according to the teachings of Islam.

Whoever perfects this will be given a spiritual kingdom in both worlds. The ultimate destination of the one who fulfils the rights of the King by perfecting servanthood has been mentioned in the Holy Quran. They will be granted a high station in the presence of the only Omnipotent King. Chapter 54 Al Qamar, verse 55:

“In a seat of honour near a Sovereign, Perfect in Ability.”

“...Praise to Allāh!...”

Allah, the Exalted, is the One who is praised by His self-praise and by the praise of His creation. This also means that Allah, the Exalted, is the One who praises His righteous servants and handsomely rewards them for their efforts.

The muslim who understands this divine name will be far too busy in praising and obeying Allah, the Exalted, to praise themselves and to worry about their rights. This will keep them away from pride which is a characteristic that leads to Hell. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 265.

A muslim must act on this divine name by only performing praiseworthy actions and adopting a praiseworthy character. This is arguably the greatest tradition of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 68 Al Qalam, verse 4:

“And indeed, you are of a great moral character.”

“...But most of them do not know.”

A great distraction which prevents one from submitting to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, is ignorance. It can be argued that it is the origin of every sin as the one who truly knows the consequences of sins would never commit them. This refers to true beneficial knowledge which is knowledge that is acted upon. In reality, all knowledge which is not acted on is not beneficial knowledge. The example of the one who behaves in this manner is described in the Holy Quran as a donkey which carries books of knowledge which do not benefit it. Chapter 62 Al Jumu'ah, verse 5:

“...and then did not take it on (did not act upon knowledge) is like that of a donkey who carries volumes [of books]...”

A person who acts on their knowledge rarely slips up and commits sins intentionally. In fact, when this occurs it is only caused by a moment of ignorance where a person forgets to act on their knowledge which results in them sinning.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, once highlighted the seriousness of ignorance in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2322. He declared that everything in the material world is cursed except for the remembrance of Allah, the Exalted, whatever is

connected to this remembrance, the scholar and the student of knowledge. This means that all the blessings in the material world will become a curse for the one who is ignorant as they will misuse them thereby committing sins.

In fact, ignorance can be considered a person's worse enemy as it prevents them from protecting themselves from harm and gaining benefit all of which can only be achieved through acting on knowledge. The ignorant commits sins without being aware of them. How can one avoid a sin if they do not know what is considered a sin? Ignorance causes one to neglect their obligatory duties. How can one fulfil their duties if they are unaware of what their duties are?

It is therefore a duty on all Muslims to gain enough knowledge to fulfil all their obligatory duties and avoid sins. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224.

Parable 22

Chapter 16 – An Nahl, Verses 112-113

وَضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا قَرْيَةً كَانَتْ ءَامِنَةً مُّطْمَئِنَّةً يَأْتِيهَا رِزْقُهَا رَغَدًا
مِّن كُلِّ مَكَانٍ فَكَفَرَتْ بِأَنْعُمِ اللَّهِ فَأَذَاقَهَا اللَّهُ لِبَاسَ الْجُوعِ
وَالْخَوْفِ بِمَا كَانُوا يَصْنَعُونَ ﴿١١٢﴾

“And Allah presents an example: a city [Mecca] which was safe and secure, its provision coming to it in abundance from every location, but it denied the favors of Allah. So Allah made it taste the envelopment of hunger and fear for what they had been doing.

And there had certainly come to them a Messenger from among themselves, but they denied him; so punishment overtook them while they were wrongdoers.”

“And Allah presents an example...”

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2645, that when Allah, the Exalted, desires to give someone good He provides them with Islamic knowledge.

There is no doubt that every muslim irrespective of the strength of their faith desires good in both worlds. Even though many muslims incorrectly believe that this good which they desire lies in fame, wealth, authority, companionship and their career this Hadith makes it crystal clear that true lasting good lies in gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge. It is important to note a branch of religious knowledge is useful worldly knowledge whereby one earns lawful provision in order to fulfil their necessities and the necessities of their dependents. Even though the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has pointed out where good lies yet it is a shame how many muslims do not place much value in this. They in most cases only strive to obtain the bare minimum of Islamic knowledge in order to fulfil their obligatory duties and fail to acquire and act on more such as the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Instead they dedicate their efforts on worldly things believing true good is found there. Many muslims fail to appreciate that the righteous predecessors had to journey for weeks on end just to learn a single verse or Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, whereas today one can study Islamic teachings without leaving their home. Yet, many fail to make use of this blessing given to the modern day muslims. Out of His infinite mercy Allah, the Exalted, through his Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has not only pointed out where true good lies but He has also

placed this good at one's finger tips. Allah, the Exalted, has informed mankind of where an eternal buried treasure is located which can solve all the problems they may encounter in both worlds. But muslims will only obtain this good once they struggle to acquire and act on it.

“And Allah presents an example: a city [Mecca] which was safe and secure...”

Generally speaking, a society needs two things in order to obtain safety and security. The first is a good and just law. The second is the fear of Allah, the Exalted.

Unfortunately, there are some who claim that faith is not required in this world and others who are Muslims claim it is enough to profess Islam without supporting it with sincere obedience to Allah, the Exalted. But the increase in crimes within society proves the importance of faith and strengthening it through knowledge and action. This is because crimes and sins only occur as a person feels they will either face no consequences for their actions, such as prison, or they will somehow escape them for example, by fleeing the country. But the person who believes that no matter what action they perform, whether open or secret, big or small, and no matter what tricks they attempt a day will undoubtedly come where they will be held accountable for all their deeds will always think twice before committing a crime or a sin. If this belief is strengthened through gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge it will deter one from committing crimes and sins. If people acted in this way peace and justice would spread across society. The crime rate would decrease and the times would closely match the times of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and his rightly guided Caliphs, may Allah be pleased with them. This fact alone indicates the importance of faith and strengthening it through gaining and acting on knowledge within society. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 90:

“Indeed, Allah orders justice and good conduct and giving [help] to relatives and forbids immorality and bad conduct and oppression. He admonishes you that perhaps you will be reminded.”

“And Allāh presents an example: a city [Mecca] which was safe and secure, its provision coming to it in abundance from every location, but it denied the favors of Allāh. So Allāh made it taste the envelopment of hunger and fear for what they had been doing.”

A muslim must ensure they fulfill all three aspects of gratitude so that they avoid becoming a denier of Allah, the Exalted, as the one who is ungrateful in reality, scorns the One who granted them the blessings. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 152:

“...And be grateful to Me and do not deny Me.”

The three aspects of gratitude are to internally acknowledge Allah, the Exalted, as the sole Creator and Provider of all blessings. An aspect of this is to correct one's intention so that they only perform actions to please Allah, the Exalted. The next aspect is to praise Allah, the Exalted, via the tongue. And the final and highest aspect is to practically show gratitude through one's actions by using each blessing as prescribed by Islam in order to please Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 14 Ibrahim, verse 7:

“And [remember] when your Lord proclaimed, 'If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favor]; but if you deny, indeed, My punishment is severe.'”

As true gratitude leads to an increase in blessings muslims should fear that showing ingratitude may cause the blessings they possess to either be taken away from them or for their blessings to be used against them by becoming a burden and a curse for them in both worlds. It is important to note, even if a muslim becomes truly grateful they will still face tests and difficulties as they are guaranteed. But if they behave in the correct way they will be guided through every situation so that they obtain peace of mind and body in this world and a great reward in the hereafter.

“And Allāh presents an example: a city [Mecca] which was safe and secure, its provision coming to it in abundance from every location, but it denied the favors of Allāh. So Allāh made it taste the envelopment of hunger and fear for what they had been doing. And there had certainly come to them a Messenger from among themselves, but they denied him; so punishment overtook them while they were wrongdoers.”

The purpose of sending Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, is for them to be sincerely obeyed and followed. In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim number 196, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that Islam is sincerity towards the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This includes striving to acquire knowledge in order to act on his traditions. These traditions include the ones related to Allah, the Exalted, in the form of worship, and his blessed noble character towards the creation. Chapter 68 Al Qalam, verse 4:

"And indeed, you are of a great moral character."

It includes to accept his commands and prohibitions at all times. This has been made a duty by Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 59 Al Hashr, verse 7:

"...And whatever the Messenger has given you - take; and what he has forbidden you - refrain from..."

Sincerity includes to give priority to his traditions over the actions of anyone else as all paths to Allah, the Exalted, are closed except the path of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 31:

"Say, [O Muḥammad], "If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins..."

One must love all those who supported him during his life and after his passing, whether they are from his Family or his Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all. Supporting those who walk on his path and teach his traditions is a duty on those who desire to be sincere to him. Sincerity also includes loving those who love him and disliking those who criticise him irrespective, of one's relationship with these people. This is all summarised in a single Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 16. It advises that a person cannot have true faith until they love Allah, the Exalted, and the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, more than the entire creation. This love must be shown through actions not just words.

“And there had certainly come to them a Messenger from among themselves, but they denied him; so punishment overtook them while they were wrongdoers.”

During his childhood the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, was always under the protection of Allah, the Exalted. Allah, the Exalted, saved him from the evils that were widespread during the age of ignorance: the time before Islam. When the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, reached maturity he was the finest person among his people, the best of them in character and repute, the best of neighbours, the most prudent, the most honest in speech and most trustworthy. He was completely removed from immorality and other evil characteristics. Because of this he became known among the people of Mecca as Al Amin, the trustworthy. This has been discussed in Imam Ibn Kathir's, *The Life of the Prophet*, Volume 1, Page 180.

The fact that the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, spent his entire life amongst the non-muslims of Mecca was enough of a proof of his declaration of Prophethood. When the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, invited the non-muslims of Mecca to embrace Islam he used his 40 years amongst them as proof that he was speaking the truth. This evidence was undeniable even by the non-muslims. This incident is recorded in a Hadith found in *Sahih Bukhari*, number 4553. Only the arrogance of some prevented them from submitting to the truth. Chapter 10 Yunus, verse 16:

“...for I had remained among you a lifetime before it. Then will you not reason?”

“And Allah presents an example: a city [Mecca] which was safe and secure, its provision coming to it in abundance from every location, but it denied the favors of Allah. So Allah made it taste the envelopment of hunger and fear for what they had been doing. And there had certainly come to them a Messenger from among themselves, but they denied him; so punishment overtook them while they were wrongdoers.”

When the violence of the non-Muslims of Mecca escalated further against the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, Allah, the Exalted, subjected them to a severe famine. It was so bad that they were forced to eat carrion, leather and bones. Some of the non-Muslim leaders of Mecca came to the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, stating that his claim was a mission of mercy for mankind so he should therefore pray for this famine to be removed from them. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, did pray for this and Mecca was blessed with profuse rain and the effects of the famine were removed. This has been discussed in Imam Ibn Kathir's, the Life of the Prophet, Volume 2, Pages 59-60.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 7376, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that Allah, the Exalted, will not show mercy to the one who does not show mercy to others.

Islam is a very simple religion. One of its fundamental teachings is so simple that even uneducated people can understand and act on them namely, how people treat others is how they will be treated by Allah, the Exalted. For example, those who learn to overlook and forgive the mistakes of others will be forgiven by Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 24 An Nur, verse 22:

“...and let them pardon and overlook. Would you not like that Allah should forgive you?...”

Those who support others in beneficial worldly and religious matters such as emotional or financial aid will be supported by Allah, the Exalted, in both worlds. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4893. This same Hadith advises that the one who conceals the faults of others will have their faults concealed by Allah, the Exalted.

Simply put, if one treats others with kindness and respect according to the teachings of Islam they will be treated similarly by Allah, the Exalted. And those who mistreat others will be treated similarly by Allah, the Exalted, even if they fulfill the obligatory duties which are connected to Him such as the obligatory prayers. This is because a Muslim must fulfill both duties in order to achieve success namely, the duties towards Allah, the Exalted, and people.

Finally, it is important to note a Muslim will only be treated kindly by Allah, the Exalted, if they treat others kindly for His sake. If they do it for any other reason than they will undoubtedly forfeit the reward mentioned in these teachings. The foundation of all acts and Islam itself is one's intention. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1.

Parable 23

Chapter 18 – Al Kahf, Verses 32-36

❁ وَأَضْرِبْ لَهُمْ مَثَلًا رَّجُلَيْنِ جَعَلْنَا لِأَحَدِهِمَا جَنَّتَيْنِ مِنْ أَعْنَبٍ وَحَفَفْنَاهُمَا

بِنَخْلٍ وَجَعَلْنَا بَيْنَهُمَا زُرْعًا ﴿٣٢﴾

كِلْتَا الْجَنَّتَيْنِ ءَأَنْتَ أَكُلْهَا وَلَمْ تَظْلِمْ مِنْهُ شَيْئًا وَفَجَّرْنَا خِلَالَهُمَا نَهْرًا ﴿٣٣﴾

وَكَانَ لَهُ ثَمَرٌ فَقَالَ لِصَاحِبِهِ وَهُوَ يُحَاوِرُهُ أَنَا أَكْثَرُ مِنْكَ مَالًا وَأَعَزُّ نَفَرًا

﴿٣٤﴾

وَدَخَلَ جَنَّتَهُ وَهُوَ ظَالِمٌ لِنَفْسِهِ قَالَ مَا أَظُنُّ أَنْ تَبِيدَ هَذِهِ أَبَدًا ﴿٣٥﴾

وَمَا أَظُنُّ السَّاعَةَ قَائِمَةً وَلَئِنْ رُدِدْتُ إِلَىٰ رَبِّي لَأَجِدَنَّ خَيْرًا مِنْهَا

مُنْقَلَبًا ﴿٣٦﴾

“And present to them an example of two men: We granted to one of them two gardens of grapevines, and We bordered them with palm trees and placed between them [fields of] crops.

Each of the two gardens produced its fruit and did not fall short thereof in anything. And We caused to gush forth within them a river.

And he had fruit, so he said to his companion while he was conversing with him, "I am greater than you in wealth and mightier in [numbers of] men.”

And he entered his garden while he was unjust to himself. He said, "I do not think that this will perish - ever.

And I do not think the Hour will occur. And even if I should be brought back to my Lord, I will surely find better than this as a return.””

“And present to them an example of two men: We granted to one of them two gardens of grapevines, and We bordered them with palm trees and placed between them [fields of] crops. Each of the two gardens produced its fruit and did not fall short thereof in anything. And We caused to gush forth within them a river. And he had fruit, so he said to his companion while he was conversing with him, “I am greater than you in wealth and mightier in [numbers of] men.” And he entered his garden while he was unjust to himself...”

His wealth and possessions made him arrogant.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 265, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that a person who possesses even an atom’s worth of pride in their heart will not enter Paradise. He clarified that pride is when a person rejects the truth and looks down on others.

No amount of good deeds will benefit someone who possesses pride. This is quite obvious when one observes the Devil and how his countless years of worship did not benefit him when he became proud. In fact, the following verse clearly connects pride with disbelief so a muslim must avoid this evil characteristic at all costs. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 34:

“And [mention] when We said to the angels, "Prostrate before Adam"; so they prostrated, except for Iblees. He refused and was arrogant and became of the disbelievers.”

The proud is the one who rejects the truth when it is presented to them simply because it did not come from them and as it challenges their desires and mentality. The proud person also believes they are superior to others even though they are unaware of their own ultimate end and the ultimate end of others. This is plain ignorance. In reality, it is foolish to be proud of anything seeing as Allah, the Exalted, created and granted everything a person owns. Even the righteous deeds one performs are only due to the inspiration, knowledge and strength granted by Allah, the Exalted. Therefore, being proud of something which does not innately belong to them is plain foolishness. This is just like a person who becomes proud over a mansion they do not even own or live in.

This is the reason why pride belongs to Allah, the Exalted, as He alone is the Creator and innate Owner of all things. The one who challenges Allah, the Exalted, in pride will be thrown into Hell. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4090.

A muslim should instead follow in the footsteps of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and adopt humility. The humble truly recognise that all the good they possess and all the evil they are protected from comes from no one except Allah, the Exalted. Therefore, humility is more fitting for a person than pride. A person should not be fooled into believing humility leads to disgrace as no one has been

more honoured than the humble servants of Allah, the Exalted. In fact, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has guaranteed an increase in status for the one who adopts humility for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2029.

“And present to them an example of two men: We granted to one of them two gardens of grapevines, and We bordered them with palm trees and placed between them [fields of] crops. Each of the two gardens produced its fruit and did not fall short thereof in anything. And We caused to gush forth within them a river. And he had fruit, so he said to his companion while he was conversing with him, “I am greater than you in wealth and mightier in [numbers of] men.” And he entered his garden while he was unjust to himself...And even if I should be brought back to my Lord, I will surely find better than this as a return.””

It is important for muslims to understand that they should not define a situation as good or bad according to worldly definitions. For example, according to a worldly definition being wealthy is good whereas being poor is bad. Instead, muslims should ascribe good and bad to events and things according to the teachings of Islam. Meaning, anything which takes one closer to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in the form of fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience, is good even if it is seen as bad from a worldly point of view. And anything which takes one away from the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, is bad even if it appears good.

There are many examples throughout the teachings of Islam which demonstrate this. For example, Qarun was an extremely wealthy person who lived in the time of the Holy Prophet Mosa, peace be upon him. Many people then and now may consider his wealth to be a good thing but as it led him to pride it became a means of his destruction. So in his case being wealthy was a bad thing. Chapter 28 Al Qasas, verses 79-81.

“So he came out before his people in his adornment. Those who desired the worldly life said, “Oh, would that we had like what was given to Qārūn. Indeed, he is one of great fortune. But those who had been given knowledge said, “Woe to you! The reward of Allah is better for he who believes and does righteousness. And none are granted it except the patient.” And We caused the earth to swallow him and his home. And there was for him no company to aid him other than Allah, nor was he of those who [could] defend themselves.”

On the other hand, the third rightly guided Caliph of Islam, Usman Bin Affan, may Allah be pleased with him, was also wealthy yet he used his wealth in the correct way. In fact, once after donating a large amount of wealth he was told by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, that nothing could harm his faith after that day. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3701. So in his case wealth was a good thing.

To conclude, a muslim should remember that every difficulty they face has wisdoms behind it even if they do not observe them. So they should not believe something is good or bad from a worldly point of view. Meaning, if the thing encourages them towards the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, then it is good even if it looks bad. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

“And present to them an example of two men: We granted to one of them two gardens of grapevines, and We bordered them with palm trees and placed between them [fields of] crops. Each of the two gardens produced its fruit and did not fall short thereof in anything. And We caused to gush forth within them a river. And he had fruit, so he said to his companion while he was conversing with him, “I am greater than you in wealth and mightier in [numbers of] men.” And he entered his garden while he was unjust to himself...”

He was unjust as he failed to show gratitude to Allah, the Exalted.

A muslim must ensure they fulfill all three aspects of gratitude so that they avoid becoming a denier of Allah, the Exalted, as the one who is ungrateful in reality, scorns the One who granted them the blessings. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 152:

“...And be grateful to Me and do not deny Me.”

The three aspects of gratitude are to internally acknowledge Allah, the Exalted, as the sole Creator and Provider of all blessings. An aspect of this is to correct one’s intention so that they only perform actions to please Allah, the Exalted. The next aspect is to praise Allah, the Exalted, via the tongue. And the final and highest aspect is to practically show gratitude

through one's actions by using each blessing as prescribed by Islam in order to please Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 14 Ibrahim, verse 7:

“And [remember] when your Lord proclaimed, 'If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favor]; but if you deny, indeed, My punishment is severe.'”

As true gratitude leads to an increase in blessings muslims should fear that showing ingratitude may cause the blessings they possess to either be taken away from them or for their blessings to be used against them by becoming a burden and a curse for them in both worlds. It is important to note, even if a muslim becomes truly grateful they will still face tests and difficulties as they are guaranteed. But if they behave in the correct way they will be guided through every situation so that they obtain peace of mind and body in this world and a great reward in the hereafter.

“And present to them an example of two men: We granted to one of them two gardens of grapevines, and We bordered them with palm trees and placed between them [fields of] crops. Each of the two gardens produced its fruit and did not fall short thereof in anything. And We caused to gush forth within them a river. And he had fruit, so he said to his companion while he was conversing with him, "I am greater than you in wealth and mightier in [numbers of] men.” And he entered his garden while he was unjust to himself...”

He was unjust as he failed to show gratitude to Allah, the Exalted. This involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted.

In reality, in most cases nothing in this material world in itself is good or bad, such as wealth. What makes a thing good or bad is the way it is used. It is important to understand that the very purpose of everything which was created by Allah, the Exalted, was for it to be used correctly according to the teachings of Islam. When something is not used correctly it in reality becomes useless. For example, wealth is useful in both worlds when it is used correctly such as being spent on the necessities of a person and their dependents. But it can become useless and even a curse for its bearer if it is not used correctly, such as being hoarded or spent on sinful things. Simply hoarding wealth causes wealth to lose value. How can paper and metal coins one tucks away be useful? In this respect, there is no difference between a blank piece of paper and a note of money. It is only useful when it is used correctly.

So if a muslim desires all their worldly possessions to become a blessing for them in both worlds all they have to do is use them correctly according to the teachings found in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. But if they use them incorrectly then the same blessing will become a burden and curse for them in both worlds. It is as simple as that.

“And present to them an example of two men: We granted to one of them two gardens of grapevines, and We bordered them with palm trees and placed between them [fields of] crops. Each of the two gardens produced its fruit and did not fall short thereof in anything. And We caused to gush forth within them a river. And he had fruit, so he said to his companion while he was conversing with him, “I am greater than you in wealth and mightier in [numbers of] men.” And he entered his garden while he was unjust to himself...”

He was unjust as he failed to show gratitude to Allah, the Exalted. This involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. One can adopt the correct attitude when they understand the purpose of these blessings.

Every worldly blessing a muslim possesses is only a means which should aid them in reaching the hereafter safely. It is not an end in itself. For example, wealth is a means one should use in order to obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, fulfilling their necessities and the necessities of their dependents. It is not an end or an ultimate goal in itself.

This not only aids a muslim in maintaining their focus on the hereafter but it also aids them whenever they lose worldly blessings. When a muslim treats each worldly blessing, such as a child, as a means to please Allah, the Exalted, and reach the hereafter safely then losing it will not have such a detrimental impact on them. They may become sad, which is an acceptable emotion, but they will not become grieved which leads to impatience and

other mental problems, such as depression. This is because they firmly believe the worldly blessing they possessed was only a means so losing it does not cause a loss in the ultimate goal namely, Paradise, the loss of which is disastrous. Therefore, still possessing and concentrating on the ultimate goal will prevent them from becoming grieved.

In addition, they will understand that just like the thing they lost was only a means they firmly believe they will be provided with another means to reach and fulfil their ultimate goal by Allah, the Exalted. This will also prevent them from grieving. Whereas, the one who believes their worldly blessing is the end instead of a means will experience severe grief when losing it as their whole purpose and objective has been lost. This grief will lead to depression and other mental issues.

To conclude, muslims should treat each blessing they possess as a means to reach the hereafter safely not as an end in itself. This is how one can possess things without being possessed by them. This is how they can keep worldly things in their hands and not in their hearts.

“...We granted to one of them two gardens of grapevines, and We bordered them with palm trees and placed between them [fields of] crops. Each of the two gardens produced its fruit and did not fall short thereof in anything. And We caused to gush forth within them a river...And he entered his garden while he was unjust to himself. He said, "I do not think that this will perish - ever. And I do not think the Hour will occur.””

A person can become fooled in this way, to the point they dedicate the majority of their efforts in beautifying their worldly life, when they fail to adopt the correct understanding and perception in respect to this material world and the hereafter.

In a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4108, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that the material world compared to the hereafter is like a drop of water compared to an ocean.

In reality, this parable was given in order for people to understand how small the material world is compared to the hereafter. But in reality they cannot be compared as the material world is temporal whereas the hereafter is eternal. Meaning, the limited cannot be compared to the unlimited. The material world can be split into four categories: fame, fortune, authority and one's social life, such as their family and friends. No matter what worldly blessing one obtains which falls within these groups it will always be imperfect, transient and death will cut a person off from the blessing. On the other hand, the blessings in the hereafter are lasting and

perfect. So in this respect the material world is no more than a drop compared to an endless ocean.

In addition, a person is not guaranteed to experience a long life in this world as the time of death is unknown. Whereas, everyone is guaranteed to experience death and reach the hereafter. So it is foolish to strive for a day, such as one's retirement, which they may never reach over striving for the hereafter which they are guaranteed to reach.

This does not mean one should abandon the world as it is a bridge which must be crossed in order to reach the hereafter safely. Instead, a muslim should take from this material world enough to fulfill their necessities and the necessities of their dependents according to the teachings of Islam without waste, excessiveness or extravagance. And then dedicate the rest of their efforts in preparing for the eternal hereafter by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the teachings of Islam.

An intelligent person will not prioritize the drop of water over an endless ocean and an intelligent muslim would not prioritize the temporal material world over the eternal hereafter.

“...We granted to one of them two gardens of grapevines, and We bordered them with palm trees and placed between them [fields of] crops. Each of the two gardens produced its fruit and did not fall short thereof in anything. And We caused to gush forth within them a river...And he entered his garden while he was unjust to himself. He said, "I do not think that this will perish - ever. And I do not think the Hour will occur.””

A person can become fooled in this way, to the point they dedicate the majority of their efforts in beautifying their worldly life, when they fail to adopt the correct understanding and perception in respect to this material world and the hereafter.

It is important for muslims to develop the correct perception so that they can increase their obedience to Allah, the Exalted, which involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience. This is what the righteous predecessors possessed and it encouraged them to avoid the excess luxuries of the material world and instead prepare for the hereafter. This is an important characteristic to possess and it can be explained with a worldly example. Two people are extremely thirsty and come across a cup of murky water. They both desire to drink it even though it is not pure and even if it means they have to argue over it. As their thirst grows the more focused on the cup of murky water they become to the point they lose focus on everything else. But if one of them shifted their focus and observed a river of pure water which was only a short distance ahead they would immediately lose focus on the cup of water to the point they would no longer care about it and no longer argue over it. And instead they would endure their thirst patiently knowing a river of pure water is close. The person who is unaware of the river would

probably believe the other person is crazy after observing their change in attitude. This is the case of the two types of people in this world. One group greedily focuses on the material world. The other group has shifted their focus to the hereafter and the pure and eternal blessings therein. When one shifts their focus to the bliss of the hereafter worldly problems do not seem like such a big deal. Therefore, patience becomes easier to adopt. But if one keeps their focus on this world then it will seem like everything to them. They will argue, fight, love and hate for it. Just like the person in the example mentioned earlier who only focuses on the cup of murky water.

This correct perception is only achieved through gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge found within the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 53:

“We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth...”

“...We granted to one of them two gardens of grapevines, and We bordered them with palm trees and placed between them [fields of] crops. Each of the two gardens produced its fruit and did not fall short thereof in anything. And We caused to gush forth within them a river...And he entered his garden while he was unjust to himself. He said, "I do not think that this will perish - ever. And I do not think the Hour will occur.””

A person can become fooled in this way, to the point they dedicate the majority of their efforts in beautifying their worldly life, when they fail to adopt the correct understanding and perception in respect to this material world and the hereafter.

A great obstacle to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, is having false hope for a long life. It is an extremely blameworthy characteristic as it is the main cause for a muslim giving priority to amassing the material world over preparing for the hereafter. One only needs to assess their average 24 hour day and observe how much time they dedicate to the material world and how much time they dedicate to the hereafter in order to realise this truth. In fact, having false hope for a long life is one of the strongest weapons the Devil uses in order to misguide people. When a person believes they will live long they delay preparing for the hereafter falsely believing they can prepare for it in the near future. In most cases, this near future never comes and a person passes away without adequately preparing for the hereafter.

In addition, false hope for a long life causes one to delay sincere repentance and changing one's character for the better as they believe they have much time left to do this. It encourages a person to hoard the things of this material world, such as wealth, as it convinces them they will need these things during their long life on Earth. The Devil scares people into thinking they must hoard wealth for their old age as they may find no one to support them when they become physically weaker and therefore can no longer work for themselves. They forget that the same way Allah, the Exalted, took care of their provision when they were younger He will provide for them in old age too. In fact, the provision of the creation was allocated over fifty thousand years before the creation of the Heavens and the Earth. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6748. It is strange how a person will dedicate 40 years of their life saving for their retirement which very rarely lasts longer than 20 years but fails to prepare in the same way for the eternal hereafter.

Islam does not teach muslims to not prepare anything for the world. There is no harm in saving for the near future as long as priority is given to the hereafter. Even though, people admit they may die at any time yet, some behave as if they will live forever in this world. Even to the point that if they were given a promise of eternal life on Earth they would not be able to strive harder in order to accumulate more of the material world due to the restrictions of the day and night. How many people have passed away earlier than expected? And how many learn a lesson from this and change their behaviour?

In reality, one of the greatest pains a person will feel at the time of death or any other stage of the hereafter is regret for delaying their preparation for the hereafter. Chapter 63 Al Munafiqun, verses 10-11:

“And spend [in the way of Allah] from what We have provided you before death approaches one of you and he says, “My Lord, if only You would delay me for a brief term so I would give charity and be of the righteous.” But never will Allah delay a soul when its time has come. And Allah is Aware of what you do.”

A person would be labelled a fool if they dedicated more time and wealth on a house which they were only going to live in for a short while compared to a house they were planning to live in for a very long time. This is the example of giving priority to the temporal world over the eternal hereafter.

Muslims should work for both the world and the hereafter but know that death does not come to a person at a time, situation or age known to them but it is certain to come. Therefore, preparing for it and what it leads to should take priority over preparing for a future in this world which is not certain to occur.

“...We granted to one of them two gardens of grapevines, and We bordered them with palm trees and placed between them [fields of] crops. Each of the two gardens produced its fruit and did not fall short thereof in anything. And We caused to gush forth within them a river...And he entered his garden while he was unjust to himself. He said, "I do not think that this will perish - ever. And I do not think the Hour will occur.””

Disbelief can be a literal rejecting of Islam or through actions, which involves disobeying Allah, the Exalted, even though one believes in Him. This can be clearly understood by an example. If an unaware person is warned by another of an approaching lion and the unaware person takes practical steps to obtain safety they will be considered someone who believed in the warning given to them as they adapted their behaviour based on the warning. Whereas, if the unaware person does not practically change their behaviour after being warned, people will suspect that they do not believe in the warning given to them even if the unaware person verbally claims belief in the warning given to them.

The root of this attitude is weakness of faith.

A great obstacle to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, is weakness of faith. It is a blameworthy characteristic which gives rise to other negative characteristics, such as failing to act on one's knowledge, fearing others, placing the obedience of people above the obedience to Allah, the Exalted, having hope in forgiveness without striving for it and other undesired characteristics. The greatest affliction of weakness of faith is that it allows

one to commit sins, such as neglecting the obligatory duties. The root cause of weakness of faith is ignorance of Islam.

One should strive to gain knowledge in order to strengthen their faith. With time they will eventually reach certainty of faith which is so strong that it safeguards a person through all tests and trials and ensures they fulfil their duties both religious and worldly. This knowledge is obtained when one studies the teachings of the Holy Quran and the Hadiths of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Specifically, those teachings which discuss the promises of reward for those who are obedient and the punishment for those who are disobedient to Allah, the Exalted. This creates fear of punishment and hope of reward in a muslim's heart which acts like a pull and push mechanism towards the obedience of Allah, the Exalted.

One can strengthen their faith by reflecting on the creations within the Heavens and the Earth. When done correctly this clearly indicates the Oneness of Allah, the Exalted, and His infinite power. Chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 53:

“We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth...”

For example, if a muslim ponders over the night and day and how perfectly in sync they are and the other things linked to them they will truly believe that this is not a random thing meaning, there is a force which ensures everything runs like clockwork. This is the infinite power of Allah, the Exalted. In addition, if one ponders over the perfect timing of the night and day they will realise it clearly indicates that there is only one God namely, Allah, the Exalted. If there were more than one God each god would desire the night and day to occur according to their own desires. This would lead to utter chaos as one God might desire the Sun to rise whereas the other God might desire the night to continue. The perfect uninterrupted system found within the universe proves there is only one God namely, Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 21 Al Anbiya, verse 22:

“Had there been within them [i.e., the heavens and earth] gods besides Allah, they both would have been ruined...”

Another thing which can strengthen one's faith is to persist in righteous deeds and abstain from all sins. As faith is belief supported by actions it weakens when sins are committed and strengthens when good deeds are performed. For example, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, once warned in a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 5662, that a muslim is not a believer when they drink alcohol.

“...We granted to one of them two gardens of grapevines, and We bordered them with palm trees and placed between them [fields of] crops. Each of the two gardens produced its fruit and did not fall short thereof in anything. And We caused to gush forth within them a river...And he entered his garden while he was unjust to himself. He said, "I do not think that this will perish - ever. And I do not think the Hour will occur. And even if I should be brought back to my Lord, I will surely find better than this as a return."”

The final part of these verses highlight the concept of wishful thinking.

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2459, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, described the difference between true hope in the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, and wishful thinking. True hope is when one controls their soul by avoiding the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted, and actively struggles for preparing for the hereafter. Whereas, the foolish wishful thinker follows their desires and then expects Allah, the Exalted, to forgive them and fulfill their wishes.

It is important for muslims not to confuse these two attitudes so that they avoid living and dying as a wishful thinker as this person is highly unlikely to succeed in this world or the next. Wishful thinking is like a farmer who fails to prepare the land for planting, fails to plant seeds, fails to water the land and then expects to harvest a huge crop. This is plain foolishness and this farmer is highly unlikely to succeed. Whereas, true hope is like a farmer who prepares the land, plants seeds, waters the land and then hopes Allah, the Exalted, will bless them with a huge harvest. The key

difference is that the one who possesses true hope will actively strive to obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. And whenever they slip up they sincerely repent. Whereas, the wishful thinker will not actively strive in obeying Allah, the Exalted, and instead follow their desires and still expect Allah, the Exalted, to forgive them and fulfill their wishes.

Muslims must therefore learn the key difference so that they can abandon wishful thinking and instead adopt true hope in Allah, the Exalted, which always leads to nothing except good and success in both worlds. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 7405.

A specific type of wishful thinking which affected the past nations and even the muslim nation is when a person believes that they can ignore the commands and prohibitions of Allah, the Exalted, and somehow someone on the Day of Judgement will intercede for them and save them from Hell. Even though the intercession of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, is a fact and has been discussed in many Hadiths, such as the one found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4308, none the less even with his intercession some muslims whose punishment will be reduced by it will still enter Hell. Even a single moment in Hell is truly unbearable. So one should abandon wishful thinking and instead adopt true hope by practically striving in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted.

The Devil convinces those who do not believe in Judgement Day that even if it occurs they will make peace with Allah, the Exalted, on that day by claiming that they were not so bad as they avoided major crimes such as murder. They have convinced themselves that their pleas will be accepted and they will be sent to Paradise even though they disbelieved in Allah, the Exalted, during their lives on Earth. This is incredibly foolish as Allah, the Exalted, will not treat the person who believed in Him and tried to obey him like the one who disbelieved in Him. A single verse has erased this type of wishful thinking. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 85:

“And whoever desires other than Islām as religion - never will it be accepted from him, and he, in the Hereafter, will be among the losers.”

Parable 24

Chapter 22 – Al Hajj, Verses 30-33

ذَلِكَ وَمَنْ يُعْظِمِ حُرْمَتِ اللَّهِ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ وَأُحِلَّتْ
لَكُمْ الْأَنْعَامُ إِلَّا مَا يُتْلَى عَلَيْكُمْ فَاجْتَنِبُوا الرِّجْسَ مِنَ
الْأَوْثَانِ وَاجْتَنِبُوا قَوْلَ الزُّورِ ﴿٣٠﴾

حُنَفَاءَ لِلَّهِ غَيْرَ مُشْرِكِينَ بِهِ وَمَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَكَأَنَّمَا خَرَّ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ
فَتَخَطَفَهُ الطَّيْرُ أَوْ تَهْوَى بِهِ الرِّيحُ فِي مَكَانٍ سَحِيقٍ ﴿٣١﴾

ذَلِكَ وَمَنْ يُعْظِمِ شَعَائِرَ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّهَا مِنْ تَقْوَى الْقُلُوبِ ﴿٣٢﴾

لَكُمْ فِيهَا مَنَافِعُ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ثُمَّ مَحِلُّهَا إِلَىٰ الْبَيْتِ الْعَتِيقِ ﴿٣٣﴾

“That [has been commanded], and whoever honors the sacred ordinances of Allah - it is best for him in the sight of his Lord. And permitted to you are the grazing livestock, except what is recited to you. So avoid the uncleanness of idols and avoid false statement.

Inclining [only] to Allah, not associating [anything] with Him. And he who associates with Allah - it is as though he had fallen from the sky and was snatched by the birds or the wind carried him down into a remote place.

That [is so]. And whoever honors the symbols [i.e., rites] of Allah - indeed, it is from the piety of hearts.

For you therein [i.e., the animals marked for sacrifice] are benefits for a specified term; then their place of sacrifice is at the ancient House."

“That [has been commanded], and whoever honors the sacred ordinances of Allah - it is best for him in the sight of his Lord...That [is so]. And whoever honors the symbols [i.e., rites] of Allah - indeed, it is from the piety of hearts.”

This is an aspect of being sincere to Allah, the Exalted.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim number 196, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that Islam is sincerity towards Allah, the Exalted.

Sincerity towards Allah, the Exalted, includes fulfilling all the duties given by Him in the form of commands and prohibitions, solely for His pleasure. As confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1, all will be judged by their intention. So if one is not sincere towards Allah, the Exalted, when performing good deeds they will gain no reward in this world or in the next. In fact, according to a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3154, those who performed insincere deeds will be told on Judgement Day to seek their reward from those who they acted for, which will not be possible. Chapter 98 Al Bayyinah, verse 5.

"And they were not commanded except to worship Allah, [being] sincere to Him in religion....."

If one is lax in fulfilling their duties towards Allah, the Exalted, it proves a lack of sincerity. Therefore, they should sincerely repent and struggle to fulfil them all. It is important to bear in mind Allah, the Exalted, never burdens one with duties they cannot perform or handle. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 286.

"Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity...."

Being sincere towards Allah, the Exalted, means that one should always choose His pleasure over the pleasure of themselves and others. A Muslim should always give priority to those actions which are for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, over all else. One should love others and dislike their sins for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, and not for the sake of their own desires. When they help others or refuse to take part in sins it should be for the sake of Allah, the Exalted. The one who adopts this mentality has perfected their faith. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4681.

“That [has been commanded], and whoever honors the sacred ordinances of Allah - it is best for him in the sight of his Lord...That [is so]. And whoever honors the symbols [i.e., rites] of Allah - indeed, it is from the piety of hearts.”

Piety cannot be achieved without gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge so that one can fulfill the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refrain from His prohibitions and face destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 35 Fatir, verse 28:

“...Only those fear Allah, from among His servants, who have knowledge...”

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2451, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon, advised that a muslim cannot become pious until they avoid something which is not harmful to their religion out of caution that it will lead to something which is harmful. Therefore, an aspect of piety is to avoid things which are doubtful not just unlawful. This is because doubtful things takes a muslim one step closer to the unlawful and the closer one is to the unlawful the easier it is to fall into it. It is why a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1205, advises that the one who avoids unlawful and doubtful things will protect their religion and honor. If one observes those who have become misguided in society, in most cases, this occurred gradually not in one sudden step. Meaning, the person first indulged in doubtful things before falling into the unlawful. This is the reason why Islam stresses the need to avoid unnecessary and

vain things in one's life as they can lead them to the unlawful. For example, vain and useless speech which is not classified sinful by Islam often leads to evil speech, such as backbiting, lying and slander. If a person avoids the first step by not indulging in vain speech they will undoubtedly avoid evil speech. This process can be applied to all things which are vain, unnecessary and especially, doubtful.

“That [has been commanded], and whoever honors the sacred ordinances of Allah - it is best for him in the sight of his Lord...That [is so]. And whoever honors the symbols [i.e., rites] of Allah - indeed, it is from the piety of hearts.”

Generally speaking, muslims are good at honouring certain things, days and places Allah, the Exalted, has made sacred but often overlook other things which He has also made sacred.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 67, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, declared that the blood, property and honor of a muslim are sacred in Islam.

This Hadith, like many others, teaches muslims that success can only be obtained when one fulfills the rights of Allah, the Exalted, such as the obligatory prayers, and the rights of people. One without the other is not good enough.

A true believer and muslim is the one who keeps their verbal and physical harm away from the self and possessions of others. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 4998. Therefore, it is vital for muslims not to harm others through their actions or words.

A muslim must respect the possessions of others and not try to wrongfully acquire them for example, in a legal case. A Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 353, warns that someone who does this will go to Hell even if the thing they acquired was as insignificant as a twig of a tree. Muslims should only use the possessions of others according to their wishes and return them in a way pleasing to its owner.

The honor of a muslim should not be violated through actions or speech, such as backbiting or slander. A muslim should instead defend the honor of others whether in their presence or absence as this will lead to their protection from the fire of Hell. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1931.

To conclude, one should avoid wronging the self, possessions or honor of others by treating others exactly how they desire others to treat them. Just like one loves this for themselves they should love it for others and prove this through their actions and speech. This is the sign of a true believer according to a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2515.

“And permitted to you are the grazing livestock, except what is recited to you...”

It is important to understand that the prohibitions and commands of Allah, the Exalted, do not exist to make people's life harder. They only exist in order to benefit people in both this world and in the next even if these benefits are not apparent to people. For example, the negative effects of alcohol, which science has proven, was not always apparent such as its negative effect on the organs of the body. It only became unlawful in Islam to protect people from this and other harms. In addition, It is an aspect of faith to accept something without understanding its wisdoms. If all the wisdoms of the commands and prohibitions were made apparent then it would not allow muslims to possess complete faith. Allah, the Exalted, does not benefit from these commands and prohibitions only people do.

“...So avoid the uncleanness of idols...Inclining [only] to Allāh, not associating [anything] with Him. And he who associates with Allāh - it is as though he had fallen from the sky and was snatched by the birds or the wind carried him down into a remote place.”

An idol which is created by a person cannot be a God. In fact, the person who created it has a higher status than it. If one claims the spirit of their God enters the idol after its manufacture then this would mean their God is completely dependent on people to create a body for it. A true God is not dependent on another in fact, everyone else is dependent on it. In addition, the fact that an idol does not possess any senses proves that it cannot benefit itself or others. Therefore, it is not worthy of being worshipped as the very purpose of worship is to gain benefit from the one being worshipped.

The greatest major sin is to associate others with Allah, the Exalted. This has been confirmed by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6273. Polytheism can be classified as greater and minor. The greater type is when one worships more than one God. If a person dies in this state they will not be forgiven. Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 48:

“Indeed, Allah does not forgive association with Him...”

The minor type is when one shows off their actions. This has been confirmed in many Hadiths such as the one found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3989. On Judgment Day those who performed deeds to please others besides Allah, the Exalted, will be commanded to gain their reward from them which will not be possible. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3154.

If the Devil cannot prevent one from performing righteous deeds he will attempt to corrupt their intention thereby destroying their reward. If he cannot corrupt their intention in an obvious way he tries to corrupt it through subtle ways. This includes when people subtly show off their righteous deeds to others. Sometimes it is so subtle that the person themselves are not fully aware of what they are doing. As gaining and acting on knowledge is a duty on all, according to a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224, claiming ignorance will not be accepted by Allah, the Exalted, on Judgment Day.

Subtly showing off often occurs through social media and one's speech. For example, a muslim might inform others they are fasting even though no one directly asked them if they were fasting. Another example is when one publically recites the Holy Quran from memory in front of others thereby showing others they have memorized the Holy Quran. Even criticizing oneself publically can be considered showing off one's humility to others.

To conclude, showing off subtly destroys a muslim's reward and must be avoided in order to safeguard their righteous deeds. This is only possible

by learning and acting on Islamic knowledge, such as how to safeguard one's speech.

“...and avoid false statement.”

Unfortunately, lying is a far too common sin found within society today even though the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, specifically labelled this sin an aspect of hypocrisy. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 2459. Lying is unacceptable whether it is a small lie or when one lies as a joke. In fact, the one who lies to make people laugh meaning, their aim is not to deceive someone, has been cursed three times in one Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2315. If lying while joking is cursed then can one imagine the seriousness of lying while attempting to deceive others?

Another popular type of lie people often speak believing it is not a sin is when they lie to children. This is undoubtedly a sin according to Hadiths such as the one found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4991. It is plain foolishness to lie to children as they will only adopt this sinful habit from the elder who lies to them. Behaving in this manner shows children that lying is acceptable when it is not according to the teachings of Islam.

All muslims desire the company of the Angels yet when a person lies they are deprived of their company. In fact, the stench that is omitted from the mouth of the liar causes the Angels to move a mile away from them. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1972. Only in very rare and extreme cases is lying acceptable for example, lying in order to protect the life of an innocent person. Therefore, muslims must avoid all forms of lying irrespective of who they are conversing with.

“...and avoid false statement.”

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 2673, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that the one who acts as a false witness in order to unlawfully take the possessions of others will meet Allah, the Exalted, while He is angry with them.

It is important to note, this applies to taking the possessions of all people, irrespective of their faith. This will be the outcome even if one obeys Allah, the Exalted, in other aspects of their life, such as offering the obligatory prayers. Unfortunately, this commonly occurs especially, in third world countries where muslims file false claims in legal courts in order to take something which does not belong to them, such as wealth and properties. According to a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 2654, it is one of the greatest of major sins. In fact, this Hadith places perjury next to polytheism and disobedience to parents. In fact, Allah, the Exalted, has done the same in the Holy Quran. Chapter 22 Al Hajj, verse 30:

“...So avoid the uncleanness of idols and avoid false statement.”

A Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 2373, gives a severe warning to a person who does not sincerely repent from being a false witness. If they fail to repent they will not move on the Day of Judgment until Allah, the Exalted, sends them to Hell. In fact, the one who acts as a false witness in

order to take something which they have no right to will be sent to Hell even if the thing they took was a twig of a tree. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 353.

Being a false witness is such a serious sin as it includes many other terrible sins, such as lying. The false witness commits a sin against the person who they are testifying against. This sin will not be forgiven by Allah, the Exalted, until the victim forgives them first. If they do not the false witness's good deeds will be given to the victim and if necessary the sins of the victim will be given to the false witness in order to establish justice on Judgement Day. This may well cause the false witness to be hurled into Hell. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6579. The false witness also commits a sin if they testify on someone else's behalf so that the latter can take something which they have no right to. This attitude clearly challenges the command of the Holy Quran which advises muslims to not aid each other in evil but instead help each other in good things. Chapter 5 Al Ma'idah, verse 2:

“...And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression...”

The false witness will also commit further sins by using something which has become unlawful because of the way it was obtained. For example, if a person obtained wealth in this manner and then gave it in charity it would be rejected and recorded as a sin as Allah, the Exalted, only accepts the lawful. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 2342.

In fact, anything they do with the wealth will be absent of grace and a sin as it was obtained unlawfully.

It is a duty on all muslims to always speak the truth whether it is in normal everyday conversations or under oath in a court case. Lying in all forms leads to sins which in turn lead to Hell. The one who continues lying will be recorded as a great liar by Allah, the Exalted. It does not take a scholar to work out what is most likely to happen to someone on Judgment Day who has been labelled a great liar by Allah, the Exalted. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1971.

“...and avoid false statement.”

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1971, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, discussed the importance of truthfulness and avoiding lies. The first part advises that truthfulness leads to righteousness which in turn leads to Paradise. When a person persists on truthfulness they are recorded by Allah, the Exalted, as a truthful person.

It is important to note, that truthfulness has three levels. The first is when one is truthful in their intention and sincerity. Meaning, they act only for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, and do not benefit others for an ulterior motive, such as fame. This in fact is the foundation of Islam as every action is judged on one's intention. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1. The next level is when one is truthful through their words. This in reality means they avoid all types of verbal sins not just lies. As the one who indulges in other verbal sins cannot be a real truthful person. An excellent way of achieving this is by acting on a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2317, which advises that a person can only make their Islam excellent when they avoid getting involved in the things which do not concern them. The majority of verbal sins occur because a muslim discusses something which does not concern them. The final stage is truthfulness in actions. This is achieved through the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and being patient with destiny according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, without cherry picking or misinterpreting the teachings of Islam which suit one's desires. They must adhere to hierarchy and priority order set by Allah, the Exalted, in all actions.

The consequences of the opposite of these levels of truthfulness namely, lying, according to the main Hadith under discussion, is that it leads to disobedience which in turn leads to the fire of Hell. When one persists on this attitude they will be recorded as a great liar by Allah, the Exalted.

“...and avoid false statement.”

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2501, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, declared that whoever is silent is saved.

This means the one who is silent from vain or evil speech and only speaks good words will be saved by Allah, the Exalted, in both worlds. This is important to understand as the main reason people will enter Hell is because of their speech. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2616. In fact, it only takes a single evil word to cause a person to plunge into Hell on Judgement Day which has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2314.

Speech can be of three types. The first is evil speech which should be avoided at all costs. The second is vain speech which only causes one to waste time which will lead to a great regret on Judgment Day. In addition, the first step of sinful speech is often vain speech. So it is safer to avoid this type of speech. The final type is good speech which should always be adopted. Based on these aspects two thirds of speech should be removed from one's life.

In addition, the one who speaks too much will only reflect on their actions and the hereafter a little as this requires silence. This will prevent one from

assessing their deeds which inspires one to perform more righteous deeds and sincerely repent from their sins. This person will then be prevented from changing for the better.

Finally, those who speak too much often discuss worldly things and things which are entertaining and fun. This will cause them to adopt a mentality whereby they dislike discussing or listening to serious issues like death and the hereafter. This will prevent them from preparing adequately for the hereafter which will lead to a great regret and a potential punishment.

All of this can be avoided if one simply remains silent from sinful and vain speech and instead only speaks good words. Therefore, the one who is silent in this way will be saved from trouble in this world and from punishment in the next world.

“...And he who associates with Allāh - it is as though he had fallen from the sky and was snatched by the birds or the wind carried him down into a remote place.”

The Holy Quran clearly declared the purpose of mankind in chapter 51 Adh Dhariyat, verse 56:

“And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me.”

Before one can worship Allah, the Exalted, they must first recognise Him as it is not possible to obey someone without knowledge. In addition, people must first learn how to worship Allah, the Exalted, before they can fulfil this task. Therefore, worship is followed by knowledge. This is why in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, declared seeking useful knowledge a duty on all muslims. Without knowledge one will never be able to worship Allah, the Exalted, correctly. Few good deeds performed with knowledge are far superior to many good deeds performed incorrectly because of ignorance.

As Allah, the Exalted, is the One who created mankind no one has the right to be served and worshipped except Him. If an employer easily dismisses their employee for abandoning the duty they have been hired for, how can it be correct to abandon serving and worshipping Allah, the Exalted, when

He alone created and sustains the creation? All of mankind have been granted free will and the ability to obey and worship Allah, the Exalted. So each person must decide whether they desire to fulfil their purpose of creation thereby receiving eternal reward or reject it and face punishment in both worlds. The same way a device, such as a mobile phone, which does not fulfil its primary purpose is discarded people may well be discarded on the Day of Judgement into Hell for failing to fulfil their primary purpose of existence.

It is important to note, that worship refers to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted. This involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This obedience must encompass every part of one's life and body, such as their tongue. It includes a person's duty towards Allah, the Exalted, such as offering the prayer and treating the creation with kindness.

Those who obey Allah, the Exalted, will be given the best rewards while those who disobey Him will receive the worst punishment in this world and the next. In a divine Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2466, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, narrates from Allah, the Exalted, who declares that if one busies themselves in worshipping Him, through sincere obedience, He will fill their heart with richness and remove their poverty. But if they turn away from His worship and obedience Allah, the Exalted, will fill their life with problems and not remove their poverty.

It is important to note, that Allah, the Exalted, does not need the creation in anyway whatsoever. As clearly mentioned in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6572, people only benefit themselves with their good deeds as it raises their ranks. And they only harm themselves with their sins as they will be held accountable for them. The infinite status of Allah, the Exalted, does not change at all irrespective of if the entire creation worshipped Him or not. Allah, the Exalted, is the sole Creator and sole Provider. It is people who are completely and utterly in need of Him. Whoever understands this and sincerely obeys Allah, the Exalted, will fulfil the purpose of their creation and will therefore be given an eternal reward.

“For you therein [i.e., the animals marked for sacrifice] are benefits for a specified term; then their place of sacrifice is at the ancient House.”

This verse discusses aspects of the Holy Pilgrimage.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1773, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that the reward for an accepted Holy Pilgrimage is nothing except Paradise.

The real purpose of the Holy Pilgrimage is to prepare muslims for their final journey to the hereafter. The same way a muslim leaves behind their home, business, wealth, family, friends and social status in order to perform the Holy Pilgrimage this will occur at the time of their death when they take their final journey to the hereafter. In fact, a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2379, advises that a person's family and wealth abandons them at their grave and only their deeds, good and bad, accompany them.

When a muslim bears this in mind during their Holy Pilgrimage they will fulfil all the aspects of this duty correctly. This muslim will return back home a changed person as they will prioritise preparing for their final journey to the hereafter over amassing the excess aspects of this material world. They will strive in fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining

from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, which includes taking from this world in order to fulfill their needs and the needs of their dependents without waste, excessiveness or extravagance.

Muslims should not treat the Holy Pilgrimage as a holiday and a place to shop as this attitude defeats the purpose of it. It must remind Muslims of their final journey to the hereafter a journey which has no return and no second chances. Only this will inspire one to fulfill the Holy Pilgrimage correctly and prepare adequately for the hereafter.

Parable 25

Chapter 22 – Al Hajj, Verses 73-74

يَتَأْتِيهَا النَّاسُ ضُرِبَ مَثَلٍ فَاَسْتَمِعُوا لَهُ ۗ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ تَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ
دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ لَنْ يَخْلُقُوْا ذُبَابًا وَّلَوْ اَجْتَمَعُوْا لَهُ ۗ وَاِنْ يَسْلُبْهُمُ الذُّبَابُ شَيْئًا لَا
يَسْتَنْقِذُوْهُ مِنْهُ ضَعُفَ الطَّالِبِ وَاَلْمَطْلُوْبِ ﴿٧٣﴾

مَا قَدَرُوْا اللّٰهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ ۗ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَقَوِيٌّْ عَزِيْزٌ ﴿٧٤﴾

“O people, an example is presented, so listen carefully to it. Indeed, those you invoke besides Allah will never create [as much as] a fly, even if they gathered together for it [i.e., that purpose]. And if the fly should steal from them a [tiny] thing, they could not recover it from him. Weak are the pursuer and pursued.

They have not appraised Allah with true appraisal. Indeed, Allah is Powerful and Exalted in Might.”

“O people, an example is presented, so listen carefully to it...”

Even though, the number of preachers has increased over time and accessing information has become easier yet the strength of muslims has only weakened. One of the reasons is that many muslims have adopted a mentality which has hindered them from learning and acting on Islamic knowledge namely, they believe merely listening to Islamic knowledge is good enough to succeed. This is a trap of the Devil and completely contradicts the attitude of the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, and the righteous predecessors. They not only listened to religious knowledge but they fully intended and fulfilled this intention by acting on the knowledge they heard. Failing to act in this way has caused the faith of muslims to weaken. It is the reason why some muslims have spent decades attending religious gatherings and talks yet have not changed for the better at all. The danger of this attitude is that eventually people will fall lower by believing that they can simply declare Islam with their tongues without the need to listen or act on religious teachings. Muslims will be left with ignorance as their guide which will only lead them to destruction.

“O people, an example is presented, so listen carefully to it...”

Listening correctly to the word of Allah, the Exalted, is the only way one can correctly adhere to its teachings. It is important to understand the difference between hearing and listening. Hearing is simply acknowledging a sound with one's mind even if they fail to make sense of the noise. For example, a person may hear someone shouting at them from a great distance but they will not be able to understand what they are saying. Whereas, listening involves hearing a sound and understanding it so that one's behaviour changes. For example, a person giving a specific verbal instruction to another who responds appropriately after hearing and understanding the instructions.

Muslims need to hear the word of Allah, the Exalted, and strive to understand it so that it affects their behaviour in a positive way. Unfortunately, many Muslims have failed to live up to this in respect to the Holy Quran as they are good at hearing the recitation of the Holy Quran but fail to correctly listen to it which involves understanding and acting on its teachings.

To conclude, simply hearing the word of Allah, the Exalted, is not good enough to obtain success one must strive to instead truly listen to it.

“...Indeed, those you invoke besides Allāh will never create [as much as] a fly, even if they gathered together for it [i.e., that purpose]...”

Allah, the Exalted, is Al Khaliq, which means the Creator, Al Baari which means the Maker and Al Musawwir which means the Fashioner.

The Creator is the One who brings something into existence. In reality, there is no Creator except Allah, the Exalted, as He is the only One who creates without any aid from another. On other hand, an inventor only invents things through the aid of Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 37 As Saffat, verse 96:

“While Allah created you and that which you do?”

The Maker is the One who arranges all of the creation and prepares them for receiving the forms He has chosen for them which is linked to the next divine name mentioned earlier namely, the Fashioner.

The Creator makes things manifest. The Maker chooses their shape, appearance, and time of creation. The Fashioner fashions the creation according to His divine will.

After understanding these divine names a muslim must trust Allah, the Exalted, in all situations. If Allah, the Exalted, created and manages the entire universe He is more than capable in sorting out a person's problems. In addition, these names indicate that Allah, the Exalted, is the One who creates and chooses all things. So a muslim should not challenge the choice of Allah, the Exalted, as this leads to nothing except disappointment. It is therefore better to submit obediently and patiently await relief knowing that Allah, the Exalted, only decrees the best for His servants even if this wisdom is not obvious to them. As a muslim is short sighted it is better to trust in the Creator whose wisdom has no limits. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

“...And if the fly should steal from them a [tiny] thing, they could not recover it from him...Indeed, Allāh is Powerful and Exalted in Might.”

Allah, the Exalted, is the One who over powers all things, who in reality is the only One who possesses power and might. Anyone else who possesses strength only does so because Allah, the Exalted, granted it to them. There is no atom in this world or in the next that can escape the power and authority of Allah, the Exalted.

As all power belongs to Allah, the Exalted, a muslim should therefore always remember that the strength to perform righteous deeds and refrain from sins comes from Allah, the Exalted, alone. This will remove any chance of pride creeping into their heart. An atom's worth of which is enough to take a person to Hell. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 266.

Whoever desires for their faith to become mighty must obey the All Mighty, Allah, the Exalted. Only then will they be granted strong faith which will aid them to overcome all difficulties so that they leave this world while Allah, the Exalted, is pleased with them. True obedience only lies in following the footsteps of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This includes fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 31:

“Say, [O Muhammad], “If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins.”

Truly Knowing Allah, the Exalted, is All Mighty should prevent a muslim from sinning. As they should know there is no way to escape the might of Allah, the Exalted. In addition, when a muslim engraves this divine name into their heart it prevents them from committing oppression and wronging others. They become fully aware that even if there is no person powerful enough to seek justice from them Allah, the Exalted, will certainly take them to account and punish them in both worlds. As confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6579, oppression to others may cause the All Mighty, Allah, the Exalted, to hurl them into Hell on Judgment Day.

“...Indeed, those you invoke besides Allāh will never create [as much as] a fly, even if they gathered together for it [i.e., that purpose]. And if the fly should steal from them a [tiny] thing, they could not recover it from him. Weak are the pursuer and pursued. They have not appraised Allāh with true appraisal...”

An idol which is created by a person cannot be a God. In fact, the person who created it has a higher status than it. If one claims the spirit of their God enters the idol after its manufacture then this would mean their God is completely dependent on people to create a body for it. A true God is not dependent on another in fact, everyone else is dependent on it. In addition, the fact that an idol does not possess any senses proves that it cannot benefit itself or others. Therefore, it is not worthy of being worshipped as the very purpose of worship is to gain benefit from the one being worshipped.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, indicated the infinite and absolute power and authority of Allah, the Exalted, in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2516. This Hadith advises that the entire creation cannot benefit a person if Allah, the Exalted, did not desire them to do so. Similarly, the entire creation together could not harm someone if Allah, the Exalted, did not desire them to. This means only what Allah, the Exalted, decides happens within the universe. It is important to note, that this advice does not indicate one should abandon using means, such as medicine, but it means that one can use the means as they have been created by none other than Allah, the Exalted, but they must understand that Allah, the Exalted, is the only One who decides the outcome of all things. For example, there are many sick people who take medicine and recover from their illness. But there are others who take

medicine and do not recover. This indicates that another factor decides the end result namely, the will of Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 9 At Tawbah, verse 51:

“Say, “Never will we be struck except by what Allah has decreed for us...”

The one who understands this knows that anything that affected them could not have been avoided. And those things which missed them could never have been obtained.

It is important to note, that whatever the end result even if it is against a person's desire they should remain patient and truly believe Allah, the Exalted, has chosen the best for them even if they do not observe the wisdom behind the outcome. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

When one truly understands this truth they stop relying on the creation knowing they cannot innately harm or benefit them. Instead, they turn to Allah, the Exalted, seeking His support and protection through sincere obedience by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and

by facing destiny with patience. This leads a muslim to trusting in Allah, the Exalted. It also encourages one to only fear Allah, the Exalted, as they know the creation cannot harm them without the will of Allah, the Exalted.

Recognising that all things which occur within one's life and the universe originate from Allah, the Exalted, is a part of understanding the Oneness of Allah, the Exalted. This is a topic which has no end and goes beyond only superficially believing that there is none worthy of worship except Allah, the Exalted. When this is fixed in one's heart then they only hope in Allah, the Exalted, knowing He is the only One who can help them. They will only submit and obey Allah, the Exalted, in all aspects of their life. In reality, a person only obeys another in order to receive protection from harm or gain some benefit. Only Allah, the Exalted, can grant this therefore only He deserves to be obeyed and worshipped. If anyone chooses the obedience of another over the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, this shows they believe that this other can bring them some sort of benefit or protect them from harm. This is a sign of the weakness of their faith. The source of all things which occur is Allah, the Exalted, so muslims should only obey Him. Chapter 35 Fatir, verse 2:

“Whatever Allah grants to people of mercy - none can withhold it; and whatever He withholds - none can release it thereafter...”

It is important to note, that obeying a person which encourages the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in reality is obeying Allah, the Exalted. For example, obeying the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 80:

“He who obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah...”

“...Weak are the pursuer and pursued.”

The one who pursues what is innately weak will always remain weak. The one who pursues the pleasure of the All Mighty Allah, the Exalted, will be empowered to obtain safety and peace in both worlds.

In a divine Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6502, Allah, the Exalted, declares that when one strives in fulfilling the obligatory duties and performing voluntary righteous deeds He blesses their five senses so that they use them in obedience to Him. This righteous servant will very rarely commit sins. This increase in guidance has been indicated in Chapter 29 Al Ankabut, verse 69:

“And those who strive for Us - We will surely guide them to Our ways...”

This muslim reaches the level of excellence which has been discussed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 99. This is when a muslim performs actions, such as the prayer, as if they observe Allah, the Exalted. The one who reaches this level will guard their mind and body from sins. This is the one who when they speak they speak for Allah, the Exalted, when they are silent they are silent for Allah, the Exalted. When they act they act for Him and when they are still they are for His sake. This is an aspect of monotheism and understanding the Oneness of Allah, the Exalted.

The next thing mentioned in the main Hadith under discussion is that this muslim's supplication will be fulfilled and they will be granted the refuge and protection of Allah, the Exalted. This is a clear lesson for those who desire lawful worldly things. They should not seek to obtain them using any means except through the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted. No spiritual teacher or anyone else will be able to grant things to a person unless the person strives in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted and they are destined to obtain those things.

To conclude this Hadith makes it clear that the proximity of Allah, the Exalted, is only gained through sincere obedience to Him in the form of fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and being patient with destiny. This is the path of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and the only path of success in both worlds.

“...Weak are the pursuer and pursued.”

The one who pursues what is innately weak will always remain weak. The one who pursues the pleasure of the All Mighty Allah, the Exalted, will be empowered to obtain safety and peace in both worlds.

It is important for muslims to strive in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience as Allah, the Exalted, has guaranteed a good life in both worlds for the one who behaves in this manner. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

“Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do.”

This good life will protect a muslim from severe grief, depression and other extreme moods and mental disorders which can destroy a person's life. Even though, muslims will face difficulties which will sadden them but if they obey Allah, the Exalted, this sadness will never become extreme and effect their entire life on a long term basis. This is because a muslim who strives in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, has an excellent reason to continue moving forward through their difficulty without giving up and

turning to depression and even suicide. For example, they look forward to the countless reward which will be granted to the patient. Chapter 39 Az Zumar, verse 10:

“...Indeed, the patient will be given their reward without account [i.e., limit].”

Whereas, the muslim who does not strive in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, and only claims the title of being a muslim with their tongue will not be granted this attitude and a good life. And whenever they face difficulties it will drive them to extreme moods and mental disorders which will destroy their entire life.

“...Weak are the pursuer and pursued.”

The one who pursues what is innately weak will always remain weak. The one who pursues the pleasure of the All Mighty Allah, the Exalted, will be empowered to obtain safety and peace in both worlds.

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2465, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that whoever prioritises the hereafter over this material world will be granted contentment, their affairs will be corrected for them and they will receive their destined provision in an easy way.

This half of the Hadith means that whoever correctly fulfils their duties in respect to Allah, the Exalted, and to the creation, such as providing for their family in a lawful manner while avoiding the excess of this material world will be granted contentment. This is when one is pleased with what they possess without being greedy and actively striving to obtain more worldly things. In reality, the one who is content with what they possess is a truly rich person even if they possess little wealth as they become independent of things. Independence of anything makes one rich in respect to it.

In addition, this attitude will allow one to comfortably deal with any worldly issues which may arise during their life. This is because the less one interacts with the material world and focuses on the hereafter the less

worldly issues they will face. The less worldly issues a person faces the more comfortable their life will become. For example, the one who possesses one house will have fewer issues to deal with in respect to it, such as a broken cooker, than the one who possesses ten houses. Finally, this person will easily and pleasantly obtain their lawful provision. Not only this but Allah, the Exalted, will place such grace in their provision that it will cover all their responsibilities and necessities meaning, it will satisfy them and their dependents.

But as mentioned in the other half of this Hadith the one who prioritises the material world over the hereafter meaning, by neglecting their duties or striving for the unnecessary and excess of this material world will find that their need, meaning greed, for worldly things is never satisfied which by definition makes them poor even if they possess much wealth. These people will go from one worldly issue to another throughout the day failing to achieve contentment as they have opened too many worldly doors. And they will receive their destined provision with difficulty and it will not give them satisfaction and never seem enough to fill their greed. This may even push them towards the unlawful which only leads to a loss in both worlds.

“They have not appraised Allah with true appraisal...”

Even though achieving this is impossible none the less a muslim must strive to achieve this according to their own potential. For example, in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 2736, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that whoever knows the ninety nine names of Allah, the Exalted, will enter Paradise.

Knowing does not only refer to memorizing them. It actually means to study them and act on them according to one's status and potential. For example, Allah, the Exalted, is the Most Merciful according to His infinite status. This attribute means that Allah, the Exalted, bestows countless favours on the creation and is always extremely kind to them. This same characteristic has been attributed to others such as the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 9 At Tawbah, verse 128:

“There has certainly come to you a Messenger from among yourselves. Grievous to him is what you suffer; [he is] concerned over you [i.e., your guidance] and to the believers is kind and merciful.”

When used in reference to the creation merciful means soft-hearted and compassionate. Similarly, Allah, the Exalted, is All Forgiving according to His infinite status. And adopting this attribute by forgiving others is

something which has been encouraged in Islam. Chapter 24 An Nur, verse 22:

“...and let them pardon and overlook. Would you not like that Allah should forgive you?...”

So the divine attributes of Allah, the Exalted, can be adopted by muslims according to their status.

Therefore, muslims must first understand the meaning of the divine attributes and names and then adopt the meaning of the names in their character through action until they become firmly rooted into their spiritual heart so that they can achieve noble character.

Parable 26

Chapter 24 – An Nur, Verses 35-38

❖ اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ مِثْلُ نُورِهِ كَمِشْكَاةٍ فِيهَا مِصْبَاحٌ الْمِصْبَاحُ
فِي زُجَاجَةٍ الزُّجَاجَةُ كَأَنَّهَا كَوْكَبٌ دُرِّيٌّ يُوقَدُ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ مُبْرَكَةٍ زَيْتُونَةٍ لَا
شَرْقِيَّةٍ وَلَا غَرْبِيَّةٍ يَكَادُ زَيْتُهَا يُضِيءُ وَلَوْ لَمْ تَمْسَسْهُ نَارٌ نُورٌ عَلَى نُورٍ
يَهْدِي اللَّهُ لِنُورِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَلَ لِلنَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ
عَلِيمٌ ﴿٣٥﴾

فِي بُيُوتٍ أُذِنَ لِلَّهِ أَنْ تَرْفَعَ وَيَذَكَرَ فِيهَا أَسْمُهُ يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ فِيهَا بِالْغُدُوِّ
وَالْأَصَالِ ﴿٣٦﴾

رِجَالٌ لَا تُلْهِيهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَلَا بَيْعٌ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَإِقَامِ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءِ الزَّكَاةِ يَخَافُونَ
يَوْمًا تَتَقَلَّبُ فِيهِ الْقُلُوبُ وَالْأَبْصَارُ ﴿٣٧﴾

لِيَجْزِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنَ مَا عَمِلُوا وَيَزِيدَهُم مِّن فَضْلِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَرْزُقُ مَن يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ

حِسَابٍ ۝ ٣٨

“Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp; the lamp is within glass, the glass as if it were a pearly [white] star lit from [the oil of] a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light. Allah guides to His light whom He wills. And Allah presents examples for the people, and Allah is Knowing of all things.”

[Such niches are] in houses [i.e., mosques] which Allah has ordered to be raised and that His name be mentioned [i.e., praised] therein; exalting Him within them in the morning and the evenings.

[Are] men whom neither commerce nor sale distracts from the remembrance of Allah and performance of prayer and giving of zakah. They fear a Day in which the hearts and eyes will [fearfully] turn about.

That Allah may reward them [according to] the best of what they did and increase them from His bounty. And Allah gives provision to whom He wills without account [i.e., limit].”

“Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth...Allāh guides to His light whom He wills...”

Allah, the Exalted, is the one who draws all things from the darkness of non-existence to the light of being. He sheds light on all good and bad things for His servants so that they can be rightly guided to the abode of peace in the hereafter. He is the One who enlightens the Heavens and the Earth and everything within it.

The Muslim who understands this divine name will act on the advice and commands of Allah, the Exalted, as they shed light on the truth and guide people to eternal success.

A Muslim must act on this divine name by avoiding those actions which encompass their spiritual heart with darkness namely, sins. Instead they must perform those actions which enlighten their spiritual heart and provide them a guiding light in both worlds. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3334.

“...The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp; the lamp is within glass, the glass as if it were a pearly [white] star lit from [the oil of] a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light...”

This parable describes a person who possesses an inner light that was granted to them when they accepted Allah, the Exalted, as their Lord before they were sent to Earth. When this inner light makes contact with the light of divine revelation namely, the Holy Quran, through fulfilling its rights, then the two join and the strength of this Muslim's faith increases and radiates outwards so that it benefits them and others in both worlds.

This verse is connected to chapter 7 Al A'raf, verse 172 of the Holy Quran:

“And [mention] when your Lord took from the children of Adam - from their loins - their descendants and made them testify of themselves, [saying to them], "Am I not your Lord?" They said, "Yes, we have testified." [This] - lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection, "Indeed, we were of this unaware.””

All humans were brought forth so that they could take this pledge to Allah, the Exalted. The lesson to understand behind this incident is that all people accepted Allah, the Exalted, as their Lord. Meaning, the One who created

them, sustains them and the One who will judge their deeds on the Day of Judgment. It is important for all Muslims to fulfil this pledge through sincere obedience to Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

This verse indicates that Allah, the Exalted, did not ask the creation if they were His servants instead, He asked them if He was their Lord. This is an indication that the will of Allah, the Exalted, should always come before the will and desire of a person. If a Muslim has a choice between pleasing Allah, the Exalted, or someone else this pledge should remind them that the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted, must come first.

This question is also an indication of the infinite mercy of Allah, the Exalted, as He hinted the answer to the creation by wording it as He did. This shows Muslims that even though Allah, the Exalted, is the Lord who will judge their deeds yet, He is also infinitely merciful.

The effect of this covenant is deeply embedded in the hearts of all mankind. In fact, this is the nature which has been indicated in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6755. From this one can understand that it is important for people not to search for the truth after making their minds up beforehand and then search for evidence which supports their predetermined belief. Only those who open their minds without making a predetermined decision will unlock this covenant which has been embedded deep in their hearts. In fact, having an open mind is important in

all issues not just in matters of faith as it helps one to find the truth and the best path. This attitude strengthens society and always encourages peace between people. But the stubbornness of those who predetermine their choices will always create wedges between members of a society which can affect people on a national level. It is important for Muslims not to always believe they are correct in worldly matters otherwise they will adopt this stubborn attitude. This will prevent them from accepting the opinions of others which will lead to arguments, enmity and fractured relationships. Therefore, this attitude should be avoided at all costs.

Finally, the fact that this covenant is deeply embedded in a person's heart indicates that it is a duty on Muslims to uncover it. This will lead one to certainty of faith which is much stronger than faith based on hearsay meaning, being told by one's family that they are a Muslim. Certainty of faith allows a Muslim to overcome all difficulties successfully in this world while fulfilling their religious and worldly duties. One only fails in tests and their duties because of weakness in their faith. Certainty of faith is only obtained by gaining and acting on the knowledge found within the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 53:

“We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth...”

“...The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp; the lamp is within glass, the glass as if it were a pearly [white] star lit from [the oil of] a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light...”

This parable describes a person who possesses an inner light that was granted to them when they accepted Allah, the Exalted, as they Lord before they were sent to Earth. When this inner light makes contact with the light of divine revelation namely, the Holy Quran, through fulfilling its rights, then the two join and the strength of this Muslim’s faith increases and radiates outwards so that it benefits them and others in both worlds.

In a Hadith found in Imam Munzari's, Awareness and Apprehension, number 30, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that the Holy Quran will intercede on Judgment Day. Those who follow it during their lives on Earth will be led to Paradise on Judgment Day. But those who neglect it during their lives on Earth will find that it pushes them into Hell on Judgment Day.

The Holy Quran is a book of guidance. It is not merely a book of recitation. Muslims must therefore strive to fulfill all aspects of the Holy Quran to ensure that it guides them to success in both worlds. The first aspect is reciting it correctly and regularly. The second aspect is to understand it. And the final aspect is to act on its teachings according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Those who behave in such a manner are the ones who are given glad tidings of

right guidance through every difficulty in this world and its intercession on the Day of Judgment. But as warned by this Hadith the Holy Quran is only guidance and a mercy for those who correctly act on its aspects according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. But those who misinterpret it and instead act according to their desires in order to gain worldly things, such as fame, will be deprived of this right guidance and its intercession on Judgment Day. In fact, their complete loss in both worlds will only increase until they sincerely repent. Chapter 17 Al Isra, verse 82:

“And We send down of the Quran that which is healing and mercy for the believers, but it does not increase the wrongdoers except in loss.”

Finally, it is important to understand that even though the Holy Quran is a cure for worldly problems a Muslim should not only use it for this purpose. Meaning, they should not only recite it in order to fix their worldly problems thereby, treating the Holy Quran like a tool which is removed during a difficulty and then placed back in a toolbox. The main function of the Holy Quran is to guide one to the hereafter safely. Neglecting this main function and only using it to fix one's worldly problems is not correct as it contradicts the behaviour of a true Muslim. It is like the one who purchases a car with many different accessories yet, it possesses no engine. There is no doubt that this person is simply foolish.

“...The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp; the lamp is within glass, the glass as if it were a pearly [white] star lit from [the oil of] a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light...”

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All Muslims have faith in Islam but the strength of their faith varies from person to person. For example, the one who follows the teachings of Islam because their family told them to is not the same as the one who believes in it through evidence. A person who has heard about something will not believe in it in the same way as the one who has witnessed the thing with their own eyes.

As confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224, gaining useful knowledge is a duty on all Muslims. One of the reasons for this is that it is the best way a Muslim can strengthen their faith in Islam. This is important to pursue as the stronger one’s certainty of faith the greater the chance they will remain steadfast on the correct path, especially when facing difficulties. In addition, having certainty of faith has been described as one of the best things one can possess in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn

Majah, number 3849. This knowledge should be obtained by studying the Holy Quran and the Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, through a reliable source.

Allah, the Exalted, did not only declare a truth in the Holy Quran but He also provided evidence for it through examples. Not only examples which are to be found in the past nations but examples which have been placed in one's very own life. For example, in the Holy Quran Allah, the Exalted, advises that sometimes a person loves a thing even though it will cause them trouble if they obtained it. Similarly, they might hate a thing while there is much hidden good in it for them. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

There are many examples of this truth in history such as the Pact of Hudaiba. Some Muslims believed this pact, which was made with the non-Muslims of Mecca, would completely favour the latter group. Yet, history clearly shows that it favoured Islam and the Muslims. This event is discussed in the Hadiths found in Sahih Bukhari, numbers 2731 and 2732.

If one reflects on their own life they will find many examples when they believed something was good when it was actually bad for them and vice

versa. These examples prove the authenticity of this verse and help one's faith strengthen.

Another example is found in chapter 79 An Naziat, verse 46:

“It will be, on the Day they see it (Judgement Day) as though they had not remained [in the world] except for an afternoon or a morning thereof.”

If one turns the pages of history they will clearly observe how great empires came and went. But when they left they passed away in such a way as if they were only on Earth for a moment. All but a few of their signs have faded away as if they were never present on Earth in the first place. Similarly, when one reflects on their own life they will realise that no matter how old they are and no matter how slow certain days might have felt overall their life so far has passed in a flash. Understanding the truthfulness of this verse strengthens one's certainty of faith and this inspires them to prepare for the hereafter before their time runs out.

The Holy Quran and the Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, are full of such examples. Therefore, one should strive to learn and act on these divine teachings so that they adopt certainty of faith. The one who achieves this will not be shaken by any difficulty they face and will remain steadfast on the path which leads to the gates of Paradise. Chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 53:

“We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth...”

“...The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp; the lamp is within glass, the glass as if it were a pearly [white] star lit from [the oil of] a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light. Allāh guides to His light whom He wills...”

This parable describes a person who possesses an inner light that was granted to them when they accepted Allah, the Exalted, as they Lord before they were sent to Earth. When this inner light makes contact with the light of divine revelation namely, the Holy Quran, through fulfilling its rights, then the two join and the strength of this Muslim’s faith increases and radiates outwards so that it benefits them and others in both worlds.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2645, that when Allah, the Exalted, desires to give someone good He provides them with Islamic knowledge.

There is no doubt that every Muslim irrespective of the strength of their faith desires good in both worlds. Even though many Muslims incorrectly believe that this good which they desire lies in fame, wealth, authority, companionship and their career this Hadith makes it crystal clear that true lasting good lies in gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge. It is important to note a branch of religious knowledge is useful worldly knowledge whereby one earns lawful provision in order to fulfil their necessities and the necessities of their dependents. Even though the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has pointed out where

good lies yet it is a shame how many Muslims do not place much value in this. They in most cases only strive to obtain the bare minimum of Islamic knowledge in order to fulfil their obligatory duties and fail to acquire and act on more such as the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Instead they dedicate their efforts on worldly things believing true good is found there. Many Muslims fail to appreciate that the righteous predecessors had to journey for weeks on end just to learn a single verse or Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, whereas today one can study Islamic teachings without leaving their home. Yet, many fail to make use of this blessing given to the modern day Muslims. Out of His infinite mercy Allah, the Exalted, through his Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has not only pointed out where true good lies but He has also placed this good at one's finger tips. Allah, the Exalted, has informed mankind of where an eternal buried treasure is located which can solve all the problems they may encounter in both worlds. But Muslims will only obtain this good once they struggle to acquire and act on it.

“...Allāh guides to His light whom He wills...”

Allah, the Exalted, is the One who guides His servants to what is beneficial for them in both worlds and guides them away from anything which harms them. Chapter 91 Ash Shams, verse 8:

“And inspired it [with discernment of] its wickedness and its righteousness.”

The Muslim who understands this divine name will seek guidance in worldly and religious matters from none other than Allah, the Exalted, through the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Whoever seeks guidance from anything else will not find lasting success.

A Muslim should act on this divine name by guiding others towards the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, and what is beneficial to them in both worldly and religious matters according to their knowledge. This will ensure they become a true believer meaning, the one who loves for others what they desire for themselves. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2515.

“...And Allāh presents examples for the people...”

One will only benefit from these examples when they gain and act on Islamic knowledge.

A great distraction which prevents one from submitting to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, is ignorance. It can be argued that it is the origin of every sin as the one who truly knows the consequences of sins would never commit them. This refers to true beneficial knowledge which is knowledge that is acted upon. In reality, all knowledge which is not acted on is not beneficial knowledge. The example of the one who behaves in this manner is described in the Holy Quran as a donkey which carries books of knowledge which do not benefit it. Chapter 62 Al Jumu'ah, verse 5:

“...and then did not take it on (did not act upon knowledge) is like that of a donkey who carries volumes [of books]...”

A person who acts on their knowledge rarely slips up and commits sins intentionally. In fact, when this occurs it is only caused by a moment of ignorance where a person forgets to act on their knowledge which results in them sinning.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, once highlighted the seriousness of ignorance in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2322. He declared that everything in the material world is cursed except for the remembrance of Allah, the Exalted, whatever is connected to this remembrance, the scholar and the student of knowledge. This means that all the blessings in the material world will become a curse for the one who is ignorant as they will misuse them thereby committing sins.

In fact, ignorance can be considered a person's worse enemy as it prevents them from protecting themselves from harm and gaining benefit all of which can only be achieved through acting on knowledge. The ignorant commits sins without being aware of them. How can one avoid a sin if they do not know what is considered a sin? Ignorance causes one to neglect their obligatory duties. How can one fulfil their duties if they are unaware of what their duties are?

It is therefore a duty on all Muslims to gain enough knowledge to fulfil all their obligatory duties and avoid sins. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224.

“...And Allāh presents examples for the people...”

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2645, that when Allah, the Exalted, desires to give someone good He provides them with Islamic knowledge.

There is no doubt that every Muslim irrespective of the strength of their faith desires good in both worlds. Even though many Muslims incorrectly believe that this good which they desire lies in fame, wealth, authority, companionship and their career this Hadith makes it crystal clear that true lasting good lies in gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge. It is important to note a branch of religious knowledge is useful worldly knowledge whereby one earns lawful provision in order to fulfil their necessities and the necessities of their dependents. Even though the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has pointed out where good lies yet it is a shame how many Muslims do not place much value in this. They in most cases only strive to obtain the bare minimum of Islamic knowledge in order to fulfil their obligatory duties and fail to acquire and act on more such as the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Instead they dedicate their efforts on worldly things believing true good is found there. Many Muslims fail to appreciate that the righteous predecessors had to journey for weeks on end just to learn a single verse or Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, whereas today one can study Islamic teachings without leaving their home. Yet, many fail to make use of this blessing given to the modern day Muslims. Out of His infinite mercy Allah, the Exalted, through his Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has not only pointed out where true good lies but He has also

placed this good at one's finger tips. Allah, the Exalted, has informed mankind of where an eternal buried treasure is located which can solve all the problems they may encounter in both worlds. But Muslims will only obtain this good once they struggle to acquire and act on it.

“...and Allāh is Knowing of all things.”

Allah, the Exalted, is All Knowing as nothing escapes His knowledge whether in the Heavens or the Earth whether visible or not. The knowledge of Allah, the Exalted, has no limit, it has no beginning and no end and it is innate meaning, no one gave it to Him. Every creation which possesses knowledge has been granted it by none other than Allah, the Exalted. The knowledge of the creation is limited and has a beginning. Allah, the Exalted, is fully aware of one's outer and inner beings at all time.

The Muslim who understands this divine name will refrain from sins both outward and inward rightfully believing Allah, the Exalted, knows all this and will hold them accountable for their actions. In addition, they will not stress about worldly issues understanding that Allah, the Exalted, is fully aware of them and will respond to them at the right time.

A Muslim should act on this divine name by striving to gain and act on useful knowledge both worldly and religious which is the path of piety. This is the true inheritor of the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, which has been indicated in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 223.

“...The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp; the lamp is within glass, the glass as if it were a pearly [white] star lit from [the oil of] a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light...[Such niches are] in houses [i.e., mosques] which Allāh has ordered to be raised and that His name be mentioned [i.e., praised] therein; exalting Him within them in the morning and the evenings.”

This parable describes a person who possesses an inner light that was granted to them when they accepted Allah, the Exalted, as they Lord before they were sent to Earth. When this inner light makes contact with the light of divine revelation namely, the Holy Quran, through fulfilling its rights, then the two join and the strength of this Muslim’s faith increases and radiates outwards so that it benefits them and others in both worlds.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 1528, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that the most beloved places to Allah, the Exalted, are the Mosques and the most hated places to Him are the market places.

Islam does not prohibit Muslims from going to places other than the Mosques. Nor does it command them to always inhabit the Mosques. But it is important that they prioritize attending Mosques for the congregational prayers and attending religious gatherings over visiting the market places unnecessarily.

When a need arises there is no harm to attend other places, such as shopping centers, but a Muslim should avoid going to them unnecessarily as they are places where sins more often occur. Whereas, the Mosques are meant to be a sanctuary from sins and a comfortable place to obey Allah, the Exalted, in. This involves fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience. Just like a student benefits from a library as it is an environment created for studying similarly, Muslims can benefit from Mosques as their very purpose is to encourage Muslims to obtain and act on useful knowledge so that they can obey Allah, the Exalted.

Not only should a Muslim prioritize the Mosques over other places but they should encourage others such as their children to do the same. In fact, it is an excellent place for the youth to avoid sins, crimes and bad company, which lead to nothing but trouble and regret in both worlds.

“...The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp; the lamp is within glass, the glass as if it were a pearly [white] star lit from [the oil of] a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light...[Such niches are] in houses [i.e., mosques] which Allāh has ordered to be raised and that His name be mentioned [i.e., praised] therein; exalting Him within them in the morning and the evenings.”

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In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3235, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised walking towards the Mosques for the congregational prayers and remaining in the Mosque after the congregational prayer has finished erases sins.

The first act mentioned in the main Hadith under discussion which erases minor sins namely, taking many steps towards the Mosques to offer the congregational prayers has been discussed in many Hadiths. For example, a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 2119, advises that the one who performs ablution at home and sets out for the Mosque to perform the congregational prayer will have a sin forgiven or their rank raised by one degree for every step they take. The Angels will keep praying for their

forgiveness as long as they remain inside the Mosque without breaking their ablution and refrain from causing trouble for others. Finally, they will be recorded as one who is offering prayer as long as they are waiting for the congregational prayer to begin. This same Hadith advises that the congregational prayer is 25 times greater in reward than performing it at home or at work.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 2891, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that every step one takes towards offering the prayer in congregation at a Mosque is recorded as charity.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, gave glad tidings of a complete light on the Day of Resurrection for those who walk to the Mosques for the congregational prayers in the dark. This refers to the morning and late evening obligatory prayers. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 780.

Praying in congregation is so important that the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all, regarded the one who did not attend it regularly without a good reason a hypocrite. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 850.

The second action which erases minor sins mentioned in the main Hadith is staying in the Mosque after the congregational prayer has concluded. All are aware of the reward of a person who strives in Holy War. The one who remains in the Mosque after the congregational prayer waiting for the next one is counted as the one who strives in Holy War. This is advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 51. The one who remains in the Mosque must observe its etiquettes. They must busy themselves in good actions such as, reciting the Holy Quran and avoid causing any disruption to others. The one who remains in the Mosque reciting and studying the Holy Quran with others will be blessed with tranquillity, mercy, the company of the Angels and best of all they will be mentioned by Allah, the Exalted, to the Angels in the Heavens. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6853.

The one whose heart is attached to the Mosques like this has been promised shade from the unbearable heat of Judgment Day. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6806.

Staying in Mosques can be difficult especially, in this day and age, when there are so many different distractions readily available. This act contradicts one's desires to join and participate in these activities hence why the reward of this deed is so great.

“...The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp; the lamp is within glass, the glass as if it were a pearly [white] star lit from [the oil of] a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light...[Such niches are] in houses [i.e., mosques] which Allāh has ordered to be raised and that His name be mentioned [i.e., praised] therein; exalting Him within them in the morning and the evenings. [Are] men whom neither commerce nor sale distracts from the remembrance of Allāh...”

This parable describes a person who possesses an inner light that was granted to them when they accepted Allah, the Exalted, as they Lord before they were sent to Earth. When this inner light makes contact with the light of divine revelation namely, the Holy Quran, through fulfilling its rights, then the two join and the strength of this Muslim’s faith increases and radiates outwards so that it benefits them and others in both worlds.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6407, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that the difference between the person who remembers Allah, the Exalted, and the one who does not is like a living person compared to a dead person.

It is important for Muslims who desire to create a strong connection with Allah, the Exalted, so that they can overcome all difficulties in this world and in the hereafter successfully to remember Allah, the Exalted, as much as possible. Put simply, the more they remember Him the more they will achieve this vital goal.

This is achieved by practically acting on the three levels of the remembrance of Allah, the Exalted. The first level is to remember Allah, the Exalted, internally and silently. This includes correcting one's intention so that they only act in order to please Allah, the Exalted. The second is by remembering Allah, the Exalted, through one's tongue. But the highest and most effective way of strengthening one's bond with Allah, the Exalted, is practically remembering Him with one's limbs. This is achieved by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This requires one to gain and act on Islamic knowledge which in turn is the root of all good and success in both worlds.

Those who remain on the first two levels will receive reward depending on their intention but they are unlikely to increase the strength of their faith and piety unless they move to the third and highest level of the remembrance of Allah, the Exalted.

“...The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp; the lamp is within glass, the glass as if it were a pearly [white] star lit from [the oil of] a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light...[Such niches are] in houses [i.e., mosques] which Allāh has ordered to be raised and that His name be mentioned [i.e., praised] therein; exalting Him within them in the morning and the evenings. [Are] men whom neither commerce nor sale distracts from the remembrance of Allāh...”

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In reality, in most cases nothing in this material world in itself is good or bad, such as wealth. What makes a thing good or bad is the way it is used. It is important to understand that the very purpose of everything which was created by Allah, the Exalted, was for it to be used correctly according to the teachings of Islam. When something is not used correctly it in reality becomes useless. For example, wealth is useful in both worlds when it is used correctly such as being spent on the necessities of a person and their dependents. But it can become useless and even a curse for its bearer if it is not used correctly, such as being hoarded or spent on sinful things. Simply hoarding wealth causes wealth to lose value. How can paper and metal coins one tucks away be useful? In this respect, there is no

difference between a blank piece of paper and a note of money. It is only useful when it is used correctly.

So if a Muslim desires all their worldly possessions to become a blessing for them in both worlds all they have to do is use them correctly according to the teachings found in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. But if they use them incorrectly then the same blessing will become a burden and curse for them in both worlds. It is as simple as that.

“...The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp; the lamp is within glass, the glass as if it were a pearly [white] star lit from [the oil of] a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light...[Such niches are] in houses [i.e., mosques] which Allāh has ordered to be raised and that His name be mentioned [i.e., praised] therein; exalting Him within them in the morning and the evenings. [Are] men whom neither commerce nor sale distracts from the remembrance of Allāh...”

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Every worldly blessing a Muslim possesses is only a means which should aid them in reaching the hereafter safely. It is not an end in itself. For example, wealth is a means one should use in order to obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, fulfilling their necessities and the necessities of their dependents. It is not an end or an ultimate goal in itself.

This not only aids a Muslim in maintaining their focus on the hereafter but it also aids them whenever they lose worldly blessings. When a Muslim treats each worldly blessing, such as a child, as a means to please Allah, the

Exalted, and reach the hereafter safely then losing it will not have such a detrimental impact on them. They may become sad, which is an acceptable emotion, but they will not become grieved which leads to impatience and other mental problems, such as depression. This is because they firmly believe the worldly blessing they possessed was only a means so losing it does not cause a loss in the ultimate goal namely, Paradise, the loss of which is disastrous. Therefore, still possessing and concentrating on the ultimate goal will prevent them from becoming grieved.

In addition, they will understand that just like the thing they lost was only a means they firmly believe they will be provided with another means to reach and fulfil their ultimate goal by Allah, the Exalted. This will also prevent them from grieving. Whereas, the one who believes their worldly blessing is the end instead of a means will experience severe grief when losing it as their whole purpose and objective has been lost. This grief will lead to depression and other mental issues.

To conclude, Muslims should treat each blessing they possess as a means to reach the hereafter safely not as an end in itself. This is how one can possess things without being possessed by them. This is how they can keep worldly things in their hands and not in their hearts.

“...The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp; the lamp is within glass, the glass as if it were a pearly [white] star lit from [the oil of] a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light...[Such niches are] in houses [i.e., mosques] which Allāh has ordered to be raised and that His name be mentioned [i.e., praised] therein; exalting Him within them in the morning and the evenings. [Are] men whom neither commerce nor sale distracts from the remembrance of Allāh and performance of prayer...”

This parable describes a person who possesses an inner light that was granted to them when they accepted Allah, the Exalted, as they Lord before they were sent to Earth. When this inner light makes contact with the light of divine revelation namely, the Holy Quran, through fulfilling its rights, then the two join and the strength of this Muslim’s faith increases and radiates outwards so that it benefits them and others in both worlds.

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2618, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that the difference between belief and disbelief is abandoning the obligatory prayers.

In this day and age this has become far too common. Many give up their obligatory prayers for trivial reasons all of which are undoubtedly rejected. If the obligation of the prayer has not been removed for the one who is engaging in battle how can it be removed from anyone else? Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 102:

“And when you [i.e., the commander of an army] are among them and lead them in prayer, let a group of them stand [in prayer] with you and let them carry their arms. And when they have prostrated, let them be [in position] behind you and have the other group come forward which has not [yet] prayed and let them pray with you, taking precaution and carrying their arms...”

Neither is the traveller or the sick exempt from offering their obligatory prayers. The traveller has been advised to reduce the amount of cycles in some of the obligatory prayers in order to reduce the burden for them but they have not been exempt from offering them. Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 101:

“And when you travel throughout the land, there is no blame upon you for shortening the prayer...”

The sick have been advised to perform dry ablution if contact with water will harm them. Chapter 5 Al Ma'idah, verse 6:

“...But if you are ill or on a journey or one of you comes from the place of relieving himself or you have contacted women and do not find water, then seek clean earth and wipe over your faces and hands with it...”

In addition, the sick can perform the obligatory prayer in a way which is easier for them. Meaning, if they cannot stand they are allowed to sit and if they cannot sit they can lay down and offer the obligatory prayer. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 372. But again, no complete exemption is granted to the sick unless one is mentally ill which prevents them from comprehending the obligation of the prayer.

The other major issue is that some Muslims delay their obligatory prayers and offer them beyond their correct times. This clearly contradicts the Holy Quran as the believers have been described as those who offer their obligatory prayers on time. Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 103:

“...Indeed, prayer has been decreed upon the believers a decree of specified times.”

Many believe that the following verse of the Holy Quran refers to those who unnecessarily delay their obligatory prayers. This has been discussed in Tafseer Ibn Kathir, volume 10, pages 603-604. Chapter 107 Al Ma'un, verses 4-5:

“So woe to those who pray. [But] who are heedless of their prayer.”

Here Allah, the Exalted, has clearly cursed those who have adopted this evil trait. How can one find success in this world or the next if they have been removed from the mercy of Allah, the Exalted?

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, declared in a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 512, that delaying one's obligatory prayers unnecessarily is a sign of hypocrisy. The Holy Quran has made it clear that one of the main reasons people will enter Hell is failing to establish the obligatory prayers. Chapter 74 Al Muddaththir, verses 42-43:

“[And asking them], “What put you into Saqar?” They will say, “We were not of those who prayed.”

Abandoning the obligatory prayers is such a serious sin that the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, declared in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2621, that whoever commits this sin has disbelieved in Islam.

In addition, no other good deed will benefit a Muslim until their obligatory prayers are not established. A Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 553, clearly warns that one's good deeds are destroyed if they miss the afternoon obligatory prayer. If this is the case for abandoning one obligatory prayer can one imagine the penalty of abandoning them all?

Observing the obligatory prayers at their correct times has been advised to be one of the most beloved deeds to Allah, the Exalted, in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 252. From this one can determine that delaying the obligatory prayers beyond their time or completely missing them is one of the most hated deeds by Allah, the Exalted.

It is an important duty for all elders to encourage the children under their care to offer the obligatory prayers from a young age so that they establish them before it becomes legally binding on them. Those adults that delay this and wait until children are older have failed in this extremely important duty. The children who were only encouraged to offer the obligatory prayers when it became obligatory on them very rarely established them quickly. In most cases, it takes years for them to fulfil this important duty correctly. And the blame falls on the elders of the family especially, the parents. This is why the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has advised in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 495, that families most encourage their children to offer the obligatory prayers when they turn seven years old.

Another major issue many Muslims face is that they may offer the obligatory prayers but fail to do so correctly. For example, many do not

complete the stages of the prayer correctly and instead rush through it. In fact, a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 757, clearly warns that the one who prays like this has not prayed at all. Meaning, they are not recorded as a person who offered their prayer and therefore their obligation has not been fulfilled. A Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 265, clearly warns that the prayer of the one who does not settle in each position of the prayer is not accepted.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, described the one who does not bow or prostrate correctly in the prayer as the worse thief. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Muwatta Malik, Book number 9, Hadith number 75. Unfortunately, many Muslims who have spent decades offering their obligatory and many voluntary prayers like this will find that none of them have counted and thus they will be treated as one who did not fulfil their obligation. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 1313.

The Holy Quran indicates the importance of offering the obligatory prayers with congregation usually at a Mosque. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 43:

“...and bow with those who bow [in worship and obedience].”

In fact, due to this verse and Hadiths of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, some reliable scholars have declared

this obligatory on Muslim men. For example, one Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 550, clearly warns that the Muslims who would not offer their obligatory prayers with congregation at the Mosque were considered hypocrites by the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them. In fact, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, even threatened to burn the houses of the men who failed to perform their obligatory prayers at the Mosque with congregation without a valid excuse. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 1482. Those Muslims who are in a position to perform this important deed should do so. They should not fool themselves into claiming they are performing other righteous deeds such as helping their family with house chores. Even though, this is a tradition of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, according to a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 676, but it is important not to rearrange the importance of his traditions according to one's desires. Whoever does this is not following his traditions they are only following their own desires even if they are performing a righteous deed. In fact, this same Hadith concludes by advising that when it was time for the obligatory prayer the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, would leave for the Mosque.

“...The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp; the lamp is within glass, the glass as if it were a pearly [white] star lit from [the oil of] a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light...[Such niches are] in houses [i.e., mosques] which Allāh has ordered to be raised and that His name be mentioned [i.e., praised] therein; exalting Him within them in the morning and the evenings. [Are] men whom neither commerce nor sale distracts from the remembrance of Allāh...and giving of zakah...”

This parable describes a person who possesses an inner light that was granted to them when they accepted Allah, the Exalted, as they Lord before they were sent to Earth. When this inner light makes contact with the light of divine revelation namely, the Holy Quran, through fulfilling its rights, then the two join and the strength of this Muslim’s faith increases and radiates outwards so that it benefits them and others in both worlds.

Severe warnings over failing to donate the obligatory charity have been given in the Holy Quran and the Hadiths of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. For example, a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1403, warns that the person who does not donate their obligatory charity will encounter a large poisonous snake which will continuously bite them on the Day of Judgement. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 180:

“And let not those who [greedily] withhold what Allah has given them of His bounty ever think that it is better for them. Rather, it is worse for them.

Their necks will be encircled by what they withheld on the Day of Resurrection..."

According to a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4019, when the members of a society withhold the obligatory charity Allah, the Exalted, will withhold rain and if it was not for the animals He would not let it rain at all. This major sin is therefore one potential cause of the long periods of drought some nations face.

Not offering the obligatory charity is a sign of extreme greed as it is only an extremely tiny portion of one's wealth namely, 2.5%. It is clear that the miser is far from Allah, the Exalted, the people and close to Hell. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1961.

Muslims must understand that donating the obligatory charity does not only protect them from punishment but it leads to blessings in one's life which far outweigh the wealth they donated. In fact, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has made it clear in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6592, that charity does not decrease one's wealth. This means that when one donates Allah, the Exalted, compensates them. For example, He provides them with business opportunities which cause them to gain more wealth than they donated. This repayment is confirmed in many places of the Holy Quran for example, chapter 57 Al Hadid, verse 11:

“Who is it that would loan Allah a goodly loan so He will multiply it for him and he will have a noble reward?”

In addition, this Hadith could indicate that as each person's provision is pre-recorded whatever wealth which is destined to be spent on them will never change irrespective of how much wealth a person donates. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6748.

A Muslim must therefore avoid the wrath of Allah, the Exalted, by donating a very small fraction of their wealth in the form of the obligatory charity while hoping for a reward which is much greater both in this world and the next.

“...The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp; the lamp is within glass, the glass as if it were a pearly [white] star lit from [the oil of] a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light...[Such niches are] in houses [i.e., mosques] which Allāh has ordered to be raised and that His name be mentioned [i.e., praised] therein; exalting Him within them in the morning and the evenings. [Are] men whom neither commerce nor sale distracts from the remembrance of Allāh... They fear a Day in which the hearts and eyes will [fearfully] turn about.”

This parable describes a person who possesses an inner light that was granted to them when they accepted Allah, the Exalted, as they Lord before they were sent to Earth. When this inner light makes contact with the light of divine revelation namely, the Holy Quran, through fulfilling its rights, then the two join and the strength of this Muslim’s faith increases and radiates outwards so that it benefits them and others in both worlds.

The trumpet blast will lead to the death of the creation. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 7381. The important thing to learn is that this is a call which no one can or will reject responding to. It will lead to the resurrection and final judgment. Therefore, Muslims should respond to the call of Allah, the Exalted, through the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, through sincere obedience by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 8 An Anfal, verse 24:

“O you who have believed, respond to Allah and to the Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life...”

Whoever responds to this call in this world will find the final call easy to endure and respond to. Whereas, the one who lives heedless to the call of Allah, the Exalted, in this world will not find peace in it and they will be forced to answer the call of the trumpet which will be a great burden for them to endure and respond to. A person can only ignore the call of Allah, the Exalted, for so long as the final call will occur, sooner or later, and no one will be able to avoid or ignore it. If this is inevitable it makes sense that one respond to it now, today, instead of living in heedlessness. If one hears the trumpet blast while heedless no action or regret will benefit them and what comes after for this person will be even more terrifying.

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In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 7232, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that people will be resurrected on Judgment Day in the same state they died on Earth.

This means that if a person dies on good they will be resurrected on good. But if they die on evil they will be raised in an evil way.

A Muslim should not live in heedlessness by believing just because they have faith in Islam it guarantees they will die and therefore be raised in a

good state on Judgment Day. If they persist on the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted, and then die in this state without sincerely repenting then they will be raised in an evil way. It does not take a scholar to determine what will happen to this person on Judgment Day.

From this Hadith one can understand that the way they will die will be in the same state they have lived. Meaning, if they lived in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by sincerely fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, then they will die in a good state and therefore be raised in a good state which includes being raised with the righteous as they practically followed in their footsteps. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 3688.

A Muslim should therefore not walk the path to Hell by disobeying Allah, the Exalted, and believe that they will somehow be raised with the pious and end up in Paradise.

“...The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp; the lamp is within glass, the glass as if it were a pearly [white] star lit from [the oil of] a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light...[Such niches are] in houses [i.e., mosques] which Allāh has ordered to be raised and that His name be mentioned [i.e., praised] therein; exalting Him within them in the morning and the evenings. [Are] men whom neither commerce nor sale distracts from the remembrance of Allāh... They fear a Day in which the hearts and eyes will [fearfully] turn about.”

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The Sun will be brought within two miles of the creation on the Day of Judgment. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 2864.

This will cause people to sweat according to the deeds they performed during their lives on Earth. Some people's sweat will reach up to their ankles, some their knees and for others it will reach their mouths.

One only needs to ponder over the times they were subjected to intense summer weather and how the heat affected their attitude and behaviour. Through this one can imagine how difficult the situation on Judgment Day will be when the Sun is brought so close to them. This shows that those who strive hard and exert sincere efforts in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, will find relaxation on Judgment Day. But those who were lazy and relaxed during their lives on Earth will be subjected to great stress on Judgment Day. Simply put, the one who strives here will relax there but the one who relaxes here will strive there in difficulty.

The same way people strive hard in this material world so that they obtain a comfortable life and even a comfortable retirement, even though reaching this retirement age is not guaranteed, Muslims should strive even harder in this world by obeying Allah, the Exalted, in all aspects of their life so that they can obtain peace and comfort on a day that is guaranteed to occur. It is a sign of great ignorance to strive for a day one may never reach namely, the day of retirement, and not strive for a day they are guaranteed to reach and experience namely, Judgment Day.

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It is important for Muslims to regularly assess their own deeds as no one except Allah, the Exalted, is better aware of them than themselves. When one honestly judges their own deeds it will inspire them to sincerely repent from their sins and encourage them towards righteous deeds. But the one who fails to regularly assess their deeds will lead a life of heedlessness whereby they commit sins without sincerely repenting. This person will find the weighing of their deeds on the Day of Judgment extremely difficult. In fact, it may well cause them to be hurled into Hell.

A clever business owner will always regularly assess their accounts. This will ensure their business heads in the right direction and ensures they complete all the necessary accounts such as a tax return correctly. But the foolish business owner will not regularly take accounts of their business. This will lead to a loss in profits and a failure in correctly preparing for their accounts. Those who fail to file their accounts correctly with the government face penalties which only makes their lives more difficult. But the key thing to note is that the penalty of failing to correctly assess and prepare one's deeds for the Scales of Judgment Day does not involve a monetary fine. Its penalty is more severe and truly unbearable. Chapter 99 Az Zalzalah, verses 7-8:

“So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it. And whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it.”

“...The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp; the lamp is within glass, the glass as if it were a pearly [white] star lit from [the oil of] a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light...[Such niches are] in houses [i.e., mosques] which Allāh has ordered to be raised and that His name be mentioned [i.e., praised] therein; exalting Him within them in the morning and the evenings. [Are] men whom neither commerce nor sale distracts from the remembrance of Allāh... They fear a Day in which the hearts and eyes will [fearfully] turn about.”

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People will be commanded to cross the Bridge which will be placed over Hell on the Day of Judgment. This has been discussed extensively in Islamic teachings, such as the Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6573. It warns that extremely large hooks will be on the Bridge which will affect people according to their deeds. Some will be flung into Hell by them, some will be subjected to great torture before they cross the Bridge, others will only face minimal injury from them and finally the righteous will not be harmed by them. Another Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 455, warns that the Bridge is narrower than a strand of hair and sharper than a sword.

The important thing to learn from this is that each person will cross the Bridge according to their deeds. So it is important for Muslims not to neglect any duties if they desire to cross the Bridge safely. They must fulfil the commands of Allah, the Exalted, and refrain from His prohibitions. These include duties in respect to Allah, the Exalted, and people. One should not neglect this and simply hope they will magically cross the Bridge unaffected.

In addition, the ease at which a person will cross this Bridge will be a mirror of how much they remained steadfast on the straight path of Islam in this world. This straight path is the path of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 31:

“Say, [O Muhammad], “If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins...”

Anyone who abandons this path will not successfully cross this Bridge. Simply put, the more one remains steadfast on the straight path in this world the easier they will cross the Bridge over Hell on Judgment Day. The straight path has been made clear in this world so Muslims are left with no excuses from following it thereby ensuring they safely cross the Bridge on Judgment Day.

“...The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp; the lamp is within glass, the glass as if it were a pearly [white] star lit from [the oil of] a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light...[Such niches are] in houses [i.e., mosques] which Allāh has ordered to be raised and that His name be mentioned [i.e., praised] therein; exalting Him within them in the morning and the evenings. [Are] men whom neither commerce nor sale distracts from the remembrance of Allāh...That Allāh may reward them [according to] the best of what they did and increase them from His bounty...”

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It is important for Muslims to strive in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience as Allah, the Exalted, has guaranteed a good life in both worlds for the one who behaves in this manner. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

“Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do.”

This good life will protect a Muslim from severe grief, depression and other extreme moods and mental disorders which can destroy a person's life. Even though, Muslims will face difficulties which will sadden them but if they obey Allah, the Exalted, this sadness will never become extreme and effect their entire life on a long term basis. This is because a Muslim who strives in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, has an excellent reason to continue moving forward through their difficulty without giving up and turning to depression and even suicide. For example, they look forward to the countless reward which will be granted to the patient. Chapter 39 Az Zumar, verse 10:

“...Indeed, the patient will be given their reward without account [i.e., limit].”

Whereas, the Muslim who does not strive in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, and only claims the title of being a Muslim with their tongue will not be granted this attitude and a good life. And whenever they face difficulties it will drive them to extreme moods and mental disorders which will destroy their entire life.

“...The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp; the lamp is within glass, the glass as if it were a pearly [white] star lit from [the oil of] a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light...[Such niches are] in houses [i.e., mosques] which Allāh has ordered to be raised and that His name be mentioned [i.e., praised] therein; exalting Him within them in the morning and the evenings. [Are] men whom neither commerce nor sale distracts from the remembrance of Allāh...That Allāh may reward them [according to] the best of what they did and increase them from His bounty...”

This parable describes a person who possesses an inner light that was granted to them when they accepted Allah, the Exalted, as they Lord before they were sent to Earth. When this inner light makes contact with the light of divine revelation namely, the Holy Quran, through fulfilling its rights, then the two join and the strength of this Muslim’s faith increases and radiates outwards so that it benefits them and others in both worlds.

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2465, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that whoever prioritises the hereafter over this material world will be granted contentment, their affairs will be corrected for them and they will receive their destined provision in an easy way.

This half of the Hadith means that whoever correctly fulfils their duties in respect to Allah, the Exalted, and to the creation, such as providing for their family in a lawful manner while avoiding the excess of this material world will be granted contentment. This is when one is pleased with what

they possess without being greedy and actively striving to obtain more worldly things. In reality, the one who is content with what they possess is a truly rich person even if they possess little wealth as they become independent of things. Independence of anything makes one rich in respect to it.

In addition, this attitude will allow one to comfortably deal with any worldly issues which may arise during their life. This is because the less one interacts with the material world and focuses on the hereafter the less worldly issues they will face. The less worldly issues a person faces the more comfortable their life will become. For example, the one who possesses one house will have fewer issues to deal with in respect to it, such as a broken cooker, than the one who possesses ten houses. Finally, this person will easily and pleasantly obtain their lawful provision. Not only this but Allah, the Exalted, will place such grace in their provision that it will cover all their responsibilities and necessities meaning, it will satisfy them and their dependents.

But as mentioned in the other half of this Hadith the one who prioritises the material world over the hereafter meaning, by neglecting their duties or striving for the unnecessary and excess of this material world will find that their need, meaning greed, for worldly things is never satisfied which by definition makes them poor even if they possess much wealth. These people will go from one worldly issue to another throughout the day failing to achieve contentment as they have opened too many worldly doors. And they will receive their destined provision with difficulty and it will not give them satisfaction and never seem enough to fill their greed. This may even push them towards the unlawful which only leads to a loss in both worlds.

“...The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp; the lamp is within glass, the glass as if it were a pearly [white] star lit from [the oil of] a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light...[Such niches are] in houses [i.e., mosques] which Allāh has ordered to be raised and that His name be mentioned [i.e., praised] therein; exalting Him within them in the morning and the evenings. [Are] men whom neither commerce nor sale distracts from the remembrance of Allāh...That Allāh may reward them [according to] the best of what they did and increase them from His bounty...”

This parable describes a person who possesses an inner light that was granted to them when they accepted Allah, the Exalted, as they Lord before they were sent to Earth. When this inner light makes contact with the light of divine revelation namely, the Holy Quran, through fulfilling its rights, then the two join and the strength of this Muslim’s faith increases and radiates outwards so that it benefits them and others in both worlds.

It is important to note, that one will only enter Paradise through the mercy of Allah, the Exalted. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 5673. This is because every righteous deed is only possible through the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, in the form of knowledge, inspiration, strength and opportunity to do the deed. This understanding prevents one from adopting pride which is vital to avoid as only an atom’s worth of pride is needed to take a person to Hell. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 267.

In addition, a Muslim must understand that this mercy of Allah, the Exalted, in the form of righteous deeds is in reality a light which one must gather in this world if they desire to obtain a guiding light in the hereafter. If a Muslim lives in heedlessness and refrains from gathering this light in the world by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience then how can they expect to receive this guiding light in the hereafter?

All Muslims desire to inhabit Paradise with the greatest servants of Allah, the Exalted, such as the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. But it is important to understand that simply wishing for this without action will not make it come true otherwise the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, would have done this. Simply put, the more one strives in learning and acting on the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, the closer they will be to him in the hereafter.

The greatest blessing of Paradise is physically observing Allah, the Exalted, which is discussed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 7436. If a Muslim desires to obtain this unimaginable blessing they must practically strive to achieve the level of excellence mentioned in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 99. This is when one performs actions, such as the prayer, as if they can observe Allah, the Exalted, overlooking them. This attitude ensures one's persistent and sincere obedience to Allah, the Exalted. It is hoped that the one who strives for this level of faith will receive the blessing of physically observing Allah, the Exalted, in the hereafter.

“...And Allāh gives provision to whom He wills without account.”

Allah, the Exalted, is the Creator and Allocator of provision to the entire creation which they need to preserve their physical and spiritual constitutions. In fact, according to a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6748, the provision of the entire creation was allocated over fifty thousand years before the creation of the Heavens and the Earth.

The one who understands this divine name will rely on Allah, the Exalted, to provide for them as He has planned for them before they were created. They will prove this reliance by striving to gain lawful provision as commanded by Allah, the Exalted, while refraining from anything which is unlawful and doubtful.

It is important to note that as people require physical provision in the form of food and drink. Similarly, the soul of a Muslim requires provision also. This provision strengthens it and leads it to eternal bliss. This provision is in the form of sincere obedience to Allah, the Exalted, which involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience. The foundation of all this is gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge. Therefore, Muslims should strive to gain this important provision of the soul as well as provision for their physical body. Two elements should be remembered in this respect. Do not exert unlawful and unnecessary efforts in gaining one's guaranteed provision. And do not misuse or waste the provision one gains.

A Muslim, should act on this divine name by fulfilling their duty by providing for their dependents according to the teachings of Islam. This includes providing them with both physical and spiritual provision through education. A Muslim should also do the same for the needy according to their capacity without fearing poverty for themselves. They should remember the Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4893, which advises that Allah, the Exalted, will fulfil the needs of the Muslim who takes care of the needs of others.

“...And Allāh gives provision to whom He wills without account.”

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6748, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that Allah, the Exalted, allocated all things, such as provision, to all creatures over fifty thousand years before He created the Heavens and the Earth.

It is important to understand that there are two aspects in respect to all situations, such as gaining one's provision. The first aspect is what Allah, the Exalted, has decided meaning, destiny; this will occur and nothing in creation can prevent this from occurring. As this is out of a person's hands it makes no sense to stress over this aspect as they have no influence on destiny irrespective of what they or anybody else does.

The second aspect is one's own efforts. This aspect a person has full control over and they should therefore concentrate on this aspect by using the means they have been provided such as their physical strength to obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience, which they have no control over, according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This includes striving to gain lawful provision in order to fulfill their needs and the needs of their dependents while avoiding the unlawful, excess, waste and extravagance.

To conclude, a Muslim should never waste time stressing over things they have no control or influence over instead they should use the means they possess and act on those things which they have control over according to the teachings of Islam. This is what Allah, the Exalted, has commanded.

Parables 27 & 28

Chapter 24 – An Nur, Verses 39-40

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَعْمَالُهُمْ كَسَرَابٍ بِقِيَعَةٍ يَحْسَبُهُ الظَّمْثَانُ مَاءً حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَهُ
لَمْ يَجِدْهُ شَيْئًا وَوَجَدَ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ فَوَفَّاهُ حِسَابَهُ وَاللَّهُ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿٣٩﴾
أَوْ كظلماتٍ في بحرٍ لَّجِيٍّ يَغْشَاهُ مَوْجٌ مِّن فَوْقِهِ مَوْجٌ مِّن فَوْقِهِ سَحَابٌ
ظلماتٌ بعضها فوق بعضٍ إذا أخرج يده لم يكد يراها ومن لم يجعل الله له
نورا فما له من نورٍ ﴿٤٠﴾

“But those who disbelieved - their deeds are like a mirage in a lowland which a thirsty one thinks is water until, when he comes to it, he finds it is nothing but finds Allah before him, and He will pay him in full his due; and Allah is swift in account.

Or [they are] like darkneses within an unfathomable sea which is covered by waves, upon which are waves, over which are clouds - darkneses, some of them upon others. When one puts out his hand [therein], he can hardly see it. And he to whom Allah has not granted light - for him there is no light.”

“But those who disbelieved - their deeds are like a mirage in a lowland which a thirsty one thinks is water until, when he comes to it, he finds it is nothing but finds Allah before him, and He will pay him in full his due...”

This is the parable of the hypocrite who outwardly performs good deeds and even believes they will be rewarded for them yet when they reach Judgement Day they will find their deeds are worthless because of their insincerity.

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3154, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that those who perform deeds for the sake of people, such as showing off, instead of doing them for the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted, will be told to gain their reward on Judgment Day from the people they acted for which in reality is not possible to do.

It is important to understand that the foundation of all deeds and even Islam itself is one's intention. It is the very thing which Allah, the Exalted, judges people on according to a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1. A Muslim should ensure they perform all religious and useful worldly actions for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, so that they gain reward from Him in both worlds. A sign of this correct mentality is that this person neither expects nor desires people to appreciate or show gratitude to them for the deeds they perform. If one desires this then it indicates their incorrect intention.

In addition, acting with the correct intention prevents sadness and bitterness as the one who acts for the sake of people will eventually encounter ungrateful people who will make them annoyed and bitter as they feel they wasted their effort and time. Unfortunately, this is seen in parents and relatives as they often fulfill their duties towards their children and relatives for their sake instead of for the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted. But the one who acts for the sake of Allah, the exalted, will fulfill all their duties towards others such as their children and never become bitter or enraged when they fail to show gratitude towards them. This attitude leads to peace of mind and general happiness as they know Allah, the Exalted, is fully aware of their righteous deed and will reward them for it. This is the way all Muslims must act otherwise they may well be left empty handed on the Day of Judgment.

“But those who disbelieved - their deeds are like a mirage in a lowland which a thirsty one thinks is water until, when he comes to it, he finds it is nothing but finds Allah before him, and He will pay him in full his due...”

This is the parable of the hypocrite who outwardly performs good deeds and even believes they will be rewarded for them yet when they reach Judgement Day they will find their deeds are worthless because of their insincerity.

In a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3989, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that even slightly showing off is polytheism.

This is a minor type of polytheism which does not cause one to lose their faith. Instead it leads to the loss of reward as this Muslim acted for the sake of pleasing people when they should have acted to please Allah, the Exalted. In fact, these people will be told on Judgment Day to seek their reward from those they acted for, which will not be possible. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3154.

If the Devil cannot prevent one from performing righteous deeds he will attempt to corrupt their intention thereby destroying their reward. If he cannot corrupt their intention in an obvious way he tries to corrupt it through

subtle ways. This includes when people subtly show off their righteous deeds to others. Sometimes it is so subtle that the person themselves are not fully aware of what they are doing. As gaining and acting on knowledge is a duty on all, according to a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224, claiming ignorance will not be accepted by Allah, the Exalted, on Judgment Day.

Subtly showing off often occurs through social media and one's speech. For example, a Muslim might inform others they are fasting even though no one directly asked them if they were fasting. Another example is when one publically recites the Holy Quran from memory in front of others thereby showing others they have memorized the Holy Quran. Even criticizing oneself publically can be considered showing off one's humility to others.

To conclude, showing off subtly destroys a Muslim's reward and must be avoided in order to safeguard their righteous deeds. This is only possible by learning and acting on Islamic knowledge, such as how to safeguard one's speech.

“But those who disbelieved - their deeds are like a mirage in a lowland which a thirsty one thinks is water until, when he comes to it, he finds it is nothing but finds Allah before him, and He will pay him in full his due...”

This is the parable of the hypocrite who outwardly performs good deeds and even believes they will be rewarded for them yet when they reach Judgement Day they will find their deeds are worthless because of their insincerity. Muslims must avoid behaving in this manner and instead prepare practically for the Day of Judgement.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6442, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that a person's true wealth is what they send ahead to the hereafter whereas, what they leave behind is in reality the wealth of their inheritors.

It is important for Muslims to send as many blessings, such as their wealth, as they can to the hereafter by using them in ways which are pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. This includes spending on one's needs and the needs of their dependents without being wasteful, excessive or extravagant. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 4006.

But if a Muslim does not use their blessings correctly they will become a burden for them in both worlds. And if they hoard them and leave them

behind for their inheritors then they will be held accountable for obtaining them even though others will enjoy them after they depart. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2379.

In addition, if their inheritors use the blessings correctly then they will obtain reward from Allah, the Exalted, while the one who collected it will be left empty handed on Judgment Day. Or their inheritor will misuse the blessings which will become a great regret for both the one who earned the blessing and their inheritor especially, if they did not teach their inheritor, such as their child, how to correctly use the blessings as this is a duty on them. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 2928.

Muslims should therefore fulfill their responsibilities towards Allah, the Exalted, and people and ensure they take the rest of their blessings with them to the hereafter by using them correctly as prescribed by Islam. Otherwise, they will be left empty handed and full of regrets on Judgment Day.

“But those who disbelieved - their deeds are like a mirage in a lowland which a thirsty one thinks is water until, when he comes to it, he finds it is nothing but finds Allah before him, and He will pay him in full his due...”

This includes those who adopt wishful thinking in respect to Allah, the Exalted.

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2459, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, described the difference between true hope in the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, and wishful thinking. True hope is when one controls their soul by avoiding the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted, and actively struggles for preparing for the hereafter. Whereas, the foolish wishful thinker follows their desires and then expects Allah, the Exalted, to forgive them and fulfill their wishes.

It is important for Muslims not to confuse these two attitudes so that they avoid living and dying as a wishful thinker as this person is highly unlikely to succeed in this world or the next. Wishful thinking is like a farmer who fails to prepare the land for planting, fails to plant seeds, fails to water the land and then expects to harvest a huge crop. This is plain foolishness and this farmer is highly unlikely to succeed. Whereas, true hope is like a farmer who prepares the land, plants seeds, waters the land and then hopes Allah, the Exalted, will bless them with a huge harvest. The key difference is that the one who possesses true hope will actively strive to obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions

of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. And whenever they slip up they sincerely repent. Whereas, the wishful thinker will not actively strive in obeying Allah, the Exalted, and instead follow their desires and still expect Allah, the Exalted, to forgive them and fulfill their wishes.

Muslims must therefore learn the key difference so that they can abandon wishful thinking and instead adopt true hope in Allah, the Exalted, which always leads to nothing except good and success in both worlds. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 7405.

A specific type of wishful thinking which affected the past nations and even the Muslim nation is when a person believes that they can ignore the commands and prohibitions of Allah, the Exalted, and somehow someone on the Day of Judgement will intercede for them and save them from Hell. Even though the intercession of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, is a fact and has been discussed in many Hadiths, such as the one found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4308, none the less even with his intercession some Muslims whose punishment will be reduced by it will still enter Hell. Even a single moment in Hell is truly unbearable. So one should abandon wishful thinking and instead adopt true hope by practically striving in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted.

The Devil convinces those who do not believe in Judgement Day that even if it occurs they will make peace with Allah, the Exalted, on that day by claiming that they were not so bad as they avoided major crimes such as murder. They have convinced themselves that their pleas will be accepted

and they will be sent to Paradise even though they disbelieved in Allah, the Exalted, during their lives on Earth. This is incredibly foolish as Allah, the Exalted, will not treat the person who believed in Him and tried to obey him like the one who disbelieved in Him. A single verse has erased this type of wishful thinking. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 85:

“And whoever desires other than Islām as religion - never will it be accepted from him, and he, in the Hereafter, will be among the losers.”

“...and Allāh is swift in account.”

Allah, the Exalted, is the only One who will hold the entire creation accountable for their deeds. The Muslim who understands this divine name will only obey Allah, the Exalted, and avoid His disobedience as they know no deed, good or bad, will escape the reckoning of Allah, the Exalted.

A Muslim must act on this divine name by judging their own deeds before they are reckoned by Allah, the Exalted. The one who does this will be inspired to sincerely repent from their sins and strive to fulfil the commands of Allah, the Exalted. The one who fails to assess their own deeds will only sink deeper into heedlessness until they reach their strict reckoning on a Great Day.

“...and Allāh is swift in account.”

It is important for Muslims to regularly assess their own deeds as no one except Allah, the Exalted, is better aware of them than themselves. When one honestly judges their own deeds it will inspire them to sincerely repent from their sins and encourage them towards righteous deeds. But the one who fails to regularly assess their deeds will lead a life of heedlessness whereby they commit sins without sincerely repenting. This person will find the weighing of their deeds on the Day of Judgment extremely difficult. In fact, it may well cause them to be hurled into Hell.

A clever business owner will always regularly assess their accounts. This will ensure their business heads in the right direction and ensures they complete all the necessary accounts such as a tax return correctly. But the foolish business owner will not regularly take accounts of their business. This will lead to a loss in profits and a failure in correctly preparing for their accounts. Those who fail to file their accounts correctly with the government face penalties which only makes their lives more difficult. But the key thing to note is that the penalty of failing to correctly assess and prepare one's deeds for the Scales of Judgment Day does not involve a monetary fine. Its penalty is more severe and truly unbearable. Chapter 99 Az Zalzalah, verses 7-8:

“So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it. And whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it.”

“...and Allāh is swift in account.”

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 103, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that whoever has their deeds scrutinized by Allah, the Exalted, on Judgment Day will be punished.

It is important for Muslims to understand that even though enjoying the lawful pleasures of this material world are not prohibited they often lead to the unlawful. For example, vain speech is usually the first step before sinful speech. In addition, the more one indulges in unnecessary lawful things the longer their accountability will be on Judgment Day. One should bear in mind that Judgment Day will be a difficult day. For example, the Sun will be brought within two miles of the creation. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2421. Even though, a Muslim may be forgiven and saved by Allah, the Exalted, but none the less, the longer their accountability the greater stress they will endure. Seeing as Judgment Day will be fifty thousand years long, according to the Holy Quran, it does not make sense to enjoy a few decades of lawful pleasures if it means one will face a difficult accountability on a day which will last so long. Chapter 70 Al Ma'arij, verse 4:

“...during a Day the extent of which is fifty thousand years.”

It is therefore best to lead a simple life in order to minimize one's accountability on the Day of Judgment. It is one of the reasons why the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4118, that simplicity is a part of faith.

“...and Allāh is swift in account.”

One must prepare for their Final Judgement by using the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted.

In reality, in most cases nothing in this material world in itself is good or bad, such as wealth. What makes a thing good or bad is the way it is used. It is important to understand that the very purpose of everything which was created by Allah, the Exalted, was for it to be used correctly according to the teachings of Islam. When something is not used correctly it in reality becomes useless. For example, wealth is useful in both worlds when it is used correctly such as being spent on the necessities of a person and their dependents. But it can become useless and even a curse for its bearer if it is not used correctly, such as being hoarded or spent on sinful things. Simply hoarding wealth causes wealth to lose value. How can paper and metal coins one tucks away be useful? In this respect, there is no difference between a blank piece of paper and a note of money. It is only useful when it is used correctly.

So if a Muslim desires all their worldly possessions to become a blessing for them in both worlds all they have to do is use them correctly according to the teachings found in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. But if they use them incorrectly then the same blessing will become a burden and curse for them in both worlds. It is as simple as that.

“...and Allāh is swift in account.”

One must prepare for their Final Judgement by using the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. One can adopt the correct attitude when they understand the purpose of these blessings.

Every worldly blessing a Muslim possesses is only a means which should aid them in reaching the hereafter safely. It is not an end in itself. For example, wealth is a means one should use in order to obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, fulfilling their necessities and the necessities of their dependents. It is not an end or an ultimate goal in itself.

This not only aids a Muslim in maintaining their focus on the hereafter but it also aids them whenever they lose worldly blessings. When a Muslim treats each worldly blessing, such as a child, as a means to please Allah, the Exalted, and reach the hereafter safely then losing it will not have such a detrimental impact on them. They may become sad, which is an acceptable emotion, but they will not become grieved which leads to impatience and other mental problems, such as depression. This is because they firmly believe the worldly blessing they possessed was only a means so losing it does not cause a loss in the ultimate goal namely, Paradise, the loss of which is disastrous. Therefore, still possessing and concentrating on the ultimate goal will prevent them from becoming grieved.

In addition, they will understand that just like the thing they lost was only a means they firmly believe they will be provided with another means to reach and fulfil their ultimate goal by Allah, the Exalted. This will also prevent them from grieving. Whereas, the one who believes their worldly blessing is the end instead of a means will experience severe grief when losing it as their whole purpose and objective has been lost. This grief will lead to depression and other mental issues.

To conclude, Muslims should treat each blessing they possess as a means to reach the hereafter safely not as an end in itself. This is how one can possess things without being possessed by them. This is how they can keep worldly things in their hands and not in their hearts.

“Or [they are] like darkneses within an unfathomable sea which is covered by waves, upon which are waves, over which are clouds - darkneses, some of them upon others. When one puts out his hand [therein], he can hardly see it...”

This is the parable of the stubborn and arrogant disbeliever who refuses to search or accept the light of faith. Instead they prefer to wander aimlessly living however they desire. Because they do not possess the light of faith, which illuminates the world and teaches one how to use the blessings they have been granted correctly so that they achieve peace and success in both worlds, everything they do and say is encompassed in darkness and error. Every step forward they take only leads them to a darker and more constricted lifestyle, even if they have the world at their feet.

First of all, it is important to understand, that the major thing which separates a human from an animal is the fact that people live by a higher moral code. If people abandoned this and simply acted on their desires then they would be no difference between them and animals. In fact, people would be worse as they possess the higher level of thinking yet, still choose to live like animals.

Secondly, whether people want to admit it or not in reality, every person is a servant of something or someone. Some are servants of others, such as Hollywood executives and do whatever they command them to do even if it challenges modesty and shame. Others are servants of their relatives and friends and do whatever it takes to please them. Others are the worse by being servants of their own desires as this is the attitude of animals who

generally act to please themselves. The best and highest form of servanthood is being a servant of Allah, the Exalted. This is quite evident if one turns the pages of history which clearly shows that those who were the servants of Allah, the Exalted, such as the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, were granted the highest honour and respect in this world and will be granted this in the next. Centuries and millennia have passed yet their names are remembered as the pillars and beacons of history. Whereas those who became servants of others especially, their own desires were eventually disgraced in this world even if they achieved some worldly status and they became mere footnotes in history. The media barely remembers those who pass away for more than a few days before moving onto the next person to report on. During their lives these people eventually become sad, lonely, depressed and even suicidal as selling their souls and decency to their worldly masters did not grant them the contentment they were looking for. One does not need to be a scholar to understand this obvious truth. So if people must be servants they should be the servants of Allah, the Exalted, as lasting honour, greatness and true success lies only in this.

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This is the parable of the stubborn and arrogant disbeliever who refuses to search or accept the light of faith. Instead they prefer to wander aimlessly living however they desire. Because they do not possess the light of faith, which illuminates the world and teaches one how to use the blessings they have been granted correctly so that they achieve peace and success in both worlds, everything they do and say is encompassed in darkness and error. Every step forward they take only leads them to a darker and more constricted lifestyle, even if they have the world at their feet.

Those who disbelieve or avoid acting on their faith in Islam do so out of love for the material world and the things within it. They believe that believing or acting on their faith will prevent them from enjoying worldly blessings meaning, for them faith is something that restricts their desires and therefore they turn away from it either literally or practically. Instead they turn towards the material world and strive to fulfill their desires without restrictions believing that true peace lies in this. They look down at those who accept and actualize their faith by controlling their actions and using their worldly blessings in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. They believe that these pious Muslims are lowly slaves who been restricted from enjoying themselves whereas they, the disbelievers and the misguided, are free. But in actual fact this could not be further from the truth as the real slaves are those who fail to accept and submit to Allah, the Exalted, and the superior ones are those who have done this as they become free of slavery to the world. This can be understood by an example. A good parent

will restrict the type of food their child eats meaning, they will only let them eat junk and unhealthy food once in a while and instead force them to follow a healthy diet. This child therefore believes that their parent has placed undesirable restrictions on them and that they have become slaves to their parent and their healthy diet. On the other hand another child has been given permission from their parent to eat whatever they desire, whenever they desire and how much they desire. So this child believes that they are completely free of all restrictions. When these children come together the child who has been given complete freedom criticizes and looks down on the child who has been restricted by their parent. The latter child will also feel sorry for themselves when they observe the other child has been given free reign to behave however they wish. Outwardly it appears the child who has been granted freedom has obtained happiness whereas the other child is too tied up with restrictions to enjoy life. But years down the line the truth will become manifest. The child who had no restrictions grows up to become extremely unhealthy e.g. obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, etc. As a result of this they even become mentally unhealthy as they lose confidence in their body and the way they look. Because of this they become a slave of medications, diseases, mental and social problems. All these things restrict their happiness and life. Whereas, the child who was restricted by their parent grows up healthy in mind and body. As a result they become confident in their body and ability, which aids them to succeed in life. They become free of any slavery to medications, diseases, mental and social problems as they grew up with the correct balance and guidance. So the child who had no restrictions grew up becoming a slave to many things, whereas the child who had restrictions grew up independent of all restrictions.

To conclude, the real slave is the one who becomes a slave to all other things except Allah, the Exalted, such as social media, society, fashion and culture, and this leads to mental, physical and social problems, whereas

the real free person is the one who submits only to Allah, the Exalted, thereby achieving peace of mind and body.

“Or [they are] like darkneses within an unfathomable sea which is covered by waves, upon which are waves, over which are clouds - darkneses, some of them upon others. When one puts out his hand [therein], he can hardly see it...”

This is the parable of the stubborn and arrogant disbeliever who refuses to search or accept the light of faith. Instead they prefer to wander aimlessly living however they desire. Because they do not possess the light of faith, which illuminates the world and teaches one how to use the blessings they have been granted correctly so that they achieve peace and success in both worlds, everything they do and say is encompassed in darkness and error. Every step forward they take only leads them to a darker and more constricted lifestyle, even if they have the world at their feet.

It is important for Muslims to strive in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience as Allah, the Exalted, has guaranteed a good life in both worlds for the one who behaves in this manner. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

“Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do.”

This good life will protect a Muslim from severe grief, depression and other extreme moods and mental disorders which can destroy a person's life. Even though, Muslims will face difficulties which will sadden them but if they obey Allah, the Exalted, this sadness will never become extreme and effect their entire life on a long term basis. This is because a Muslim who strives in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, has an excellent reason to continue moving forward through their difficulty without giving up and turning to depression and even suicide. For example, they look forward to the countless reward which will be granted to the patient. Chapter 39 Az Zumar, verse 10:

“...Indeed, the patient will be given their reward without account [i.e., limit].”

Whereas, the Muslim who does not strive in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, and only claims the title of being a Muslim with their tongue will not be granted this attitude and a good life. And whenever they face difficulties it will drive them to extreme moods and mental disorders which will destroy their entire life.

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In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2465, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that whoever prioritises the hereafter over this material world will be granted contentment, their affairs will be corrected for them and they will receive their destined provision in an easy way.

This half of the Hadith means that whoever correctly fulfils their duties in respect to Allah, the Exalted, and to the creation, such as providing for their family in a lawful manner while avoiding the excess of this material world will be granted contentment. This is when one is pleased with what they possess without being greedy and actively striving to obtain more worldly things. In reality, the one who is content with what they possess is a truly

rich person even if they possess little wealth as they become independent of things. Independence of anything makes one rich in respect to it.

In addition, this attitude will allow one to comfortably deal with any worldly issues which may arise during their life. This is because the less one interacts with the material world and focuses on the hereafter the less worldly issues they will face. The less worldly issues a person faces the more comfortable their life will become. For example, the one who possesses one house will have fewer issues to deal with in respect to it, such as a broken cooker, than the one who possesses ten houses. Finally, this person will easily and pleasantly obtain their lawful provision. Not only this but Allah, the Exalted, will place such grace in their provision that it will cover all their responsibilities and necessities meaning, it will satisfy them and their dependents.

But as mentioned in the other half of this Hadith the one who prioritises the material world over the hereafter meaning, by neglecting their duties or striving for the unnecessary and excess of this material world will find that their need, meaning greed, for worldly things is never satisfied which by definition makes them poor even if they possess much wealth. These people will go from one worldly issue to another throughout the day failing to achieve contentment as they have opened too many worldly doors. And they will receive their destined provision with difficulty and it will not give them satisfaction and never seem enough to fill their greed. This may even push them towards the unlawful which only leads to a loss in both worlds.

“Or [they are] like darkneses within an unfathomable sea which is covered by waves, upon which are waves, over which are clouds - darkneses, some of them upon others. When one puts out his hand [therein], he can hardly see it...”

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Even though there is no doubt that the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, is infinite and can overcome all sins. And giving up hope in the infinite mercy of Allah, the Exalted, is defined as unbelief in chapter 12 Yusuf, verse 87:

“...Indeed, no one despairs of relief from Allah except the disbelieving people.”

Yet, none the less it is extremely important for Muslims to understand a fact. Namely, a Muslim has not been guaranteed to leave this world with their faith meaning, a Muslim is in danger of dying as a non-Muslim. This is

the greatest loss. If this happens it does not take a scholar to conclude where this person will reside in the hereafter. This can occur when a Muslim persists on sins especially, major sins, such as drinking alcohol and failing to offer their obligatory prayers and reaches their end without sincerely repenting from their sins. This is the reason why Muslims must sincerely repent from all their sins and strive to fulfil all their obligatory duties as this is a task they can undoubtedly fulfil. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 286:

“Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity...”

They should not be fooled into believing they possess hope in the mercy of Allah, the Exalted. As true hope in the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, is supported by obedience to Allah, the Exalted, through actions. This involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience. Failing to do this and then expecting the mercy and forgiveness of Allah, the Exalted, is not hope in His mercy it is merely wishful thinking which has no weight or significance. This has been clearly warned by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2459.

“Or [they are] like darkneses within an unfathomable sea which is covered by waves, upon which are waves, over which are clouds - darkneses, some of them upon others. When one puts out his hand [therein], he can hardly see it...”

This could also be describing the blind follower of others. A person should utilize their common sense and choose a way of life based on evidence and clear signs and not blindly imitate others like cattle. Behaving in this manner leads to deviation.

Muslims should not follow and adopt the customary practices of non-Muslims. The more Muslims do this the less they will follow the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This is quite evident in this day and age as many Muslims have adopted the cultural practices of other nations which has caused them to become distant from the teachings of Islam. For example, one only needs to observe the modern Muslim wedding to observe how many non-Muslim cultural practices have been adopted by Muslims. What makes this worse is that many Muslims cannot differentiate between Islamic practices based on the Holy Quran and traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and the cultural practices of non-Muslims. Because of this non-Muslims cannot differentiate between them either which has caused great problems for Islam. For example, honour killings is a cultural practice which has nothing to do with Islam yet because of the ignorance of Muslims and their habit of adopting non-Muslim cultural practices Islam is blamed every time an honour killing occurs in society. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, removed the social barriers in the form of casts and brotherhoods in order to unite people yet ignorant Muslims have

resurrected them by adopting the cultural practices of non-Muslims. Simply put, the more cultural practices Muslims adopt the less they will act on the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

“Or [they are] like darkneses within an unfathomable sea which is covered by waves, upon which are waves, over which are clouds - darkneses, some of them upon others. When one puts out his hand [therein], he can hardly see it...”

This could also be describing the blind follower of others. A person should utilize their common sense and choose a way of life based on evidence and clear signs and not blindly imitate others like cattle. Blind imitation is even disliked within Islam.

A Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4049, indicates the importance of not blindly imitating others in accepting Islam, such as one's family, without gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge so that one surpasses blind imitation and obeys Allah, the Exalted, while truly recognising his Lordship and their own servanthood. This is in fact the purpose of mankind. Chapter 51 Adh Dhariyat, verse 56:

“And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me.”

How can one truly worship someone they do not even recognize? Blind imitation is acceptable for children but adults must follow in the footsteps of the righteous predecessors by truly understanding the purpose of their creation through knowledge. Ignorance is the very reason why the Muslims who fulfil their obligatory duties still feel disconnected from Allah, the

Exalted. This recognition aids a Muslim to behave as a true servant of Allah, the Exalted, throughout the day not just during the five daily obligatory prayers. Only through this will Muslims fulfil true servanthood to Allah, the Exalted. And this is the weapon which overcomes all difficulties a Muslim faces during their life. If they do not possess this they will face difficulties without gaining reward. In fact, it will only lead to more difficulties in both worlds. Performing the obligatory duties through blind imitation may fulfil the obligation but it will not safely guide one through every difficulty in order to reach the proximity of Allah, the Exalted, in both worlds. In fact, in most cases blind imitation will lead to one eventually abandoning their obligatory duties. This Muslim will only fulfil their duties in times of difficulty and turn away from them in times of ease or vice versa.

“Or [they are] like darkneses within an unfathomable sea which is covered by waves, upon which are waves, over which are clouds - darkneses, some of them upon others. When one puts out his hand [therein], he can hardly see it. And he to whom Allāh has not granted light - for him there is no light.”

This is the parable of the stubborn and arrogant disbeliever who refuses to search or accept the light of faith. Instead they prefer to wander aimlessly living however they desire. Because they do not possess the light of faith, which illuminates the world and teaches one how to use the blessings they have been granted correctly so that they achieve peace and success in both worlds, everything they do and say is encompassed in darkness and error. Every step forward they take only leads them to a darker and more constricted lifestyle, even if they have the world at their feet.

Allah, the Exalted, guides those who sincerely try to obey Him. But those who persistently disobey Him are left to wander blindly in misguidance. Therefore, it is vital for Muslims to sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, as persistent disobedience leads to corruption of the spiritual heart and one's actions.

This is similar to a person who is warned by a judge not to behave in an unlawful way but after the person persists on this behaviour the judge gives the order for them to be locked up in prison. Therefore, Allah, the Exalted, has not wronged them they have only wronged themselves.

But it is important to note that as being abandoned in misguidance is a spiritual thing and therefore hidden to mankind, it is important for Muslims not to assume certain people have reached this point. Instead they should think positively about all people and therefore sincerely practically aid them in reforming their belief and behaviour.

Allah, the Exalted, has created human beings with the best possible capabilities. He gave them knowledge and power to differentiate between good and evil and even placed in them an innate inclination to like what is good and to dislike and avoid what is evil. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2389. Allah, the Exalted, has also granted mankind free will to choose between good and evil. This choice plays a role in enhancing or diminishing a person's natural faculties of reason. Chapter 91 Ash Shams, verses 9-10:

“He has succeeded who purifies it [the spiritual heart – the greatest faculty of reason]. And he has failed who instills it [with corruption].”

When a person chooses a path of goodness their natural potential develops and Allah, the Exalted, grants them further support in their efforts. Chapter 29 Al Ankabut, verse 69:

“And those who strive for Us - We will surely guide them to Our ways...”

But if one follows their evil desires and chooses the evil path gradually their spiritual hearts will become engrossed with darkness and no good will remain therein. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3334. If a person fails to repent then the main verse under discussion comes into effect. This person becomes so engrossed in evil that they find joy in their evil mentality and actions. They absolutely hate anything good.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 52, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that if one's spiritual heart is sound the whole body will become sound but if their spiritual heart is corrupt then the whole body will become corrupt.

First of all, this Hadith refutes the foolish belief where one claims to have a purified heart even though their speech and actions are bad. This is because what is inside will eventually manifest outwardly.

The purification of the spiritual heart is only possible when one eliminates evil characteristics from themselves and replaces them with good characteristics discussed in Islamic teachings. This is only possible when one learns and acts on Islamic teachings so that they can sincerely fulfill the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refrain from His prohibitions and face destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Behaving in this manner

will lead to a purified spiritual heart. This purification will then reflect in the outward limbs of the body, such as one's tongue and eyes. Meaning, they will only use their organs in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. This is in fact a sign showing the love Allah, the Exalted, has for His righteous servant according to a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6502.

It is important to note, that this purification will guide one through all worldly difficulties successfully so that they achieve both worldly and religious success.

Parable 29

Chapter 28 – Al Qasas, Verses 60-61

وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَمَتَّعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَزَيَّنَّا لَهَا وَمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى
أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾

أَفَمَنْ وَعَدْنَاهُ وَعَدًّا حَسَنًا فَهُوَ لَاقِيهِ كَمَنْ مَتَّعْنَاهُ مَتَّعَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ثُمَّ هُوَ
يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ مِنَ الْمُحْضَرِينَ ﴿٦١﴾

“And whatever thing you [people] have been given - it is [only for] the enjoyment of worldly life and its adornment. And what is with Allah is better and more lasting; so will you not use reason?”

Then is he whom We have promised a good promise which he will meet [i.e., obtain] like he for whom We provided enjoyment of worldly life [but] then he is, on the Day of Resurrection, among those presented [for punishment]?”

“And whatever thing you [people] have been given - it is [only for] the enjoyment of worldly life and its adornment. And what is with Allah is better and more lasting; so will you not use reason?”

This verse urges people to adopt the correct understanding and perception in respect to this world and the hereafter.

In a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4108, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that the material world compared to the hereafter is like a drop of water compared to an ocean.

In reality, this parable was given in order for people to understand how small the material world is compared to the hereafter. But in reality they cannot be compared as the material world is temporal whereas the hereafter is eternal. Meaning, the limited cannot be compared to the unlimited. The material world can be split into four categories: fame, fortune, authority and one's social life, such as their family and friends. No matter what worldly blessing one obtains which falls within these groups it will always be imperfect, transient and death will cut a person off from the blessing. On the other hand, the blessings in the hereafter are lasting and perfect. So in this respect the material world is no more than a drop compared to an endless ocean.

In addition, a person is not guaranteed to experience a long life in this world as the time of death is unknown. Whereas, everyone is guaranteed to experience death and reach the hereafter. So it is foolish to strive for a day, such as one's retirement, which they may never reach over striving for the hereafter which they are guaranteed to reach.

This does not mean one should abandon the world as it is a bridge which must be crossed in order to reach the hereafter safely. Instead, a Muslim should take from this material world enough to fulfill their necessities and the necessities of their dependents according to the teachings of Islam without waste, excessiveness or extravagance. And then dedicate the rest of their efforts in preparing for the eternal hereafter by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the teachings of Islam.

An intelligent person will not prioritize the drop of water over an endless ocean and an intelligent Muslim would not prioritize the temporal material world over the eternal hereafter.

“And whatever thing you [people] have been given - it is [only for] the enjoyment of worldly life and its adornment. And what is with Allah is better and more lasting; so will you not use reason?”

This verse urges people to adopt the correct understanding and perception in respect to this world and the hereafter.

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2377, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, declared that he was not concerned over the excess of this material world and his example in this world is of a rider who takes a short rest under the shade of a tree and then leaves it behind by moving on.

In reality, each person is a traveller who stays in this world for a very limited time compared to where they came from meaning, the world of the souls and to where they are heading which is the eternal hereafter. In fact, this world in comparison is like waiting at a bus stop. In this Hadith this world has been compared to a shadow. This is because a shadow does not last long and fades away quickly without people even taking notice which is exactly how a person's days and nights pass away. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, did not mention a traveller's inn or a hotel as these are solid structures which indicate permanence. A fading shadow better describes this material world. This is because no matter how old a person is they always admit that their life flashed by and felt like a moment. Chapter 79 An Naziat, verse 46:

“It will be, on the Day they see it (Judgment Day), as though they had not remained [in the world] except for an afternoon or a morning thereof.”

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, indicated a rider not someone walking as the one who is walking would rest more under the shade of the tree than a rider. This further indicates the limited time people spend in this world.

Taking a rest in the shade indicates the importance of one correctly using the material world in order to obtain the provisions they need just like the rider takes the provision they need namely, rest. A Muslim should therefore prepare for their immediate departure from this world by preparing for the hereafter by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience.

This does not mean one should abandon this world as this Hadith clearly indicates one should make use of the material world in order to prepare for the hereafter. The rider takes a rest and Muslims must gather the things which will benefit them in the hereafter instead of dedicating their time to unnecessary things which will leave them empty handed on Judgment Day. Chapter 89 Al Fajar, verses 23-24:

“And brought [within view], that Day, is Hell - that Day, man will remember, but how [i.e., what good] to him will be the remembrance? He will say, "Oh, I wish I had sent ahead [some good] for my life.”

“And whatever thing you [people] have been given - it is [only for] the enjoyment of worldly life and its adornment. And what is with Allah is better and more lasting; so will you not use reason?”

This verse urges people to adopt the correct understanding and perception in respect to this world and the hereafter.

When people, irrespective of their faith, go on holiday they only pack the things they need and maybe a little extra but they try to avoid over packing. Even the amount of money they take with them they limit in respect to their stay abroad. When they arrive they often stay in a hotel which usually has the main necessities of living with a few extras. If they believe they will never return to the same destination in the future they will never buy a house as they will claim they stay is short and they will not return. They do not get a job during their holiday claiming that they stay is short so they do not need to earn more money. They do not get married nor have children claiming the holiday destination is not their homeland where they would get married and have children. Generally speaking, this is the attitude and mind-set of holiday makers.

It is strange how Muslims truly believe they will depart from this world soon meaning, they stay in the world is temporary just like being on holiday, and they believe their stay in the hereafter will be permanent yet, they do not adequately prepare for it. If they truly realised the short time they have, similarly to a holiday, they would not dedicate too much effort on their homes and instead be content with a simple home just like the traveller who is content with a simple hotel. So in reality, this world is like the holiday

destination in the example yet, Muslims do not treat it like one. Instead, they dedicate the majority of their efforts in beautifying their world while neglecting the eternal hereafter. It is sometimes hard to believe some Muslims actually believe in the permanent hereafter when one observes the amount of effort they dedicate to the temporal world. Muslims should therefore strive in preparing for the hereafter by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience while being pleased with obtaining and utilising the necessities of this world. It is why the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised Muslims to live in this world as travellers in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6416. They should not take this world as a permanent home and instead treat it like a holiday destination.

“And whatever thing you [people] have been given - it is [only for] the enjoyment of worldly life and its adornment. And what is with Allah is better and more lasting; so will you not use reason?”

This verse urges people to adopt the correct understanding and perception in respect to this world and the hereafter.

It is important for Muslims to develop the correct perception so that they can increase their obedience to Allah, the Exalted, which involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience. This is what the righteous predecessors possessed and it encouraged them to avoid the excess luxuries of the material world and instead prepare for the hereafter. This is an important characteristic to possess and it can be explained with a worldly example. Two people are extremely thirsty and come across a cup of murky water. They both desire to drink it even though it is not pure and even if it means they have to argue over it. As their thirst grows the more focused on the cup of murky water they become to the point they lose focus on everything else. But if one of them shifted their focus and observed a river of pure water which was only a short distance ahead they would immediately lose focus on the cup of water to the point they would no longer care about it and no longer argue over it. And instead they would endure their thirst patiently knowing a river of pure water is close. The person who is unaware of the river would probably believe the other person is crazy after observing their change in attitude. This is the case of the two types of people in this world. One group greedily focuses on the material world. The other group has shifted their focus to the hereafter and the pure and eternal blessings therein. When one shifts their focus to the bliss of the hereafter worldly problems do not seem like such a big deal. Therefore, patience becomes easier to adopt.

But if one keeps their focus on this world then it will seem like everything to them. They will argue, fight, love and hate for it. Just like the person in the example mentioned earlier who only focuses on the cup of murky water.

This correct perception is only achieved through gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge found within the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 53:

“We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth...”

“Then is he whom We have promised a good promise which he will meet [i.e., obtain] like he for whom We provided enjoyment of worldly life [but] then he is, on the Day of Resurrection, among those presented [for punishment]?”

The good promise refers to peace and success in both worlds.

It is important for Muslims to strive in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience as Allah, the Exalted, has guaranteed a good life in both worlds for the one who behaves in this manner. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

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This good life will protect a Muslim from severe grief, depression and other extreme moods and mental disorders which can destroy a person's life. Even though, Muslims will face difficulties which will sadden them but if they obey Allah, the Exalted, this sadness will never become extreme and effect their entire life on a long term basis. This is because a Muslim who strives in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, has an excellent reason to

continue moving forward through their difficulty without giving up and turning to depression and even suicide. For example, they look forward to the countless reward which will be granted to the patient. Chapter 39 Az Zumar, verse 10:

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Whereas, the Muslim who does not strive in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, and only claims the title of being a Muslim with their tongue will not be granted this attitude and a good life. And whenever they face difficulties it will drive them to extreme moods and mental disorders which will destroy their entire life.

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This half of the Hadith means that whoever correctly fulfils their duties in respect to Allah, the Exalted, and to the creation, such as providing for their family in a lawful manner while avoiding the excess of this material world will be granted contentment. This is when one is pleased with what they possess without being greedy and actively striving to obtain more worldly things. In reality, the one who is content with what they possess is a truly rich person even if they possess little wealth as they become independent of things. Independence of anything makes one rich in respect to it.

In addition, this attitude will allow one to comfortably deal with any worldly issues which may arise during their life. This is because the less one

interacts with the material world and focuses on the hereafter the less worldly issues they will face. The less worldly issues a person faces the more comfortable their life will become. For example, the one who possesses one house will have fewer issues to deal with in respect to it, such as a broken cooker, than the one who possesses ten houses. Finally, this person will easily and pleasantly obtain their lawful provision. Not only this but Allah, the Exalted, will place such grace in their provision that it will cover all their responsibilities and necessities meaning, it will satisfy them and their dependents.

But as mentioned in the other half of this Hadith the one who prioritises the material world over the hereafter meaning, by neglecting their duties or striving for the unnecessary and excess of this material world will find that their need, meaning greed, for worldly things is never satisfied which by definition makes them poor even if they possess much wealth. These people will go from one worldly issue to another throughout the day failing to achieve contentment as they have opened too many worldly doors. And they will receive their destined provision with difficulty and it will not give them satisfaction and never seem enough to fill their greed. This may even push them towards the unlawful which only leads to a loss in both worlds.

“Then is he whom We have promised a good promise which he will meet [i.e., obtain] like he for whom We provided enjoyment of worldly life [but] then he is, on the Day of Resurrection, among those presented [for punishment]?”

The good promise refers to peace and success in both worlds.

In reality, in most cases nothing in this material world in itself is good or bad, such as wealth. What makes a thing good or bad is the way it is used. It is important to understand that the very purpose of everything which was created by Allah, the Exalted, was for it to be used correctly according to the teachings of Islam. When something is not used correctly it in reality becomes useless. For example, wealth is useful in both worlds when it is used correctly such as being spent on the necessities of a person and their dependents. But it can become useless and even a curse for its bearer if it is not used correctly, such as being hoarded or spent on sinful things. Simply hoarding wealth causes wealth to lose value. How can paper and metal coins one tucks away be useful? In this respect, there is no difference between a blank piece of paper and a note of money. It is only useful when it is used correctly.

So if a Muslim desires all their worldly possessions to become a blessing for them in both worlds all they have to do is use them correctly according to the teachings found in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. But if they use them incorrectly then the same blessing will become a burden and curse for them in both worlds. It is as simple as that.

“Then is he whom We have promised a good promise which he will meet [i.e., obtain] like he for whom We provided enjoyment of worldly life [but] then he is, on the Day of Resurrection, among those presented [for punishment]?”

The good promise refers to peace and success in both worlds.

Every worldly blessing a Muslim possesses is only a means which should aid them in reaching the hereafter safely. It is not an end in itself. For example, wealth is a means one should use in order to obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, fulfilling their necessities and the necessities of their dependents. It is not an end or an ultimate goal in itself.

This not only aids a Muslim in maintaining their focus on the hereafter but it also aids them whenever they lose worldly blessings. When a Muslim treats each worldly blessing, such as a child, as a means to please Allah, the Exalted, and reach the hereafter safely then losing it will not have such a detrimental impact on them. They may become sad, which is an acceptable emotion, but they will not become grieved which leads to impatience and other mental problems, such as depression. This is because they firmly believe the worldly blessing they possessed was only a means so losing it does not cause a loss in the ultimate goal namely, Paradise, the loss of which is disastrous. Therefore, still possessing and concentrating on the ultimate goal will prevent them from becoming grieved.

In addition, they will understand that just like the thing they lost was only a means they firmly believe they will be provided with another means to reach and fulfil their ultimate goal by Allah, the Exalted. This will also prevent them from grieving. Whereas, the one who believes their worldly blessing is the end instead of a means will experience severe grief when losing it as their whole purpose and objective has been lost. This grief will lead to depression and other mental issues.

To conclude, Muslims should treat each blessing they possess as a means to reach the hereafter safely not as an end in itself. This is how one can possess things without being possessed by them. This is how they can keep worldly things in their hands and not in their hearts.

“Then is he whom We have promised a good promise which he will meet [i.e., obtain] like he for whom We provided enjoyment of worldly life [but] then he is, on the Day of Resurrection, among those presented [for punishment]?”

The good promise refers to peace and success in both worlds.

First of all, it is important to understand, that the major thing which separates a human from an animal is the fact that people live by a higher moral code. If people abandoned this and simply acted on their desires then they would be no difference between them and animals. In fact, people would be worse as they possess the higher level of thinking yet, still choose to live like animals.

Secondly, whether people want to admit it or not in reality, every person is a servant of something or someone. Some are servants of others, such as Hollywood executives and do whatever they command them to do even if it challenges modesty and shame. Others are servants of their relatives and friends and do whatever it takes to please them. Others are the worse by being servants of their own desires as this is the attitude of animals who generally act to please themselves. The best and highest form of servanthood is being a servant of Allah, the Exalted. This is quite evident if one turns the pages of history which clearly shows that those who were the servants of Allah, the Exalted, such as the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, were granted the highest honour and respect in this world and will be granted this in the next. Centuries and millennia have passed yet their names are remembered as the pillars and beacons of history. Whereas those who

became servants of others especially, their own desires were eventually disgraced in this world even if they achieved some worldly status and they became mere footnotes in history. The media barely remembers those who pass away for more than a few days before moving onto the next person to report on. During their lives these people eventually become sad, lonely, depressed and even suicidal as selling their souls and decency to their worldly masters did not grant them the contentment they were looking for. One does not need to be a scholar to understand this obvious truth. So if people must be servants they should be the servants of Allah, the Exalted, as lasting honour, greatness and true success lies only in this.

“Then is he whom We have promised a good promise which he will meet [i.e., obtain] like he for whom We provided enjoyment of worldly life [but] then he is, on the Day of Resurrection, among those presented [for punishment]?”

The good promise refers to peace and success in both worlds.

Those who disbelieve or avoid acting on their faith in Islam do so out of love for the material world and the things within it. They believe that believing or acting on their faith will prevent them from enjoying worldly blessings meaning, for them faith is something that restricts their desires and therefore they turn away from it either literally or practically. Instead they turn towards the material world and strive to fulfill their desires without restrictions believing that true peace lies in this. They look down at those who accept and actualize their faith by controlling their actions and using their worldly blessings in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. They believe that these pious Muslims are lowly slaves who been restricted from enjoying themselves whereas they, the disbelievers and the misguided, are free. But in actual fact this could not be further from the truth as the real slaves are those who fail to accept and submit to Allah, the Exalted, and the superior ones are those who have done this as they become free of slavery to the world. This can be understood by an example. A good parent will restrict the type of food their child eats meaning, they will only let them eat junk and unhealthy food once in a while and instead force them to follow a healthy diet. This child therefore believes that their parent has placed undesirable restrictions on them and that they have become slaves to their parent and their healthy diet. On the other hand another child has been given permission from their parent to eat whatever they desire, whenever they desire and how much they desire. So this child believes that

they are completely free of all restrictions. When these children come together the child who has been given complete freedom criticizes and looks down on the child who has been restricted by their parent. The latter child will also feel sorry for themselves when they observe the other child has been given free reign to behave however they wish. Outwardly it appears the child who has been granted freedom has obtained happiness whereas the other child is too tied up with restrictions to enjoy life. But years down the line the truth will become manifest. The child who had no restrictions grows up to become extremely unhealthy e.g. obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, etc. As a result of this they even become mentally unhealthy as they lose confidence in their body and the way they look. Because of this they become a slave of medications, diseases, mental and social problems. All these things restrict their happiness and life. Whereas, the child who was restricted by their parent grows up healthy in mind and body. As a result they become confident in their body and ability, which aids them to succeed in life. They become free of any slavery to medications, diseases, mental and social problems as they grew up with the correct balance and guidance. So the child who had no restrictions grew up becoming a slave to many things, whereas the child who had restrictions grew up independent of all restrictions.

To conclude, the real slave is the one who becomes a slave to all other things except Allah, the Exalted, such as social media, society, fashion and culture, and this leads to mental, physical and social problems, whereas the real free person is the one who submits only to Allah, the Exalted, thereby achieving peace of mind and body.

“Then is he whom We have promised a good promise which he will meet [i.e., obtain] like he for whom We provided enjoyment of worldly life [but] then he is, on the Day of Resurrection, among those presented [for punishment]?”

The good promise refers to peace and success in both worlds.

Disbelief can be a literal rejecting of Islam or through actions, which involves disobeying Allah, the Exalted, even though one believes in Him. This can be clearly understood by an example. If an unaware person is warned by another of an approaching lion and the unaware person takes practical steps to obtain safety they will be considered someone who believed in the warning given to them as they adapted their behaviour based on the warning. Whereas, if the unaware person does not practically change their behaviour after being warned, people will suspect that they do not believe in the warning given to them even if the unaware person verbally claims belief in the warning given to them.

Some people claim that their belief and obedience to their God is in their hearts and they therefore do not need to demonstrate it practically. Unfortunately, this foolish mentality has infected many Muslims who believe they possess a pure faithful heart even though they fail to fulfil the obligatory duties of Islam. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has clearly declared in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3984, that when one's heart is pure the body becomes pure which means their actions become correct. But if one's heart is corrupt the body becomes corrupt which means their actions will be corrupt and

incorrect. Therefore, the one who does not obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling their duties practically can never have a pure heart.

In addition, demonstrating one's faith in Allah, the Exalted, practically is their proof and evidence which is required on Judgment Day in order to be granted Paradise. Not having this practical evidence is as silly as a student who hands back a blank exam paper to their teacher claiming their knowledge is in their mind so they therefore do not need to write it down by answering the exam questions. The same way this student would undoubtedly fail so will a person who reaches Judgment Day without the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in the form of fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience, even if they possess faith in their heart.

“Then is he whom We have promised a good promise which he will meet [i.e., obtain] like he for whom We provided enjoyment of worldly life [but] then he is, on the Day of Resurrection, among those presented [for punishment]?”

The good promise refers to peace and success in both worlds.

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2559, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that Paradise is surrounded by hardships and Hell is surrounded by desires.

This means the path which leads to Paradise contains difficulties and hardships. In most cases, a person cannot obtain good in this world without going through some sort of difficulty, such as exerting one's energy, then how can one believe they can obtain Paradise without facing difficulties? If one turns the pages of history they will observe the righteous always faced difficulties but as they knew the path of Paradise contained difficulties they maintained their focus on the destination instead of the difficulties. In fact, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, once declared that no one had been tested more than him in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2472. Therefore, Muslims must realize a fact that facing some difficulties in this world is an extremely small price to pay to obtain the permanent bliss of Paradise. Therefore, they should remain patient through all difficulties while focusing on the destination.

The path to Hell is full of desires. This indicates the importance of maintaining one's obedience to Allah, the Exalted, at all times by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience. Even though it is not unlawful to enjoy lawful pleasures in this world a Muslim should minimize these as much as possible as these lawful desires often lead to unlawful desires. It is why a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1205, advises that the one who behaves in such a manner will safe guard their faith and honor. A Muslim should never obey their desires or the desires of others if it means they will disobey Allah, the Exalted, as the pleasure of fulfilling desires vanishes quickly whereas the regret and the potential punishment will last long.

To conclude, a desire fulfilled will not make one feel better if they end up in Hell. And a difficulty one faces will not make them feel bad if they end up in Paradise.

Parable 30

Chapter 29 – Al Ankabut, Verses 41-43

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ كَمَثَلِ الْعَنْكَبُوتِ
اتَّخَذَتْ بِئْتًا وَإِنَّ أَوْهَنَ الْبُيُوتِ لَبَيْتُ الْعَنْكَبُوتِ لَوْ كَانُوا
يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤١﴾

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ
الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٤٢﴾

وَتِلْكَ الْأَمْثَلُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ وَمَا يَعْقِلُهَا إِلَّا الْعَالِمُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾

“The example of those who take allies other than Allah is like that of the spider who takes [i.e., constructs] a home. And indeed, the weakest of homes is the home of the spider, if they only knew.

Indeed, Allah knows whatever thing they call upon other than Him. And He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.

And these examples We present to the people, but none will understand them except those of knowledge.”

“The example of those who take allies other than Allah is like that of the spider who takes [i.e., constructs] a home. And indeed, the weakest of homes is the home of the spider, if they only knew.”

This refers to the one who obeys anything while disobeying Allah, the Exalted.

Islam teaches muslims that they should never compromise on their faith in order to gain something from the material world. Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 135:

“O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives...”

As the material world is temporary whatever one gains from it will eventually fade away and they will be held accountable for their actions and attitude in the hereafter. On the other hand, faith is the precious jewel which guides a muslim through all difficulties in this world and in the hereafter safely. Therefore, it is plain foolishness to compromise the thing which is more beneficial and lasting for the sake of a temporary thing.

Many people especially women, will encounter moments in their lives where they will have to choose whether to compromise on their faith. For example, in some cases a muslim woman may believe that if she removed her scarf and dressed a certain way she would be more respected at work and may even climb the corporate ladder more quickly. Similarly, in the corporate world it is considered important to mingle with colleagues after work hours. So a muslim might find themselves being invited to a pub or club after work.

In times like this it is important to remember that ultimate victory and success will only be granted to those who remain steadfast on the teachings of Islam. Those who act in this way will be granted worldly and religious success. But more importantly their worldly success will not become a burden for them. In fact, it will become a means for Allah, the Exalted, to increase their rank and remembrance amongst mankind. Examples of this are the rightly guided Caliphs of Islam. They did not compromise on their faith and instead remained steadfast throughout their lives and in return Allah, the Exalted, granted them a worldly and religious empire.

All other forms of success are very temporal and sooner or later they become a difficulty for its bearer. One only needs to observe the many celebrities who compromised on their ideals and belief in order to obtain fame and fortune only for these things to become a cause of their sadness, anxiety, depression, substance abuse and even suicide.

Reflect on these two paths for a moment and then decide which one should be preferred and chosen.

“The example of those who take allies other than Allah is like that of the spider who takes [i.e., constructs] a home. And indeed, the weakest of homes is the home of the spider, if they only knew.”

This refers to the one who obeys anything while disobeying Allah, the Exalted.

First of all, it is important to understand, that the major thing which separates a human from an animal is the fact that people live by a higher moral code. If people abandoned this and simply acted on their desires then they would be no difference between them and animals. In fact, people would be worse as they possess the higher level of thinking yet, still choose to live like animals.

Secondly, whether people want to admit it or not in reality, every person is a servant of something or someone. Some are servants of others, such as Hollywood executives and do whatever they command them to do even if it challenges modesty and shame. Others are servants of their relatives and friends and do whatever it takes to please them. Others are the worse by being servants of their own desires as this is the attitude of animals who generally act to please themselves. The best and highest form of servanthood is being a servant of Allah, the Exalted. This is quite evident if one turns the pages of history which clearly shows that those who were the servants of Allah, the Exalted, such as the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, were granted the highest honour and respect in this world and will be granted this in the next. Centuries and millennia have passed yet their names are remembered as the pillars and beacons of history. Whereas those who

became servants of others especially, their own desires were eventually disgraced in this world even if they achieved some worldly status and they became mere footnotes in history. The media barely remembers those who pass away for more than a few days before moving onto the next person to report on. During their lives these people eventually become sad, lonely, depressed and even suicidal as selling their souls and decency to their worldly masters did not grant them the contentment they were looking for. One does not need to be a scholar to understand this obvious truth. So if people must be servants they should be the servants of Allah, the Exalted, as lasting honour, greatness and true success lies only in this.

“The example of those who take allies other than Allah is like that of the spider who takes [i.e., constructs] a home. And indeed, the weakest of homes is the home of the spider, if they only knew.”

This refers to the one who obeys anything while disobeying Allah, the Exalted.

Those who disbelieve or avoid acting on their faith in Islam do so out of love for the material world and the things within it. They believe that believing or acting on their faith will prevent them from enjoying worldly blessings meaning, for them faith is something that restricts their desires and therefore they turn away from it either literally or practically. Instead they turn towards the material world and strive to fulfill their desires without restrictions believing that true peace lies in this. They look down at those who accept and actualize their faith by controlling their actions and using their worldly blessings in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. They believe that these pious Muslims are lowly slaves who been restricted from enjoying themselves whereas they, the disbelievers and the misguided, are free. But in actual fact this could not be further from the truth as the real slaves are those who fail to accept and submit to Allah, the Exalted, and the superior ones are those who have done this as they become free of slavery to the world. This can be understood by an example. A good parent will restrict the type of food their child eats meaning, they will only let them eat junk and unhealthy food once in a while and instead force them to follow a healthy diet. This child therefore believes that their parent has placed undesirable restrictions on them and that they have become slaves to their parent and their healthy diet. On the other hand another child has been given permission from their parent to eat whatever they desire, whenever they desire and how much they desire. So this child believes that

they are completely free of all restrictions. When these children come together the child who has been given complete freedom criticizes and looks down on the child who has been restricted by their parent. The latter child will also feel sorry for themselves when they observe the other child has been given free reign to behave however they wish. Outwardly it appears the child who has been granted freedom has obtained happiness whereas the other child is too tied up with restrictions to enjoy life. But years down the line the truth will become manifest. The child who had no restrictions grows up to become extremely unhealthy e.g. obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, etc. As a result of this they even become mentally unhealthy as they lose confidence in their body and the way they look. Because of this they become a slave of medications, diseases, mental and social problems. All these things restrict their happiness and life. Whereas, the child who was restricted by their parent grows up healthy in mind and body. As a result they become confident in their body and ability, which aids them to succeed in life. They become free of any slavery to medications, diseases, mental and social problems as they grew up with the correct balance and guidance. So the child who had no restrictions grew up becoming a slave to many things, whereas the child who had restrictions grew up independent of all restrictions.

To conclude, the real slave is the one who becomes a slave to all other things except Allah, the Exalted, such as social media, society, fashion and culture, and this leads to mental, physical and social problems, whereas the real free person is the one who submits only to Allah, the Exalted, thereby achieving peace of mind and body.

“The example of those who take allies other than Allah is like that of the spider who takes [i.e., constructs] a home. And indeed, the weakest of homes is the home of the spider, if they only knew.”

This also includes a bad companion who takes one away from the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted.

Muslims should note that a major sign of true love is when one directs their beloved towards the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, which involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience. This is because obedience leads to success and safety in both this world and in the hereafter. A person who does not desire safety and success for a person can never truly love them irrespective of what they claim or how they treat the other person. The same way a person becomes happy when their beloved obtains worldly success, like a job, they will also desire their beloved to obtain success in the hereafter. If a person does not care about another obtaining safety and success especially, in the next world then they do not love them.

A true lover could not bear knowing and seeing their beloved facing difficulties and punishment in this world or in the next. This is only avoidable through the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted. Therefore, they would always direct their beloved towards the obedience of Allah, the Exalted. If a person directs another towards their own selfish interest or the interest of others instead of the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, it is a clear sign that they do not truly love them. This applies to all relationships such as friendships and relatives.

Therefore, a muslim should assess whether those in their life direct them towards Allah, the Exalted, or not. If they do then it is a clear sign of their love for them. If they do not then it is a clear sign that they do not truly love them. Chapter 43 Az Zukhruf, verse 67:

“Close friends, that Day, will be enemies to each other, except for the righteous.”

“The example of those who take allies other than Allah is like that of the spider who takes [i.e., constructs] a home. And indeed, the weakest of homes is the home of the spider, if they only knew.”

Many people place their hopes in other people. The problem with this attitude is that as people are not Angels they are bound to make mistakes and fall short of people's expectations and hopes. In addition, as times change and each person progresses along their own path, which is separate from the path of all others, it will cause them to become preoccupied with their own things, such as their responsibilities. This change often causes them to let down the people who place hope in them even if they do not mean to do this. Hoping in people who are not perfect will generally lead to disappointment. A common example of this especially, in the Asian community, is when parents place hope in their children. They hope that their children will choose the path in life they advise them to and hope their children will make taking care of their parents their ultimate priority. Even though, children should definitely take care of their parents as this is their duty, parents should not place their hope in them as this can often result in disappointment. People should instead fulfil their duties to Allah, the Exalted, and towards people as Allah, the Exalted, has commanded, and then place hope in Allah, the Exalted. A muslim should never forget that the source of all help is Allah, the Exalted, and the creation are only a means. The source can still help them even without the means they have in mind if He so chooses. But the means by themselves cannot help without the Source. If muslims place their focus and hope on the means then they will be disappointed. But if they place it on the Source then nothing can prevent them from gaining the support of Allah, the Exalted.

So it is important for muslims to place their hope in the correct place which must be supported by obedience to Allah, the Exalted, which involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience, then they will find the peace of mind and satisfaction they desire in both worlds.

“The example of those who take allies other than Allah is like that of the spider who takes [i.e., constructs] a home. And indeed, the weakest of homes is the home of the spider, if they only knew.”

In respect to idol worshipping, an idol which is created by a person cannot be a God. In fact, the person who created it has a higher status than it. If one claims the spirit of their God enters the idol after its manufacture then this would mean their God is completely dependent on people to create a body for it. A true God is not dependent on another in fact, everyone else is dependent on it. In addition, the fact that an idol does not possess any senses proves that it cannot benefit itself or others. Therefore, it is not worthy of being worshipped as the very purpose of worship is to gain benefit from the one being worshipped.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, indicated the infinite and absolute power and authority of Allah, the Exalted, in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2516. This Hadith advises that the entire creation cannot benefit a person if Allah, the Exalted, did not desire them to do so. Similarly, the entire creation together could not harm someone if Allah, the Exalted, did not desire them to. This means only what Allah, the Exalted, decides happens within the universe. It is important to note, that this advice does not indicate one should abandon using means, such as medicine, but it means that one can use the means as they have been created by none other than Allah, the Exalted, but they must understand that Allah, the Exalted, is the only One who decides the outcome of all things. For example, there are many sick people who take medicine and recover from their illness. But there are others who take medicine and do not recover. This indicates that another factor decides the

end result namely, the will of Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 9 At Tawbah, verse 51:

“Say, “Never will we be struck except by what Allah has decreed for us...”

The one who understands this knows that anything that affected them could not have been avoided. And those things which missed them could never have been obtained.

It is important to note, that whatever the end result even if it is against a person's desire they should remain patient and truly believe Allah, the Exalted, has chosen the best for them even if they do not observe the wisdom behind the outcome. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

When one truly understands this truth they stop relying on the creation knowing they cannot innately harm or benefit them. Instead, they turn to Allah, the Exalted, seeking His support and protection through sincere obedience by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience. This leads a muslim to trusting in Allah, the

Exalted. It also encourages one to only fear Allah, the Exalted, as they know the creation cannot harm them without the will of Allah, the Exalted.

Recognising that all things which occur within one's life and the universe originate from Allah, the Exalted, is a part of understanding the Oneness of Allah, the Exalted. This is a topic which has no end and goes beyond only superficially believing that there is none worthy of worship except Allah, the Exalted. When this is fixed in one's heart then they only hope in Allah, the Exalted, knowing He is the only One who can help them. They will only submit and obey Allah, the Exalted, in all aspects of their life. In reality, a person only obeys another in order to receive protection from harm or gain some benefit. Only Allah, the Exalted, can grant this therefore only He deserves to be obeyed and worshipped. If anyone chooses the obedience of another over the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, this shows they believe that this other can bring them some sort of benefit or protect them from harm. This is a sign of the weakness of their faith. The source of all things which occur is Allah, the Exalted, so muslims should only obey Him. Chapter 35 Fatir, verse 2:

“Whatever Allah grants to people of mercy - none can withhold it; and whatever He withholds - none can release it thereafter...”

It is important to note, that obeying a person which encourages the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in reality is obeying Allah, the Exalted. For example, obeying the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 80:

“He who obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah...”

“Indeed, Allāh knows whatever thing they call upon other than Him...”

Allah, the Exalted, is All Knowing as nothing escapes His knowledge whether in the Heavens or the Earth whether visible or not. The knowledge of Allah, the Exalted, has no limit, it has no beginning and no end and it is innate meaning, no one gave it to Him. Every creation which possesses knowledge has been granted it by none other than Allah, the Exalted. The knowledge of the creation is limited and has a beginning. Allah, the Exalted, is fully aware of one's outer and inner beings at all time.

The muslim who understands this divine name will refrain from sins both outward and inward rightfully believing Allah, the Exalted, knows all this and will hold them accountable for their actions. In addition, they will not stress about worldly issues understanding that Allah, the Exalted, is fully aware of them and will respond to them at the right time.

A muslim should act on this divine name by striving to gain and act on useful knowledge both worldly and religious which is the path of piety. This is the true inheritor of the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, which has been indicated in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 223.

“Indeed, Allāh knows whatever thing they call upon other than Him...”

The greatest major sin is to associate others with Allah, the Exalted. This has been confirmed by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6273. Polytheism can be classified as greater and minor. The greater type is when one worships more than one God. If a person dies in this state they will not be forgiven. Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 48:

“Indeed, Allah does not forgive association with Him...”

The minor type is when one shows off their actions. This has been confirmed in many Hadiths such as the one found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3989. On Judgment Day those who performed deeds to please others besides Allah, the Exalted, will be commanded to gain their reward from them which will not be possible. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3154.

If the Devil cannot prevent one from performing righteous deeds he will attempt to corrupt their intention thereby destroying their reward. If he cannot corrupt their intention in an obvious way he tries to corrupt it through subtle ways. This includes when people subtly show off their righteous deeds to others. Sometimes it is so subtle that the person themselves are not fully aware of what they are doing. As gaining and acting on knowledge is a

duty on all, according to a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224, claiming ignorance will not be accepted by Allah, the Exalted, on Judgment Day.

Subtly showing off often occurs through social media and one's speech. For example, a muslim might inform others they are fasting even though no one directly asked them if they were fasting. Another example is when one publically recites the Holy Quran from memory in front of others thereby showing others they have memorized the Holy Quran. Even criticizing oneself publically can be considered showing off one's humility to others.

To conclude, showing off subtly destroys a muslim's reward and must be avoided in order to safeguard their righteous deeds. This is only possible by learning and acting on Islamic knowledge, such as how to safeguard one's speech.

“...And He is the Exalted in Might...”

Allah, the Exalted, is the One who over powers all things, who in reality is the only One who possesses power and might. Anyone else who possesses strength only does so because Allah, the Exalted, granted it to them. There is no atom in this world or in the next that can escape the power and authority of Allah, the Exalted.

As all power belongs to Allah, the Exalted, a muslim should therefore always remember that the strength to perform righteous deeds and refrain from sins comes from Allah, the Exalted, alone. This will remove any chance of pride creeping into their heart. An atom’s worth of which is enough to take a person to Hell. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 266.

Whoever desires for their faith to become mighty must obey the All Mighty, Allah, the Exalted. Only then will they be granted strong faith which will aid them to overcome all difficulties so that they leave this world while Allah, the Exalted, is pleased with them. True obedience only lies in following the footsteps of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This includes fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 31:

“Say, [O Muhammad], “If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins.”

Truly Knowing Allah, the Exalted, is All Mighty should prevent a muslim from sinning. As they should know there is no way to escape the might of Allah, the Exalted. In addition, when a muslim engraves this divine name into their heart it prevents them from committing oppression and wronging others. They become fully aware that even if there is no person powerful enough to seek justice from them Allah, the Exalted, will certainly take them to account and punish them in both worlds. As confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6579, oppression to others may cause the All Mighty, Allah, the Exalted, to hurl them into Hell on Judgment Day.

“...He is...the Wise.”

Allah, the Exalted, possesses infinite knowledge of all things and their real nature and acts according to His infinite wisdom in a perfect manner. The muslim who understands this divine name will never object to His choices and decrees knowing that there is wisdom behind each choice of Allah, the Exalted, which benefits His servants even if they are not obvious to them. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

A muslim should act on this divine name by using their knowledge and blessings according to the commands of Allah, the Exalted, as this is the ultimate wisdom a person can possess.

“And these examples We present to the people, but none will understand them except those of knowledge.”

A great distraction which prevents one from submitting to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, is ignorance. It can be argued that it is the origin of every sin as the one who truly knows the consequences of sins would never commit them. This refers to true beneficial knowledge which is knowledge that is acted upon. In reality, all knowledge which is not acted on is not beneficial knowledge. The example of the one who behaves in this manner is described in the Holy Quran as a donkey which carries books of knowledge which do not benefit it. Chapter 62 Al Jumu'ah, verse 5:

“...and then did not take it on (did not act upon knowledge) is like that of a donkey who carries volumes [of books]...”

A person who acts on their knowledge rarely slips up and commits sins intentionally. In fact, when this occurs it is only caused by a moment of ignorance where a person forgets to act on their knowledge which results in them sinning.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, once highlighted the seriousness of ignorance in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2322. He declared that everything in the material world is

cursed except for the remembrance of Allah, the Exalted, whatever is connected to this remembrance, the scholar and the student of knowledge. This means that all the blessings in the material world will become a curse for the one who is ignorant as they will misuse them thereby committing sins.

In fact, ignorance can be considered a person's worse enemy as it prevents them from protecting themselves from harm and gaining benefit all of which can only be achieved through acting on knowledge. The ignorant commits sins without being aware of them. How can one avoid a sin if they do not know what is considered a sin? Ignorance causes one to neglect their obligatory duties. How can one fulfil their duties if they are unaware of what their duties are?

It is therefore a duty on all Muslims to gain enough knowledge to fulfil all their obligatory duties and avoid sins. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224.

“And these examples We present to the people, but none will understand them except those of knowledge.”

This verse explains a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6853. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that whoever follows a path seeking knowledge Allah, the Exalted, will make the path to Paradise easy for them.

This indicates both a physical path someone takes seeking knowledge, such as attending lectures and classes, and a path whereby someone seeks knowledge without a physical journey. It encompasses all forms of knowledge, such as listening, reading, studying and writing about knowledge. The path to Paradise has many obstacles preventing a muslim from reaching it. Only the one who possesses knowledge of them and how to overcome them will reach Paradise safely. In addition, it is easily understood that a person cannot reach a city in this world without knowledge of its location and the route which leads to it. Similarly, Paradise cannot be obtained without knowing these things about it, such as the path leading to it.

But the important thing to note is that a muslim’s intention to seek and act on knowledge must be to please Allah, the Exalted. Whoever seeks religious knowledge for a worldly reason, such as showing off, will end up in Hell if they fail to sincerely repent. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 253.

In addition, a muslim must strive to act on their knowledge as knowledge without action is of no value or benefit. This is like the one who possesses knowledge of a path to safety but does not take it and instead remains in an area full of dangers. This is why knowledge can be split into two categories. The first is when one acts on their knowledge, which leads to piety and an increase in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted. The second is when one fails to act on their knowledge. This type will not increase one's obedience to Allah, the Exalted, in fact, it will only increase them in arrogance believing they are superior to others even though they are like donkeys which carry books that do not benefit it. Chapter 62 Al Jumu'ah, verse 5:

“...and then did not take it on (did not act on their knowledge) is like that of a donkey who carries volumes [of books]...”

“And these examples We present to the people, but none will understand them except those of knowledge.”

A great obstacle to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, is weakness of faith. It is a blameworthy characteristic which gives rise to other negative characteristics, such as failing to act on one's knowledge, fearing others, placing the obedience of people above the obedience to Allah, the Exalted, having hope in forgiveness without striving for it and other undesired characteristics. The greatest affliction of weakness of faith is that it allows one to commit sins, such as neglecting the obligatory duties. The root cause of weakness of faith is ignorance of Islam.

One should strive to gain knowledge in order to strengthen their faith. With time they will eventually reach certainty of faith which is so strong that it safeguards a person through all tests and trials and ensures they fulfil their duties both religious and worldly. This knowledge is obtained when one studies the teachings of the Holy Quran and the Hadiths of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Specifically, those teachings which discuss the promises of reward for those who are obedient and the punishment for those who are disobedient to Allah, the Exalted. This creates fear of punishment and hope of reward in a muslim's heart which acts like a pull and push mechanism towards the obedience of Allah, the Exalted.

One can strengthen their faith by reflecting on the creations within the Heavens and the Earth. When done correctly this clearly indicates the

Oneness of Allah, the Exalted, and His infinite power. Chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 53:

“We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth...”

For example, if a muslim ponders over the night and day and how perfectly in sync they are and the other things linked to them they will truly believe that this is not a random thing meaning, there is a force which ensures everything runs like clockwork. This is the infinite power of Allah, the Exalted. In addition, if one ponders over the perfect timing of the night and day they will realise it clearly indicates that there is only one God namely, Allah, the Exalted. If there were more than one God each god would desire the night and day to occur according to their own desires. This would lead to utter chaos as one God might desire the Sun to rise whereas the other God might desire the night to continue. The perfect uninterrupted system found within the universe proves there is only one God namely, Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 21 Al Anbiya, verse 22:

“Had there been within them [i.e., the heavens and earth] gods besides Allah, they both would have been ruined...”

Another thing which can strengthen one's faith is to persist in righteous deeds and abstain from all sins. As faith is belief supported by actions it

weakens when sins are committed and strengthens when good deeds are performed. For example, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, once warned in a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 5662, that a muslim is not a believer when they drink alcohol.

“And these examples We present to the people, but none will understand them except those of knowledge.”

It is important for a muslim to be observant in their daily life and avoid being too self-absorbed in their own worldly matters so that they become heedless over the things which are occurring around them and the things which have already occurred. This is an important quality to possess as it is an excellent way to strengthen one's faith which in turn helps one to remain obedient to Allah, the Exalted, at all times. For example, when a muslim observes a sick person they should not only aid them by whatever means they possess, even if it is only a supplication, but they should reflect on their own health and understand that they too will eventually lose their good health either by an illness, ageing or even death. This should inspire them to be grateful for their good health and show this through their actions by taking advantage of their good health in both worldly and religious matters which are pleasing to Allah, the Exalted.

When they observe the death of a rich person they should not only feel sad for the deceased and their family but realise that one day which is unknown to them they will die also. They should understand that just like the rich person was abandoned by their wealth, fame and family at their grave so will they too be left only with their deeds in their grave. This will encourage them to prepare for their grave and the hereafter.

This attitude can and should be applied to all things one observes. A muslim should learn a lesson from everything around them which has been advised in the Holy Quran. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 191:

*“...and give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth, [saying],
"Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly; exalted are You [above such a
thing]; then protect us from the punishment of the Fire.””*

Those who behave in this manner will strengthen their faith on a daily basis whereas those who are too self-absorbed in their worldly life will remain heedless which may lead them to their destruction.

“And these examples We present to the people, but none will understand them except those of knowledge.”

It is important for a muslim to understand a key truth namely, nothing in creation occurs without a wise reason even if people do not observe this wisdom immediately. A muslim should treat everything which occurs, whether they are in times of ease or difficulty, as a message in a bottle. They should not get too caught up in assessing and examining the bottle as it is merely a messenger which delivers the important message. This occurs when muslims either exult over the good things which occur thereby becoming heedless to the message within the good thing. Or they become grieved during difficulties thereby becoming too distracted to understand the message within the difficulty. They should instead concentrate on following the advice of the Holy Quran and approach each situation in a balanced way. Chapter 57 Al Hadid, verse 23:

“In order that you not despair over what has eluded you and not exult [in pride] over what He has given you...”

This verse does not prohibit being happy or sad in different situations as this is a part of human nature. But it advises a balanced approach whereby one avoids extreme emotions namely, exultant which is excessive happiness or grief which is excessive sadness. This balanced approach will allow one to focus their mind on the more important message inside the bottle meaning, inside the situation whether it is a situation of ease or difficulty. Through assessing, understanding and acting on the hidden message a muslim can improve their worldly and religious life for the better.

Sometimes the message will be a wakeup call to turn back to Allah, the Exalted, before their time runs out. Sometimes it will be a way of raising their rank. Other times a way of erasing their sins and sometimes a reminder not to attach themselves to the temporal material world and the things in it. Without this assessment one will merely journey through events without improving their worldly or religious life.

Parable 31

Chapter 30 – Ar Rum, Verses 28-29

ضَرَبَ لَكُمْ مَثَلًا مِّنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ هَلْ لَّكُمْ مِّنْ مَّا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ مِّنْ
شُرَكَاءَ فِي مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ فَأَنْتُمْ فِيهِ سَوَاءٌ تَخَافُونَهُمْ كَخِيفَتِكُمْ
أَنْفُسَكُمْ كَذَلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾

بَلِ اتَّبَعَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا أَهْوَاءَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ فَمَنْ يَهْدِي مَنْ أَضَلَّ اللَّهُ
وَمَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ نَّاصِرِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾

“He presents to you an example from yourselves. Do you have among those whom your right hands possess [i.e., slaves] any partners in what We have provided for you so that you are equal therein [and] would fear them as your fear of one another [within a partnership]? Thus do We detail the signs for a people who use reason.

But those who wrong follow their [own] desires without knowledge. Then who can guide one whom Allah has sent astray? And for them there are no helpers.”

“He presents to you an example from yourselves...”

In a Hadith found in Imam Munzari's, Awareness and Apprehension, number 30, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that the Holy Quran will intercede on Judgment Day. Those who follow it during their lives on Earth will be led to Paradise on Judgment Day. But those who neglect it during their lives on Earth will find that it pushes them into Hell on Judgment Day.

The Holy Quran is a book of guidance. It is not merely a book of recitation. Muslims must therefore strive to fulfill all aspects of the Holy Quran to ensure that it guides them to success in both worlds. The first aspect is reciting it correctly and regularly. The second aspect is to understand it. And the final aspect is to act on its teachings according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Those who behave in such a manner are the ones who are given glad tidings of right guidance through every difficulty in this world and its intercession on the Day of Judgment. But as warned by this Hadith the Holy Quran is only guidance and a mercy for those who correctly act on its aspects according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. But those who misinterpret it and instead act according to their desires in order to gain worldly things, such as fame, will be deprived of this right guidance and its intercession on Judgment Day. In fact, their complete loss in both worlds will only increase until they sincerely repent. Chapter 17 Al Isra, verse 82:

“And We send down of the Quran that which is healing and mercy for the believers, but it does not increase the wrongdoers except in loss.”

Finally, it is important to understand that even though the Holy Quran is a cure for worldly problems a muslim should not only use it for this purpose. Meaning, they should not only recite it in order to fix their worldly problems thereby, treating the Holy Quran like a tool which is removed during a difficulty and then placed back in a toolbox. The main function of the Holy Quran is to guide one to the hereafter safely. Neglecting this main function and only using it to fix one's worldly problems is not correct as it contradicts the behaviour of a true muslim. It is like the one who purchases a car with many different accessories yet, it possesses no engine. There is no doubt that this person is simply foolish.

“...Do you have among those whom your right hands possess [i. e., slaves] any partners in what We have provided for you so that you are equal therein [and] would fear them as your fear of one another. Thus do We detail the signs for a people who use reason.”

This verse indicates that just like a person would dislike that their slave be considered equal to them even though they did not create them nor do they provide them with provision. So then how can one equate created beings to Allah, the Exalted, when He alone created them and sustains them?

One can strengthen their faith by reflecting on the creations within the Heavens and the Earth. When done correctly this clearly indicates the Oneness of Allah, the Exalted, and His infinite power. Chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 53:

“We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth...”

For example, if a muslim ponders over the night and day and how perfectly in sync they are and the other things linked to them they will truly believe that this is not a random thing meaning, there is a force which ensures everything runs like clockwork. This is the infinite power of Allah, the Exalted. In addition, if one ponders over the perfect timing of the night and day they will realise it clearly indicates that there is only one God namely,

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“...Thus do We detail the signs for a people who use reason.”

Generally speaking, ignorance prevents one from giving thought to the signs of Allah, the Exalted.

A great distraction which prevents one from submitting to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, is ignorance. It can be argued that it is the origin of every sin as the one who truly knows the consequences of sins would never commit them. This refers to true beneficial knowledge which is knowledge that is acted upon. In reality, all knowledge which is not acted on is not beneficial knowledge. The example of the one who behaves in this manner is described in the Holy Quran as a donkey which carries books of knowledge which do not benefit it. Chapter 62 Al Jumu'ah, verse 5:

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In fact, ignorance can be considered a person's worse enemy as it prevents them from protecting themselves from harm and gaining benefit all of which can only be achieved through acting on knowledge. The ignorant commits sins without being aware of them. How can one avoid a sin if they do not know what is considered a sin? Ignorance causes one to neglect their obligatory duties. How can one fulfil their duties if they are unaware of what their duties are?

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“...Thus do We detail the signs for a people who use reason.”

Generally speaking, ignorance prevents one from giving thought to the signs of Allah, the Exalted. This leads to weakness of faith.

A great obstacle to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, is weakness of faith. It is a blameworthy characteristic which gives rise to other negative characteristics, such as failing to act on one's knowledge, fearing others, placing the obedience of people above the obedience to Allah, the Exalted, having hope in forgiveness without striving for it and other undesired characteristics. The greatest affliction of weakness of faith is that it allows one to commit sins, such as neglecting the obligatory duties. The root cause of weakness of faith is ignorance of Islam.

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“...Do you have among those whom your right hands possess [i.e., slaves] any partners in what We have provided for you so that you are equal therein [and] would fear them as your fear of one another...But those who wrong follow their [own] desires without knowledge...”

This verse indicates that just like a person would dislike that their slave be considered equal to them even though they did not create them nor do they provide them with provision. So then how can one equate created beings to Allah, the Exalted, when He alone created them and sustains them?

As indicated by the main verses under discussion, the truth is that each idol worshipper only worships their own desires. The idols are just a physical manifestation of their desires which they worship. This is obvious as a person who worships an idol knows that the lifeless idol cannot command them to live their life a certain way so the worshiper themselves decides how they imagine their lifeless idol would like them to live. And this code of conduct is based on nothing but their own desires.

So in this respect any desire which distracts one from the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted, becomes an idol.

First of all, it is important to understand, that the major thing which separates a human from an animal is the fact that people live by a higher moral code. If people abandoned this and simply acted on their desires

then they would be no difference between them and animals. In fact, people would be worse as they possess the higher level of thinking yet, still choose to live like animals.

Secondly, whether people want to admit it or not in reality, every person is a servant of something or someone. Some are servants of others, such as Hollywood executives and do whatever they command them to do even if it challenges modesty and shame. Others are servants of their relatives and friends and do whatever it takes to please them. Others are the worse by being servants of their own desires as this is the attitude of animals who generally act to please themselves. The best and highest form of servanthood is being a servant of Allah, the Exalted. This is quite evident if one turns the pages of history which clearly shows that those who were the servants of Allah, the Exalted, such as the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, were granted the highest honour and respect in this world and will be granted this in the next. Centuries and millennia have passed yet their names are remembered as the pillars and beacons of history. Whereas those who became servants of others especially, their own desires were eventually disgraced in this world even if they achieved some worldly status and they became mere footnotes in history. The media barely remembers those who pass away for more than a few days before moving onto the next person to report on. During their lives these people eventually become sad, lonely, depressed and even suicidal as selling their souls and decency to their worldly masters did not grant them the contentment they were looking for. One does not need to be a scholar to understand this obvious truth. So if people must be servants they should be the servants of Allah, the Exalted, as lasting honour, greatness and true success lies only in this.

“...Do you have among those whom your right hands possess [i.e., slaves] any partners in what We have provided for you so that you are equal therein [and] would fear them as your fear of one another...But those who wrong follow their [own] desires without knowledge...”

This verse indicates that just like a person would dislike that their slave be considered equal to them even though they did not create them nor do they provide them with provision. So then how can one equate created beings to Allah, the Exalted, when He alone created them and sustains them?

The non-muslims of Mecca did believe in Allah, the Exalted, but they foolishly associated partners in His divinity. Chapter 5 Al Ma'idah, verse 104:

“And when it is said to them, "Come to what Allāh has revealed and to the Messenger," they say, "Sufficient for us is that upon which we found our fathers." Even though their fathers knew nothing, nor were they guided?”

Blind imitation of one's forefathers is a major reason why people reject the truth. A person should utilize their common sense and choose a way of life based on evidence and clear signs and not blindly imitate others like cattle. Behaving in this manner leads to deviation.

Muslims should not follow and adopt the customary practices of non-Muslims. The more Muslims do this the less they will follow the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This is quite evident in this day and age as many Muslims have adopted the cultural practices of other nations which has caused them to become distant from the teachings of Islam. For example, one only needs to observe the modern Muslim wedding to observe how many non-Muslim cultural practices have been adopted by Muslims. What makes this worse is that many Muslims cannot differentiate between Islamic practices based on the Holy Quran and traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and the cultural practices of non-Muslims. Because of this non-Muslims cannot differentiate between them either which has caused great problems for Islam. For example, honour killings is a cultural practice which has nothing to do with Islam yet because of the ignorance of Muslims and their habit of adopting non-Muslim cultural practices Islam is blamed every time an honour killing occurs in society. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, removed the social barriers in the form of casts and brotherhoods in order to unite people yet ignorant Muslims have resurrected them by adopting the cultural practices of non-Muslims. Simply put, the more cultural practices Muslims adopt the less they will act on the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

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A Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4049, indicates the importance of not blindly imitating others in accepting Islam, such as one's family, without gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge so that one surpasses blind imitation and obeys Allah, the Exalted, while truly recognising his Lordship and their own servanthood. This is in fact the purpose of mankind. Chapter 51 Adh Dhariyat, verse 56:

“And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me.”

How can one truly worship someone they do not even recognize? Blind imitation is acceptable for children but adults must follow in the footsteps of the righteous predecessors by truly understanding the purpose of their creation through knowledge. Ignorance is the very reason why the Muslims who fulfil their obligatory duties still feel disconnected from Allah, the Exalted. This recognition aids a Muslim to behave as a true servant of Allah, the Exalted, throughout the day not just during the five daily obligatory prayers. Only through this will Muslims fulfil true servanthood to Allah, the Exalted. And this is the weapon which overcomes all difficulties a Muslim faces during their life. If they do not possess this they will face difficulties without gaining reward. In fact, it will only lead to more difficulties in both worlds. Performing the obligatory duties through blind imitation may fulfil the obligation but it will not safely guide one through every difficulty in order to reach the proximity of Allah, the Exalted, in both worlds. In fact, in most cases blind imitation will lead to one eventually abandoning their obligatory duties. This Muslim will only fulfil their duties in times of difficulty and turn away from them in times of ease or vice versa.

“But those who wrong follow their [own] desires without knowledge...”

A great distraction which prevents one from submitting to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, is ignorance. It can be argued that it is the origin of every sin as the one who truly knows the consequences of sins would never commit them. This refers to true beneficial knowledge which is knowledge that is acted upon. In reality, all knowledge which is not acted on is not beneficial knowledge. The example of the one who behaves in this manner is described in the Holy Quran as a donkey which carries books of knowledge which do not benefit it. Chapter 62 Al Jumu'ah, verse 5:

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In fact, ignorance can be considered a person's worse enemy as it prevents them from protecting themselves from harm and gaining benefit all of which can only be achieved through acting on knowledge. The ignorant commits sins without being aware of them. How can one avoid a sin if they do not know what is considered a sin? Ignorance causes one to neglect their obligatory duties. How can one fulfil their duties if they are unaware of what their duties are?

It is therefore a duty on all Muslims to gain enough knowledge to fulfil all their obligatory duties and avoid sins. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224.

“But those who wrong follow their [own] desires without knowledge...”

Some have adopted a strange attitude. When they are questioned about things they are unaware of instead of admitting the truth they give a reply which has little or no foundation in the truth. This can become a serious issue especially in matters connected to Islam. A muslim may get punished for giving incorrect information which others act on. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 2351. This is because they ignorantly attributed things to Allah, the Exalted, or the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Because of these people strange beliefs and customs have become attached to Islam which is a great deviation from the truth brought by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. In fact, many of the cultural customs muslims have adopted believing them to be a part of Islam occurred because of this ignorant mentality.

These people believe that if they simply admit they do not know something they will appear foolish to others. This mentality in itself is extremely foolish as the righteous predecessors would stress the importance of admitting one's ignorance so that others do not become misguided. In fact, the righteous predecessors would only count the person who behaved in this manner as an intelligent person and counted the one who answered every question posed to them a fool.

This attitude is often observed in elders who often advise their children on issues relating to the world and religion instead of admitting their ignorance

and directing them to someone who knows the truth. When elders act in this way they fail their duty in rightly guiding their dependents which has been indicated in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 2928.

Muslims should therefore, gain correct knowledge, whether worldly or religious, before advising others and in cases they are unaware of something they should admit it as this will not reduce their rank in anyway. If anything Allah, the Exalted, and people will appreciate their honesty.

“But those who wrong follow their [own] desires without knowledge...”

In a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4606, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that any matter which is not based on Islam will be rejected.

If muslims desire lasting success in both worldly and religious matters they must strictly adhere to the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Even though, certain actions which are not directly taken from these two sources of guidance can still be considered a righteous deed it is important to prioritize these two sources of guidance over all else. Because the fact is that the more one acts on things which are not taken from these two sources even if it is a righteous deed the less they will act on these two sources of guidance. An obvious example is how many muslims have adopted cultural practices into their lives which do not have a foundation in these two sources of guidance. Even if these cultural practices are not sins they have preoccupied muslims from learning and acting on these two sources of guidance as they feel satisfied with their behaviour. This leads to ignorance of the two sources of guidance which in turn will only lead to misguidance.

This is why a muslim must learn and act on these two sources of guidance which have been established by the leaders of guidance and only then act on other voluntary righteous deeds if they have the time and energy to do so. But if they choose ignorance and made up practices even if they are not

sins over learning and acting on these two sources of guidance they will not achieve success.

“But those who wrong follow their [own] desires without knowledge...”

Muslims should not follow and adopt the customary practices of non-muslims. The more muslims do this the less they will follow the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This is quite evident in this day and age as many muslims have adopted the cultural practices of other nations which has caused them to become distant from the teachings of Islam. For example, one only needs to observe the modern muslim wedding to observe how many non-muslim cultural practices have been adopted by muslims. What makes this worse is that many muslims cannot differentiate between Islamic practices based on the Holy Quran and traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and the cultural practices of non-muslims. Because of this non-muslims cannot differentiate between them either which has caused great problems for Islam. For example, honour killings is a cultural practice which has nothing to do with Islam yet because of the ignorance of muslims and their habit of adopting non-muslim cultural practices Islam is blamed every time an honour killing occurs in society. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, removed the social barriers in the form of casts and brotherhoods in order to unite people yet ignorant muslims have resurrected them by adopting the cultural practices of non-muslims. Simply put, the more cultural practices muslims adopt the less they will act on the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

“...Then who can guide one whom Allāh has sent astray? And for them there are no helpers.”

Allah, the Exalted, guides those who sincerely try to obey Him. But those who persistently disobey Him are left to wander blindly in misguidance. Therefore, it is vital for Muslims to sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, as persistent disobedience leads to corruption of the spiritual heart and one's actions.

This is similar to a person who is warned by a judge not to behave in an unlawful way but after the person persists on this behaviour the judge gives the order for them to be locked up in prison. Therefore, Allah, the Exalted, has not wronged them they have only wronged themselves.

But it is important to note that as being abandoned in misguidance is a spiritual thing and therefore hidden to mankind, it is important for Muslims not to assume certain people have reached this point. Instead they should think positively about all people and therefore sincerely practically aid them in reforming their belief and behaviour.

Allah, the Exalted, has created human beings with the best possible capabilities. He gave them knowledge and power to differentiate between good and evil and even placed in them an innate inclination to like what is good and to dislike and avoid what is evil. This has been indicated in a

Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2389. Allah, the Exalted, has also granted mankind free will to choose between good and evil. This choice plays a role in enhancing or diminishing a person's natural faculties of reason. Chapter 91 Ash Shams, verses 9-10:

“He has succeeded who purifies it [the spiritual heart – the greatest faculty of reason]. And he has failed who instills it [with corruption].”

When a person chooses a path of goodness their natural potential develops and Allah, the Exalted, grants them further support in their efforts. Chapter 29 Al Ankabut, verse 69:

“And those who strive for Us - We will surely guide them to Our ways...”

But if one follows their evil desires and chooses the evil path gradually their spiritual hearts will become engrossed with darkness and no good will remain therein. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3334. If a person fails to repent then the main verse under discussion comes into effect. This person becomes so engrossed in evil that they find joy in their evil mentality and actions. They absolutely hate anything good.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 52, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that if one's spiritual heart is sound the whole body will become sound but if their spiritual heart is corrupt then the whole body will become corrupt.

First of all, this Hadith refutes the foolish belief where one claims to have a purified heart even though their speech and actions are bad. This is because what is inside will eventually manifest outwardly.

The purification of the spiritual heart is only possible when one eliminates evil characteristics from themselves and replaces them with good characteristics discussed in Islamic teachings. This is only possible when one learns and acts on Islamic teachings so that they can sincerely fulfill the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refrain from His prohibitions and face destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Behaving in this manner will lead to a purified spiritual heart. This purification will then reflect in the outward limbs of the body, such as one's tongue and eyes. Meaning, they will only use their organs in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. This is in fact a sign showing the love Allah, the Exalted, has for His righteous servant according to a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6502.

It is important to note, that this purification will guide one through all worldly difficulties successfully so that they achieve both worldly and religious success.

“...And for them there are no helpers.”

It is important for muslims to understand a simple yet profound lesson namely, they will never succeed in this world or the next in worldly or religious matters through the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted. Since the dawn of time to this age and till the end of time no person has ever achieved true success nor will they ever through the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted. This is quite obvious when one turns the pages of history. Therefore, when a muslim is in a situation which they desire to achieve a positive and successful outcome from they should never choose to disobey Allah, the Exalted, irrespective of how tempting or easy it may seem to be. Even if one is advised by their close friends and relatives to do so as there is no obedience to the creation if it means disobedience to the Creator. And in truth they will never be able to protect them from Allah, the Exalted, and His punishment in either this world or the next. The same way Allah, the Exalted, grants success to those who obey Him He removes a successful outcome from those who disobey Him even if this removal takes time to witness. A muslim should not be fooled as this will occur sooner or later. The Holy Quran has made it extremely clear that an evil plan or action only encompasses the doer even if this punishment is delayed. Chapter 35 Fatir, verse 43:

“...but the evil plot does not encompass except its own people...”

Therefore, no matter how difficult the situation and choice muslims should always choose the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in both worldly and

religious matters as this alone will lead to true success in both worlds even if this success is not obvious immediately.

“...And for them there are no helpers.”

Allah, the Exalted, is the One who dominates over all things outwardly through infinite power and authority and inwardly through infinite knowledge and awareness.

The muslim who understands the outer and inner domination Allah, the Exalted, has over His creation will refrain from all acts of disobedience. They will not oppress others knowing they cannot escape the dominating force of Allah, the Exalted, even if they escape the force of worldly people, such as the police.

A muslim should act on this divine name by dominating over their inner evil and vain desires through the strength provided by Allah, the Exalted, which is only gained through His sincere obedience. This involves fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience. They should use this strength to remove all things which prevents them connecting to Allah, the Exalted.

The One who dominates all things is the only One who can provide a muslim the strength to overcome all difficulties they may face in both worlds. He is the only One who can provide them the strength to perform righteous deeds and abstain from sins. These three elements combined

are required for a muslim to gain eternal success and they will be granted to the muslim who sincerely obeys the Dominator, Allah, the Exalted.

Parable 32

Chapter 31 – Luqman, Verses 26-27

لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ ﴿٢٦﴾

وَلَوْ أَنَّ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ أَقْلَمٌ وَالْبَحْرُ يَمُدُّهُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ سَبْعَةَ

أَبْحُرٍ مَا نَفِدَتْ كَلِمَاتُ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٢٧﴾

“To Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and earth. Indeed, Allah is the Free of need, the Praiseworthy.

And if whatever trees upon the earth were pens and the sea [was ink], replenished thereafter by seven [more] seas, the words of Allah would not be exhausted. Indeed, Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise.”

“To Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and earth...”

Allah, the Exalted, is the One who possesses all sovereignty which is free of all defects. It is a sovereignty which has no beginning, no end, no reduction and no limit. Allah, the Exalted, has complete and total control over the creation through management and judgment without any limitations, partners or helpers. The King cannot be hindered or prevented from carrying out His will.

By accepting Allah, the Exalted, as the only King a muslim indirectly accepts their servanthood to Him. Therefore, they must fulfil all His commands and avoid all His prohibitions. A true servant never questions the wise decisions of the King and instead submits with full trust to His choices knowing that the wise King only decrees the best for His servant. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

When a muslim recognises Allah, the Exalted, as the King they will not turn to another when seeking help and instead only seek His support through sincere obedience to Him. They will always remember if they obey the King He will protect them from the creation. But if they obey the creation over Allah, the Exalted, the creation will not be able to protect them from the

punishment of the only King. This is indicated in a Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 2625. He declared that there is no obedience to the creation if it leads to the disobedience of the Creator.

A muslim should adopt this characteristic according to their status by purifying their inner spiritual king namely, the spiritual heart through acting on the knowledge found within the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This will cause their servants meaning, their bodily limbs, to obey their spiritual heart in acts of righteousness. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has advised in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 4094, that if the spiritual heart is pure the rest of the body will be pure but if the spiritual heart is corrupt the whole body will become corrupt. One should not become a slave of their evil desires and instead become a true king which controls their desires according to the teachings of Islam.

Whoever perfects this will be given a spiritual kingdom in both worlds. The ultimate destination of the one who fulfils the rights of the King by perfecting servanthood has been mentioned in the Holy Quran. They will be granted a high station in the presence of the only Omnipotent King. Chapter 54 Al Qamar, verse 55:

“In a seat of honour near a Sovereign, Perfect in Ability.”

“...Indeed, Allāh is the Free of need...”

Allah, the Exalted, is rich beyond needing anything whereas the creation are poor and are completely in need of Him.

The muslim who understands this divine name will seek all things from Allah, the Exalted, through sincere obedience by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience. They will understand that both worldly and religious richness which are free of any defects can only be achieved through the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted.

A muslim must act on this divine name by striving to become independent of people and only rely on Allah, the Exalted. In fact, becoming independent of the material world and the possessions of people will lead to the love of Allah, the Exalted, and the love of people according to a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4102. This is achieved when one uses the blessings they have been given, such as good health, to lawfully fulfil their needs and the needs of their dependents and avoid laziness by relying on others, such as the government, to fulfil this duty for them.

“...Allāh is...the Praiseworthy. And if whatever trees upon the earth were pens and the sea [was ink], replenished thereafter by seven [more] seas, the words of Allāh would not be exhausted...”

Allah, the Exalted, is the One who is praised by His self-praise and by the praise of His creation. This also means that Allah, the Exalted, is the One who praises His righteous servants and handsomely rewards them for their efforts.

The muslim who understands this divine name will be far too busy in praising and obeying Allah, the Exalted, to praise himself and to worry about their rights. This will keep them away from pride which is a characteristic that leads to Hell. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 265.

A muslim must act on this divine name by only performing praiseworthy actions and adopting a praiseworthy character. This is arguably the greatest tradition of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 68 Al Qalam, verse 4:

“And indeed, you are of a great moral character.”

“...Allāh is...the Praiseworthy. And if whatever trees upon the earth were pens and the sea [was ink], replenished thereafter by seven [more] seas, the words of Allāh would not be exhausted...”

All praise is only for Allah, the Exalted, as He created and continuously sustains the entire creation within the Heavens and Earth without any progeny, partner, or helper. His kindness in the form of countless blessings, such as faith, to the creation has no limits. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 18:

"And if you should count the favors of Allah, you could not enumerate them...."

Therefore, the creation should constantly praise Him through sincere obedience by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience.

Allah, the Exalted, is worthy of all praise, as He is full of perfection in terms of attributes and characteristics which are free from all shortcomings. This is still true even if He did not bestow any blessings on the creation. In addition, praising Allah, the Exalted, with the tongue and actions through sincere obedience is a means to increase the blessings one receives. Chapter 14 Ibrahim, verse 7:

"And [remember] when your Lord proclaimed, 'If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favor]..."

A muslim should praise Allah, the Exalted, as much as possible as it is has been declared the best supplication by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3800. In addition, this verse reminds mankind that whatever praise-worthy quality a person observes in the creation or within themselves is only possible because Allah, the Exalted, granted it. Therefore, all praise returns and solely belongs to Allah, the Exalted.

“And if whatever trees upon the earth were pens and the sea [was ink], replenished thereafter by seven [more] seas, the words of Allāh would not be exhausted...”

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 2736, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that whoever knows the ninety nine names of Allah, the Exalted, will enter Paradise.

Knowing does not only refer to memorizing them. It actually means to study them and act on them according to one's status and potential. For example, Allah, the Exalted, is the Most Merciful according to His infinite status. This attribute means that Allah, the Exalted, bestows countless favours on the creation and is always extremely kind to them. This same characteristic has been attributed to others such as the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 9 At Tawbah, verse 128:

“There has certainly come to you a Messenger from among yourselves. Grievous to him is what you suffer; [he is] concerned over you [i.e., your guidance] and to the believers is kind and merciful.”

When used in reference to the creation merciful means soft-hearted and compassionate. Similarly, Allah, the Exalted, is All Forgiving according to His infinite status. And adopting this attribute by forgiving others is

something which has been encouraged in Islam. Chapter 24 An Nur, verse 22:

“...and let them pardon and overlook. Would you not like that Allah should forgive you?...”

So the divine attributes of Allah, the Exalted, can be adopted by muslims according to their status.

Therefore, muslims must first understand the meaning of the divine attributes and names and then adopt the meaning of the names in their character through action until they become firmly rooted into their spiritual heart so that they can achieve noble character.

“And if whatever trees upon the earth were pens and the sea [was ink], replenished thereafter by seven [more] seas, the words of Allāh would not be exhausted...”

This verse could be referring to the qualities of the Holy Quran.

The Holy Quran possesses an uncountable amount of qualities which separates it from any other worldly book. This aspect of the Holy Quran is so intense that it cannot even be explained or discussed over countless lifetimes. But a few of these qualities will be mentioned here. First of all, in the Holy Quran, Allah, the Exalted, has given an open challenge to the entire universe (not just people) and not only a challenge to those who were present when this divine revelation was revealed but to all of creation till the end of time. The challenge being if the people believed the Holy Quran was not a divine revelation from Allah, the Exalted, then they should produce a chapter that can rival a chapter of the Holy Quran. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 23:

“And if you are in some doubt, concerning what We sent down upon Our special devotee, then bring one chapter like it, and call upon all your helpers beside Allah, if you are truthful.”

There is no book on the entire planet that can and has given this type of open challenge. But over 1400 years ago the Holy Quran gave this

challenge to the entire universe and to this day this challenge has not been won by the non-Muslims nor will it ever be God willing.

Another quality of the Holy Quran is that it stated the outcome of future events. But the more amazing thing about these statements is that the outcomes seemed impossible at the time. For example chapter 48 Al Fath, verse 28:

“It is He Who sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth that he may make it prevail over all other religions And Sufficient is Allah as witness.”

When this verse was revealed the entire city of Mecca was Islam so when the people of Mecca heard this verse, unfortunately for them, they believed that Islam was too feeble and would therefore not survive long and certainly would not spread beyond the borders of Mecca let alone the entire world. But within a some years Allah, the Exalted, fulfilled this promise.

Another example of how the Holy Quran prophesied a future event which was unimaginable at the time is found in chapter 30 Ar Rum, verses 2-5:

“The Romans have been subdued. In the nearby land and after their subjugation they will soon overcome. In a few years. The command is of Allah only before and after. And on that day the believers shall rejoice. With the help of Allah, He helps whom He pleases. And He is the Might, and Merciful.”

These verses of the Holy Quran were revealed during a time where the Romans (Christians) were at war with the Persians (Fire worshippers). This war has been confirmed by many authentic historic books. At this particular time the Persians were on the verge of winning the war. At one point Rome itself was surrounded by the Persians. But Allah, the Exalted, stated that the Romans would eventually reign victorious. The non-Muslims of Mecca who themselves were idol worshippers favoured the Persians and agreed with the majority that it was impossible for the Romans to win. But Allah, the Exalted, as always proved these verses true and allowed the Romans victory.

A final example which appeals to the scientists of the world is seen in chapter 21 Al Anbiya, verse 33:

“And it is He Who created the night and the day and the sun and the moon. Each one is floating in a circumference.”

For centuries scientists have fought over theories on how exactly the solar system is arranged e.g. whether the sun remains still and the Earth rotates around or vice versa. Only relatively recently it has been proven by scientists from all different faiths and backgrounds that each object; sun, moon and the Earth all rotate on their own axes and rotate around each other in a set orbit. But Allah, the Exalted, declared this over 1400 years ago. All the science related verses of the Holy Quran are slowly being proven by scientists today. This is a huge piece of evidence that proves that the Holy Quran are the words of the One and only true God, Allah, the Exalted, who has created this universe and everything in it, because only a Creator can truly explain his creations.

Even though many commands of the Holy Quran may not be understood by people does not mean they are incorrect. Certain verses of the Holy Quran whose wisdom was hidden to man became apparent when society reached a certain level of development. As the whole Holy Quran is a book of wisdom and guidance it must be accepted irrespective if one understands its commands or not. This situation is just like a child who is suffering from a cold and desires ice cream but is not given it by their parent. The child will continue to cry without understanding the wisdom behind but those that possess knowledge will agree with the parent even though outwardly it appears as if the decision of the parent is wronging the child.

When studying the Holy Quran one will realize that it contains different levels of superiority through both obvious and subtle meanings that it discusses. Chapter 11 Hud, verse 1:

“...[This is] a Book whose verses are perfected and then presented in detail from [one who is] Wise and Aware.”

The expressions in it are unparalleled and its meanings are explained in a simple straight forward way. Its verses are extremely eloquent and no other text can surpass it. The Holy Quran also mentioned the stories of the previous nations in detail even though the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, was not educated in history. It commanded every type of good and forbade every type of evil, those that affect an individual and those that affect an entire society so that peace and security can spread throughout homes and society. The Holy Quran is free from exaggerations, lies or falsehood unlike poems and stories. All the verses, whether short or long, in the Holy Quran are beneficial. Even when the same story is repeated in the Holy Quran different important lessons can be learned from it. Unlike all other books the Holy Quran does not become boring when it is repeatedly recited and a seeker of truth never gets fed up of studying it. The Holy Quran not only provides warnings and promises but supports them with unshakeable and clear proofs. When the Holy Quran discusses anything which can seem abstract, such as adopting patience, it always provides an easy and practical way of implementing it. It encourages one to fulfil the purpose of their creation and prepare for the eternal hereafter in a simple yet profound way. It makes the straight path clear and appealing to the one who desires true success in both worlds. The knowledge within it is timeless and can be applied to every society and age. It is a healing for every emotional, economical and physical difficulty when it is understood and applied correctly. It is the cure for every problem an individual or an entire society can ever encounter. One only needs to turn the pages of history to observe the societies which implemented the teachings of the Holy Quran correctly in order to understand its all encompassing benefits. Centuries have passed yet not even a single letter

has been edited in the Holy Quran as Allah, the Exalted, promised to safeguard it. No other book in history possesses this quality. Chapter 15 Al Hijr, verse 9:

“Indeed, it is We who sent down the message [i.e., the Quran], and indeed, We will be its guardian.”

This is undoubtedly the greatest and timeless miracle of Allah, the Exalted, granted to His final Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. But the only one who will benefit from it is the one who seeks the truth whereas the seekers of their desires will only find it difficult to hear and follow. Chapter 17 Al Isra, verse 82:

“And We send down of the Quran that which is healing and mercy for the believers, but it does not increase the wrongdoers except in loss.”

“...Indeed, Allāh is Exalted in Might...”

Allah, the Exalted, is the One who over powers all things, who in reality is the only One who possesses power and might. Anyone else who possesses strength only does so because Allah, the Exalted, granted it to them. There is no atom in this world or in the next that can escape the power and authority of Allah, the Exalted.

As all power belongs to Allah, the Exalted, a muslim should therefore always remember that the strength to perform righteous deeds and refrain from sins comes from Allah, the Exalted, alone. This will remove any chance of pride creeping into their heart. An atom’s worth of which is enough to take a person to Hell. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 266.

Whoever desires for their faith to become mighty must obey the All Mighty, Allah, the Exalted. Only then will they be granted strong faith which will aid them to overcome all difficulties so that they leave this world while Allah, the Exalted, is pleased with them. True obedience only lies in following the footsteps of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This includes fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 31:

“Say, [O Muhammad], “If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins.”

Truly Knowing Allah, the Exalted, is All Mighty should prevent a muslim from sinning. As they should know there is no way to escape the might of Allah, the Exalted. In addition, when a muslim engraves this divine name into their heart it prevents them from committing oppression and wronging others. They become fully aware that even if there is no person powerful enough to seek justice from them Allah, the Exalted, will certainly take them to account and punish them in both worlds. As confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6579, oppression to others may cause the All Mighty, Allah, the Exalted, to hurl them into Hell on Judgment Day.

“...Indeed, Allāh is...Wise.”

Allah, the Exalted, possesses infinite knowledge of all things and their real nature and acts according to His infinite wisdom in a perfect manner. The muslim who understands this divine name will never object to His choices and decrees knowing that there is wisdom behind each choice of Allah, the Exalted, which benefits His servants even if they are not obvious to them. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

A muslim should act on this divine name by using their knowledge and blessings according to the commands of Allah, the Exalted, as this is the ultimate wisdom a person can possess.

Parable 33

Chapter 35 – Fatir, Verses 19-22

وَمَا يَسْتَوِي الْأَعْمَىٰ وَالْبَصِيرُ ﴿١٩﴾

وَلَا الظُّلُمَاتُ وَلَا النُّورُ ﴿٢٠﴾

وَلَا الظِّلُّ وَلَا الْحَرُورُ ﴿٢١﴾

وَمَا يَسْتَوِي الْأَحْيَاءُ وَلَا الْأَمْوَاتُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُسْمِعُ مَن يَشَاءُ وَمَا أَنتَ بِمُسْمِعٍ مَّن فِي

الْقُبُورِ ﴿٢٢﴾

“Not equal are the blind and the seeing.

Nor are the darknesses and the light.

Nor are the shade and the heat [equal].

And not equal are the living and the dead. Indeed, Allah causes to hear whom He wills, but you cannot make hear those in the graves.”

“Not equal are the blind and the seeing.”

One uses their sense of perception and understanding correctly while the other does not.

It is important for muslims to develop the correct perception so that they can increase their obedience to Allah, the Exalted, which involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience. This is what the righteous predecessors possessed and it encouraged them to avoid the excess luxuries of the material world and instead prepare for the hereafter. This is an important characteristic to possess and it can be explained with a worldly example. Two people are extremely thirsty and come across a cup of murky water. They both desire to drink it even though it is not pure and even if it means they have to argue over it. As their thirst grows the more focused on the cup of murky water they become to the point they lose focus on everything else. But if one of them shifted their focus and observed a river of pure water which was only a short distance ahead they would immediately lose focus on the cup of water to the point they would no longer care about it and no longer argue over it. And instead they would endure their thirst patiently knowing a river of pure water is close. The person who is unaware of the river would probably believe the other person is crazy after observing their change in attitude. This is the case of the two types of people in this world. One group greedily focuses on the material world. The other group has shifted their focus to the hereafter and the pure and eternal blessings therein. When one shifts their focus to the bliss of the hereafter worldly problems do not seem like such a big deal. Therefore, patience becomes easier to adopt. But if one keeps their focus on this world then it will seem like everything to

them. They will argue, fight, love and hate for it. Just like the person in the example mentioned earlier who only focuses on the cup of murky water.

This correct perception is only achieved through gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge found within the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 53:

“We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth...”

“Not equal are the blind and the seeing.”

One uses their sense of perception and understanding correctly while the other does not.

In a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4108, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that the material world compared to the hereafter is like a drop of water compared to an ocean.

In reality, this parable was given in order for people to understand how small the material world is compared to the hereafter. But in reality they cannot be compared as the material world is temporal whereas the hereafter is eternal. Meaning, the limited cannot be compared to the unlimited. The material world can be split into four categories: fame, fortune, authority and one's social life, such as their family and friends. No matter what worldly blessing one obtains which falls within these groups it will always be imperfect, transient and death will cut a person off from the blessing. On the other hand, the blessings in the hereafter are lasting and perfect. So in this respect the material world is no more than a drop compared to an endless ocean.

In addition, a person is not guaranteed to experience a long life in this world as the time of death is unknown. Whereas, everyone is guaranteed to

experience death and reach the hereafter. So it is foolish to strive for a day, such as one's retirement, which they may never reach over striving for the hereafter which they are guaranteed to reach.

This does not mean one should abandon the world as it is a bridge which must be crossed in order to reach the hereafter safely. Instead, a muslim should take from this material world enough to fulfill their necessities and the necessities of their dependents according to the teachings of Islam without waste, excessiveness or extravagance. And then dedicate the rest of their efforts in preparing for the eternal hereafter by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the teachings of Islam.

An intelligent person will not prioritize the drop of water over an endless ocean and an intelligent muslim would not prioritize the temporal material world over the eternal hereafter.

“Not equal are the blind and the seeing.”

One uses their sense of perception and understanding correctly while the other does not.

It is important for a muslim to be observant in their daily life and avoid being too self-absorbed in their own worldly matters so that they become heedless over the things which are occurring around them and the things which have already occurred. This is an important quality to possess as it is an excellent way to strengthen one's faith which in turn helps one to remain obedient to Allah, the Exalted, at all times. For example, when a muslim observes a sick person they should not only aid them by whatever means they possess, even if it is only a supplication, but they should reflect on their own health and understand that they too will eventually lose their good health either by an illness, ageing or even death. This should inspire them to be grateful for their good health and show this through their actions by taking advantage of their good health in both worldly and religious matters which are pleasing to Allah, the Exalted.

When they observe the death of a rich person they should not only feel sad for the deceased and their family but realise that one day which is unknown to them they will die also. They should understand that just like the rich person was abandoned by their wealth, fame and family at their grave so will they too be left only with their deeds in their grave. This will encourage them to prepare for their grave and the hereafter.

This attitude can and should be applied to all things one observes. A muslim should learn a lesson from everything around them which has been advised in the Holy Quran. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 191:

*"...and give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth, [saying],
"Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly; exalted are You [above such a
thing]; then protect us from the punishment of the Fire.""*

Those who behave in this manner will strengthen their faith on a daily basis whereas those who are too self-absorbed in their worldly life will remain heedless which may lead them to their destruction.

“Not equal are the blind and the seeing.”

One uses their sense of perception and understanding correctly while the other does not.

It is important for a muslim to understand a key truth namely, nothing in creation occurs without a wise reason even if people do not observe this wisdom immediately. A muslim should treat everything which occurs, whether they are in times of ease or difficulty, as a message in a bottle. They should not get too caught up in assessing and examining the bottle as it is merely a messenger which delivers the important message. This occurs when muslims either exult over the good things which occur thereby becoming heedless to the message within the good thing. Or they become grieved during difficulties thereby becoming too distracted to understand the message within the difficulty. They should instead concentrate on following the advice of the Holy Quran and approach each situation in a balanced way. Chapter 57 Al Hadid, verse 23:

“In order that you not despair over what has eluded you and not exult [in pride] over what He has given you...”

This verse does not prohibit being happy or sad in different situations as this is a part of human nature. But it advises a balanced approach whereby one avoids extreme emotions namely, exultant which is excessive

happiness or grief which is excessive sadness. This balanced approach will allow one to focus their mind on the more important message inside the bottle meaning, inside the situation whether it is a situation of ease or difficulty. Through assessing, understanding and acting on the hidden message a muslim can improve their worldly and religious life for the better. Sometimes the message will be a wakeup call to turn back to Allah, the Exalted, before their time runs out. Sometimes it will be a way of raising their rank. Other times a way of erasing their sins and sometimes a reminder not to attach themselves to the temporal material world and the things in it. Without this assessment one will merely journey through events without improving their worldly or religious life.

“Not equal are the blind and the seeing.”

One uses their sense of perception and understanding correctly while the other does not. Ignorance leads to spiritual blindness.

A great distraction which prevents one from submitting to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, is ignorance. It can be argued that it is the origin of every sin as the one who truly knows the consequences of sins would never commit them. This refers to true beneficial knowledge which is knowledge that is acted upon. In reality, all knowledge which is not acted on is not beneficial knowledge. The example of the one who behaves in this manner is described in the Holy Quran as a donkey which carries books of knowledge which do not benefit it. Chapter 62 Al Jumu'ah, verse 5:

“...and then did not take it on (did not act upon knowledge) is like that of a donkey who carries volumes [of books]...”

A person who acts on their knowledge rarely slips up and commits sins intentionally. In fact, when this occurs it is only caused by a moment of ignorance where a person forgets to act on their knowledge which results in them sinning.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, once highlighted the seriousness of ignorance in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2322. He declared that everything in the material world is cursed except for the remembrance of Allah, the Exalted, whatever is connected to this remembrance, the scholar and the student of knowledge. This means that all the blessings in the material world will become a curse for the one who is ignorant as they will misuse them thereby committing sins.

In fact, ignorance can be considered a person's worse enemy as it prevents them from protecting themselves from harm and gaining benefit all of which can only be achieved through acting on knowledge. The ignorant commits sins without being aware of them. How can one avoid a sin if they do not know what is considered a sin? Ignorance causes one to neglect their obligatory duties. How can one fulfil their duties if they are unaware of what their duties are?

It is therefore a duty on all Muslims to gain enough knowledge to fulfil all their obligatory duties and avoid sins. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224.

“Not equal are the blind and the seeing.”

One uses their sense of perception and understanding correctly while the other does not. Ignorance leads to spiritual blindness, which in turn leads to weakness of faith.

A great obstacle to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, is weakness of faith. It is a blameworthy characteristic which gives rise to other negative characteristics, such as failing to act on one's knowledge, fearing others, placing the obedience of people above the obedience to Allah, the Exalted, having hope in forgiveness without striving for it and other undesired characteristics. The greatest affliction of weakness of faith is that it allows one to commit sins, such as neglecting the obligatory duties. The root cause of weakness of faith is ignorance of Islam.

One should strive to gain knowledge in order to strengthen their faith. With time they will eventually reach certainty of faith which is so strong that it safeguards a person through all tests and trials and ensures they fulfil their duties both religious and worldly. This knowledge is obtained when one studies the teachings of the Holy Quran and the Hadiths of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Specifically, those teachings which discuss the promises of reward for those who are obedient and the punishment for those who are disobedient to Allah, the Exalted. This creates fear of punishment and hope of reward in a muslim's heart which acts like a pull and push mechanism towards the obedience of Allah, the Exalted.

One can strengthen their faith by reflecting on the creations within the Heavens and the Earth. When done correctly this clearly indicates the Oneness of Allah, the Exalted, and His infinite power. Chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 53:

“We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth...”

For example, if a muslim ponders over the night and day and how perfectly in sync they are and the other things linked to them they will truly believe that this is not a random thing meaning, there is a force which ensures everything runs like clockwork. This is the infinite power of Allah, the Exalted. In addition, if one ponders over the perfect timing of the night and day they will realise it clearly indicates that there is only one God namely, Allah, the Exalted. If there were more than one God each god would desire the night and day to occur according to their own desires. This would lead to utter chaos as one God might desire the Sun to rise whereas the other God might desire the night to continue. The perfect uninterrupted system found within the universe proves there is only one God namely, Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 21 Al Anbiya, verse 22:

“Had there been within them [i.e., the heavens and earth] gods besides Allah, they both would have been ruined...”

Another thing which can strengthen one's faith is to persist in righteous deeds and abstain from all sins. As faith is belief supported by actions it weakens when sins are committed and strengthens when good deeds are performed. For example, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, once warned in a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 5662, that a muslim is not a believer when they drink alcohol.

“Not equal...are the darknesses and the light.”

Disbelief can be a literal rejecting of Islam or through actions, which involves disobeying Allah, the Exalted, even though one believes in Him. This can be clearly understood by an example. If an unaware person is warned by another of an approaching lion and the unaware person takes practical steps to obtain safety they will be considered someone who believed in the warning given to them as they adapted their behaviour based on the warning. Whereas, if the unaware person does not practically change their behaviour after being warned, people will suspect that they do not believe in the warning given to them even if the unaware person verbally claims belief in the warning given to them.

Some people claim that their belief and obedience to their God is in their hearts and they therefore do not need to demonstrate it practically. Unfortunately, this foolish mentality has infected many Muslims who believe they possess a pure faithful heart even though they fail to fulfil the obligatory duties of Islam. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has clearly declared in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3984, that when one's heart is pure the body becomes pure which means their actions become correct. But if one's heart is corrupt the body becomes corrupt which means their actions will be corrupt and incorrect. Therefore, the one who does not obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling their duties practically can never have a pure heart.

In addition, demonstrating one's faith in Allah, the Exalted, practically is their proof and evidence which is required on Judgment Day in order to be

granted Paradise. Not having this practical evidence is as silly as a student who hands back a blank exam paper to their teacher claiming their knowledge is in their mind so they therefore do not need to write it down by answering the exam questions. The same way this student would undoubtedly fail so will a person who reaches Judgment Day without the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in the form of fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience, even if they possess faith in their heart.

“Not equal...are the darknesses and the light.”

First of all, it is important to understand, that the major thing which separates a human from an animal is the fact that people live by a higher moral code. If people abandoned this and simply acted on their desires then there would be no difference between them and animals. In fact, people would be worse as they possess the higher level of thinking yet, still choose to live like animals.

Secondly, whether people want to admit it or not in reality, every person is a servant of something or someone. Some are servants of others, such as Hollywood executives and do whatever they command them to do even if it challenges modesty and shame. Others are servants of their relatives and friends and do whatever it takes to please them. Others are the worse by being servants of their own desires as this is the attitude of animals who generally act to please themselves. The best and highest form of servanthood is being a servant of Allah, the Exalted. This is quite evident if one turns the pages of history which clearly shows that those who were the servants of Allah, the Exalted, such as the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, were granted the highest honour and respect in this world and will be granted this in the next. Centuries and millennia have passed yet their names are remembered as the pillars and beacons of history. Whereas those who became servants of others especially, their own desires were eventually disgraced in this world even if they achieved some worldly status and they became mere footnotes in history. The media barely remembers those who pass away for more than a few days before moving onto the next person to report on. During their lives these people eventually become sad, lonely, depressed and even suicidal as selling their souls and decency to their worldly masters did not grant them the contentment they were looking for.

One does not need to be a scholar to understand this obvious truth. So if people must be servants they should be the servants of Allah, the Exalted, as lasting honour, greatness and true success lies only in this.

“Not equal...are the darknesses and the light.”

Those who disbelieve or avoid acting on their faith in Islam do so out of love for the material world and the things within it. They believe that believing or acting on their faith will prevent them from enjoying worldly blessings meaning, for them faith is something that restricts their desires and therefore they turn away from it either literally or practically. Instead they turn towards the material world and strive to fulfill their desires without restrictions believing that true peace lies in this. They look down at those who accept and actualize their faith by controlling their actions and using their worldly blessings in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. They believe that these pious Muslims are lowly slaves who been restricted from enjoying themselves whereas they, the disbelievers and the misguided, are free. But in actual fact this could not be further from the truth as the real slaves are those who fail to accept and submit to Allah, the Exalted, and the superior ones are those who have done this as they become free of slavery to the world. This can be understood by an example. A good parent will restrict the type of food their child eats meaning, they will only let them eat junk and unhealthy food once in a while and instead force them to follow a healthy diet. This child therefore believes that their parent has placed undesirable restrictions on them and that they have become slaves to their parent and their healthy diet. On the other hand another child has been given permission from their parent to eat whatever they desire, whenever they desire and how much they desire. So this child believes that they are completely free of all restrictions. When these children come together the child who has been given complete freedom criticizes and looks down on the child who has been restricted by their parent. The latter child will also feel sorry for themselves when they observe the other child has been given free reign to behave however they wish. Outwardly it appears the child who has been granted freed has obtained happiness whereas the other child is too tied up with restrictions to enjoy life. But years down the line the truth will become manifest. The child who had no restrictions grows

up to become extremely unhealthy e.g. obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, etc. As a result of this they even become mentally unhealthy as they lose confidence in their body and the way they look. Because of this they become a slave of medications, diseases, mental and social problems. All these things restrict their happiness and life. Whereas, the child who was restricted by their parent grows up healthy in mind and body. As a result they become confident in their body and ability, which aids them to succeed in life. They become free of any slavery to medications, diseases, mental and social problems as they grew up with the correct balance and guidance. So the child who had no restrictions grew up becoming a slave to many things, whereas the child who had restrictions grew up independent of all restrictions.

To conclude, the real slave is the one who becomes a slave to all other things except Allah, the Exalted, such as social media, society, fashion and culture, and this leads to mental, physical and social problems, whereas the real free person is the one who submits only to Allah, the Exalted, thereby achieving peace of mind and body.

“Not equal...are the darknesses and the light.”

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2465, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that whoever prioritises the hereafter over this material world will be granted contentment, their affairs will be corrected for them and they will receive their destined provision in an easy way.

This half of the Hadith means that whoever correctly fulfils their duties in respect to Allah, the Exalted, and to the creation, such as providing for their family in a lawful manner while avoiding the excess of this material world will be granted contentment. This is when one is pleased with what they possess without being greedy and actively striving to obtain more worldly things. In reality, the one who is content with what they possess is a truly rich person even if they possess little wealth as they become independent of things. Independence of anything makes one rich in respect to it.

In addition, this attitude will allow one to comfortably deal with any worldly issues which may arise during their life. This is because the less one interacts with the material world and focuses on the hereafter the less worldly issues they will face. The less worldly issues a person faces the more comfortable their life will become. For example, the one who possesses one house will have fewer issues to deal with in respect to it, such as a broken cooker, than the one who possesses ten houses. Finally, this person will easily and pleasantly obtain their lawful provision. Not only this but Allah, the Exalted, will place such grace in their provision that it will

cover all their responsibilities and necessities meaning, it will satisfy them and their dependents.

But as mentioned in the other half of this Hadith the one who prioritises the material world over the hereafter meaning, by neglecting their duties or striving for the unnecessary and excess of this material world will find that their need, meaning greed, for worldly things is never satisfied which by definition makes them poor even if they possess much wealth. These people will go from one worldly issue to another throughout the day failing to achieve contentment as they have opened too many worldly doors. And they will receive their destined provision with difficulty and it will not give them satisfaction and never seem enough to fill their greed. This may even push them towards the unlawful which only leads to a loss in both worlds.

“Not equal...are the darknesses and the light.”

It is important for muslims to strive in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience as Allah, the Exalted, has guaranteed a good life in both worlds for the one who behaves in this manner. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

“Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do.”

This good life will protect a muslim from severe grief, depression and other extreme moods and mental disorders which can destroy a person's life. Even though, muslims will face difficulties which will sadden them but if they obey Allah, the Exalted, this sadness will never become extreme and effect their entire life on a long term basis. This is because a muslim who strives in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, has an excellent reason to continue moving forward through their difficulty without giving up and turning to depression and even suicide. For example, they look forward to the countless reward which will be granted to the patient. Chapter 39 Az Zumar, verse 10:

“...Indeed, the patient will be given their reward without account [i.e., limit].”

Whereas, the muslim who does not strive in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, and only claims the title of being a muslim with their tongue will not be granted this attitude and a good life. And whenever they face difficulties it will drive them to extreme moods and mental disorders which will destroy their entire life.

“Not equal...are the darknesses and the light.”

In a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4031, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that a person who imitates a people is counted as one of them.

All muslims irrespective of the strength of their faith desire to be counted and end up with the righteous in the next world. But this Hadith clearly warns that a muslim will only be considered a righteous person and end up with them if they imitate the righteous. This imitation is a practical thing not only a declaration through words. This imitation is correctly done by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

But those who verbally declare their love for the righteous and fail to imitate them and instead imitate the characteristics found in hypocrites and the sinful will be considered and judged as one of them. This does not mean they will lose their faith but it means they will be judged as disobedient muslims. How can a disobedient muslim be counted as an obedient muslim and end up with the righteous? This is only wishful thinking which has no value in Islam. Chapter 59 Al Hashr, verse 20:

*“Not equal are the companions of the Fire and the companions of Paradise.
The companions of Paradise - they are the attainers [of success].”*

“Not equal...are the darknesses and the light.”

In a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4606, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that any matter which is not based on Islam will be rejected.

If muslims desire lasting success in both worldly and religious matters they must strictly adhere to the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Even though, certain actions which are not directly taken from these two sources of guidance can still be considered a righteous deed it is important to prioritize these two sources of guidance over all else. Because the fact is that the more one acts on things which are not taken from these two sources even if it is a righteous deed the less they will act on these two sources of guidance. An obvious example is how many muslims have adopted cultural practices into their lives which do not have a foundation in these two sources of guidance. Even if these cultural practices are not sins they have preoccupied muslims from learning and acting on these two sources of guidance as they feel satisfied with their behaviour. This leads to ignorance of the two sources of guidance which in turn will only lead to misguidance.

This is why a muslim must learn and act on these two sources of guidance which have been established by the leaders of guidance and only then act on other voluntary righteous deeds if they have the time and energy to do so. But if they choose ignorance and made up practices even if they are not

sins over learning and acting on these two sources of guidance they will not achieve success.

“Not equal...are the darknesses and the light.”

Muslims should not follow and adopt the customary practices of non-muslims. The more muslims do this the less they will follow the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This is quite evident in this day and age as many muslims have adopted the cultural practices of other nations which has caused them to become distant from the teachings of Islam. For example, one only needs to observe the modern muslim wedding to observe how many non-muslim cultural practices have been adopted by muslims. What makes this worse is that many muslims cannot differentiate between Islamic practices based on the Holy Quran and traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and the cultural practices of non-muslims. Because of this non-muslims cannot differentiate between them either which has caused great problems for Islam. For example, honour killings is a cultural practice which has nothing to do with Islam yet because of the ignorance of muslims and their habit of adopting non-muslim cultural practices Islam is blamed every time an honour killing occurs in society. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, removed the social barriers in the form of casts and brotherhoods in order to unite people yet ignorant muslims have resurrected them by adopting the cultural practices of non-muslims. Simply put, the more cultural practices muslims adopt the less they will act on the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

“Not equal...are the shade and the heat.”

The Sun will be brought within two miles of the creation on the Day of Judgment. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 2864.

This will cause people to sweat according to the deeds they performed during their lives on Earth. Some people's sweat will reach up to their ankles, some their knees and for others it will reach their mouths.

One only needs to ponder over the times they were subjected to intense summer weather and how the heat affected their attitude and behaviour. Through this one can imagine how difficult the situation on Judgment Day will be when the Sun is brought so close to them. This shows that those who strive hard and exert sincere efforts in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, will find relaxation on Judgment Day. But those who were lazy and relaxed during their lives on Earth will be subjected to great stress on Judgment Day. Simply put, the one who strives here will relax there but the one who relaxes here will strive there in difficulty.

The same way people strive hard in this material world so that they obtain a comfortable life and even a comfortable retirement, even though reaching this retirement age is not guaranteed, muslims should strive even harder in this world by obeying Allah, the Exalted, in all aspects of their life so that they can obtain peace and comfort on a day that is guaranteed to occur. It is a sign of great ignorance to strive for a day one may never reach namely, the day of retirement, and not strive for a day they are guaranteed to reach and experience namely, Judgment Day.

“Not equal...are the shade and the heat.”

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2559, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that Paradise is surrounded by hardships and Hell is surrounded by desires.

This means the path which leads to Paradise contains difficulties and hardships. In most cases, a person cannot obtain good in this world without going through some sort of difficulty, such as exerting one's energy, then how can one believe they can obtain Paradise without facing difficulties? If one turns the pages of history they will observe the righteous always faced difficulties but as they knew the path of Paradise contained difficulties they maintained their focus on the destination instead of the difficulties. In fact, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, once declared that no one had been tested more than him in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2472. Therefore, muslims must realize a fact that facing some difficulties in this world is an extremely small price to pay to obtain the permanent bliss of Paradise. Therefore, they should remain patient through all difficulties while focusing on the destination.

The path to Hell is full of desires. This indicates the importance of maintaining one's obedience to Allah, the Exalted, at all times by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience. Even though it is not unlawful to enjoy lawful pleasures in this world a muslim should minimize these as much as possible as these lawful desires often lead to unlawful desires. It is why a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1205, advises that the one who behaves in such a

manner will safe guard their faith and honor. A muslim should never obey their desires or the desires of others if it means they will disobey Allah, the Exalted, as the pleasure of fulfilling desires vanishes quickly whereas the regret and the potential punishment will last long.

To conclude, a desire fulfilled will not make one feel better if they end up in Hell. And a difficulty one faces will not make them feel bad if they end up in Paradise.

“And not equal are the living and the dead...”

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6407, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that the difference between the person who remembers Allah, the Exalted, and the one who does not is like a living person compared to a dead person.

It is important for muslims who desire to create a strong connection with Allah, the Exalted, so that they can overcome all difficulties in this world and in the hereafter successfully to remember Allah, the Exalted, as much as possible. Put simply, the more they remember Him the more they will achieve this vital goal.

This is achieved by practically acting on the three levels of the remembrance of Allah, the Exalted. The first level is to remember Allah, the Exalted, internally and silently. This includes correcting one's intention so that they only act in order to please Allah, the Exalted. The second is by remembering Allah, the Exalted, through one's tongue. But the highest and most effective way of strengthening one's bond with Allah, the Exalted, is practically remembering Him with one's limbs. This is achieved by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This requires one to gain and act on Islamic knowledge which in turn is the root of all good and success in both worlds.

Those who remain on the first two levels will receive reward depending on their intention but they are unlikely to increase the strength of their faith and piety unless they move to the third and highest level of the remembrance of Allah, the Exalted.

“And not equal are the living and the dead...”

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 52, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that if one's spiritual heart is sound the whole body will become sound but if their spiritual heart is corrupt then the whole body will become corrupt.

First of all, this Hadith refutes the foolish belief where one claims to have a purified heart even though their speech and actions are bad. This is because what is inside will eventually manifest outwardly.

The purification of the spiritual heart is only possible when one eliminates evil characteristics from themselves and replaces them with good characteristics discussed in Islamic teachings. This is only possible when one learns and acts on Islamic teachings so that they can sincerely fulfill the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refrain from His prohibitions and face destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Behaving in this manner will lead to a purified spiritual heart. This purification will then reflect in the outward limbs of the body, such as one's tongue and eyes. Meaning, they will only use their organs in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. This is in fact a sign showing the love Allah, the Exalted, has for His righteous servant according to a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6502.

It is important to note, that this purification will guide one through all worldly difficulties successfully so that they achieve both worldly and religious success.

“...Indeed, Allāh causes to hear whom He wills...”

Allah, the Exalted, guides those who sincerely try to obey Him. But those who persistently disobey Him are left to wander blindly in misguidance. Therefore, it is vital for Muslims to sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, as persistent disobedience leads to corruption of the spiritual heart and one's actions.

This is similar to a person who is warned by a judge not to behave in an unlawful way but after the person persists on this behaviour the judge gives the order for them to be locked up in prison. Therefore, Allah, the Exalted, has not wronged them they have only wronged themselves.

But it is important to note that as being abandoned in misguidance is a spiritual thing and therefore hidden to mankind, it is important for Muslims not to assume certain people have reached this point. Instead they should think positively about all people and therefore sincerely practically aid them in reforming their belief and behaviour.

Allah, the Exalted, has created human beings with the best possible capabilities. He gave them knowledge and power to differentiate between good and evil and even placed in them an innate inclination to like what is good and to dislike and avoid what is evil. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2389. Allah, the Exalted, has also

granted mankind free will to choose between good and evil. This choice plays a role in enhancing or diminishing a person's natural faculties of reason. Chapter 91 Ash Shams, verses 9-10:

“He has succeeded who purifies it [the spiritual heart – the greatest faculty of reason]. And he has failed who instills it [with corruption].”

When a person chooses a path of goodness their natural potential develops and Allah, the Exalted, grants them further support in their efforts. Chapter 29 Al Ankabut, verse 69:

“And those who strive for Us - We will surely guide them to Our ways...”

But if one follows their evil desires and chooses the evil path gradually their spiritual hearts will become engrossed with darkness and no good will remain therein. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3334. If a person fails to repent then the main verse under discussion comes into effect. This person becomes so engrossed in evil that they find joy in their evil mentality and actions. They absolutely hate anything good.

“...Indeed, Allāh causes to hear whom He wills, but you cannot make hear those in the graves.”

Those who fail to use their senses correctly are like the dead who have lost their senses.

Even though, the number of preachers has increased over time and accessing information has become easier yet the strength of muslims has only weakened. One of the reasons is that many muslims have adopted a mentality which has hindered them from learning and acting on Islamic knowledge namely, they believe merely listening to Islamic knowledge is good enough to succeed. This is a trap of the Devil and completely contradicts the attitude of the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, and the righteous predecessors. They not only listened to religious knowledge but they fully intended and fulfilled this intention by acting on the knowledge they heard. Failing to act in this way has caused the faith of muslims to weaken. It is the reason why some muslims have spent decades attending religious gatherings and talks yet have not changed for the better at all. The danger of this attitude is that eventually people will fall lower by believing that they can simply declare Islam with their tongues without the need to listen or act on religious teachings. Muslims will be left with ignorance as their guide which will only lead them to destruction.

“...Indeed, Allāh causes to hear whom He wills, but you cannot make hear those in the graves.”

Those who fail to use their senses correctly are like the dead who have lost their senses.

Listening correctly to the word of Allah, the Exalted, is the only way one can correctly adhere to its teachings. It is important to understand the difference between hearing and listening. Hearing is simply acknowledging a sound with one's mind even if they fail to make sense of the noise. For example, a person may hear someone shouting at them from a great distance but they will not be able to understand what they are saying. Whereas, listening involves hearing a sound and understanding it so that one's behaviour changes. For example, a person giving a specific verbal instruction to another who responds appropriately after hearing and understanding the instructions.

Muslims need to hear the word of Allah, the Exalted, and strive to understand it so that it affects their behaviour in a positive way. Unfortunately, many Muslims have failed to live up to this in respect to the Holy Quran as they are good at hearing the recitation of the Holy Quran but fail to correctly listen to it which involves understanding and acting on its teachings.

To conclude, simply hearing the word of Allah, the Exalted, is not good enough to obtain success one must strive to instead truly listen to it.

“Not equal are the blind and the seeing. Nor are the darknesses and the light. Nor are the shade and the heat [equal]. And not equal are the living and the dead. Indeed, Allah causes to hear whom He wills, but you cannot make hear those in the graves.”

Every muslim openly declares that they desire the companionship of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, the other Holy Prophets, peace be upon him them, and the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, in the hereafter. They often quote the Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 3688, which advises that a person will be with those they love in the hereafter. And because of this they openly declare their love for these righteous servants of Allah, the Exalted. But it is strange how they desire this outcome and claim love for the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, yet they barely know him as they are too busy to study his life, character and teachings. This is foolish as how can one truly love someone they do not even know?

In addition, when these people are asked for proof of their love for the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, on Judgment Day what will they say? What will they present? The proof of this declaration is studying and acting on the life, character and teachings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. A declaration without this evidence will not be accepted by Allah, the Exalted. This is quite obvious as no one understood Islam better than the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, did and this was not their attitude. They declared love for the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and supported their claim through actions by following in his footsteps. This is why they will be with him in the hereafter.

Those who believe love is in the heart and does not require it to be shown through actions is as foolish as the student who hands back a blank exam paper to their teacher claiming that knowledge is in their mind so they do not need to practically write it down on paper and then still expects to pass.

The one who behaves in such a manner does not love the righteous servants of Allah, the Exalted, only their own desires and they have undoubtedly been fooled by the Devil.

Finally, it is important to note that members of other religions also claim love for their Holy Prophets, peace be upon them. But as they failed to follow in their footsteps and act on their teachings they will certainly not be with them on Judgment Day. This is quite obvious if one ponders over this fact for a moment.

Parable 34

Chapter 39 – Az Zumar, Verse 29

ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا رَجُلًا فِيهِ شُرَكَاءُ مُتَشَكِّسُونَ وَرَجُلًا سَلَمًا لِرَجُلٍ
هَلْ يَسْتَوِيَانِ مَثَلًا الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٩﴾

“Allah presents an example: a man [slave] owned by quarreling partners and another belonging exclusively to one man - are they equal in comparison? Praise be to Allah! But most of them do not know.”

“Allah presents an example...”

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2645, that when Allah, the Exalted, desires to give someone good He provides them with Islamic knowledge.

There is no doubt that every muslim irrespective of the strength of their faith desires good in both worlds. Even though many muslims incorrectly believe that this good which they desire lies in fame, wealth, authority, companionship and their career this Hadith makes it crystal clear that true lasting good lies in gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge. It is important to note a branch of religious knowledge is useful worldly knowledge whereby one earns lawful provision in order to fulfil their necessities and the necessities of their dependents. Even though the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has pointed out where good lies yet it is a shame how many muslims do not place much value in this. They in most cases only strive to obtain the bare minimum of Islamic knowledge in order to fulfil their obligatory duties and fail to acquire and act on more such as the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Instead they dedicate their efforts on worldly things believing true good is found there. Many muslims fail to appreciate that the righteous predecessors had to journey for weeks on end just to learn a single verse or Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, whereas today one can study Islamic teachings without leaving their home. Yet, many fail to make use of this blessing given to the modern day muslims. Out of His infinite mercy Allah, the Exalted, through his Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has not only pointed out where true good lies but He has also

placed this good at one's finger tips. Allah, the Exalted, has informed mankind of where an eternal buried treasure is located which can solve all the problems they may encounter in both worlds. But muslims will only obtain this good once they struggle to acquire and act on it.

“Allāh presents an example: a man [i.e., slave] owned by quarreling partners and another belonging exclusively to one man - are they equal in comparison?...”

This includes one being devoted to their desires and the desires of others compared to being solely sincerely obedient to Allah, the Exalted.

First of all, it is important to understand, that the major thing which separates a human from an animal is the fact that people live by a higher moral code. If people abandoned this and simply acted on their desires then they would be no difference between them and animals. In fact, people would be worse as they possess the higher level of thinking yet, still choose to live like animals.

Secondly, whether people want to admit it or not in reality, every person is a servant of something or someone. Some are servants of others, such as Hollywood executives and do whatever they command them to do even if it challenges modesty and shame. Others are servants of their relatives and friends and do whatever it takes to please them. Others are the worse by being servants of their own desires as this is the attitude of animals who generally act to please themselves. The best and highest form of servanthood is being a servant of Allah, the Exalted. This is quite evident if one turns the pages of history which clearly shows that those who were the servants of Allah, the Exalted, such as the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, were granted the highest honour and respect in this world and will be granted this in the next. Centuries and millennia have passed yet their names are remembered as the pillars and beacons of history. Whereas those who

became servants of others especially, their own desires were eventually disgraced in this world even if they achieved some worldly status and they became mere footnotes in history. The media barely remembers those who pass away for more than a few days before moving onto the next person to report on. During their lives these people eventually become sad, lonely, depressed and even suicidal as selling their souls and decency to their worldly masters did not grant them the contentment they were looking for. One does not need to be a scholar to understand this obvious truth. So if people must be servants they should be the servants of Allah, the Exalted, as lasting honour, greatness and true success lies only in this.

“Allāh presents an example: a man [i.e., slave] owned by quarreling partners and another belonging exclusively to one man - are they equal in comparison?...”

This includes one being devoted to their desires and the desires of others compared to being solely sincerely obedient to Allah, the Exalted.

Those who disbelieve or avoid acting on their faith in Islam do so out of love for the material world and the things within it. They believe that believing or acting on their faith will prevent them from enjoying worldly blessings meaning, for them faith is something that restricts their desires and therefore they turn away from it either literally or practically. Instead they turn towards the material world and strive to fulfill their desires without restrictions believing that true peace lies in this. They look down at those who accept and actualize their faith by controlling their actions and using their worldly blessings in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. They believe that these pious Muslims are lowly slaves who been restricted from enjoying themselves whereas they, the disbelievers and the misguided, are free. But in actual fact this could not be further from the truth as the real slaves are those who fail to accept and submit to Allah, the Exalted, and the superior ones are those who have done this as they become free of slavery to the world. This can be understood by an example. A good parent will restrict the type of food their child eats meaning, they will only let them eat junk and unhealthy food once in a while and instead force them to follow a healthy diet. This child therefore believes that their parent has placed undesirable restrictions on them and that they have become slaves to their parent and their healthy diet. On the other hand another child has been given permission from their parent to eat whatever they desire, whenever they desire and how much they desire. So this child believes that

they are completely free of all restrictions. When these children come together the child who has been given complete freedom criticizes and looks down on the child who has been restricted by their parent. The latter child will also feel sorry for themselves when they observe the other child has been given free reign to behave however they wish. Outwardly it appears the child who has been granted freedom has obtained happiness whereas the other child is too tied up with restrictions to enjoy life. But years down the line the truth will become manifest. The child who had no restrictions grows up to become extremely unhealthy e.g. obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, etc. As a result of this they even become mentally unhealthy as they lose confidence in their body and the way they look. Because of this they become a slave of medications, diseases, mental and social problems. All these things restrict their happiness and life. Whereas, the child who was restricted by their parent grows up healthy in mind and body. As a result they become confident in their body and ability, which aids them to succeed in life. They become free of any slavery to medications, diseases, mental and social problems as they grew up with the correct balance and guidance. So the child who had no restrictions grew up becoming a slave to many things, whereas the child who had restrictions grew up independent of all restrictions.

To conclude, the real slave is the one who becomes a slave to all other things except Allah, the Exalted, such as social media, society, fashion and culture, and this leads to mental, physical and social problems, whereas the real free person is the one who submits only to Allah, the Exalted, thereby achieving peace of mind and body.

“...Praise be to Allāh!...”

Allah, the Exalted, is the One who is praised by His self-praise and by the praise of His creation. This also means that Allah, the Exalted, is the One who praises His righteous servants and handsomely rewards them for their efforts.

The muslim who understands this divine name will be far too busy in praising and obeying Allah, the Exalted, to praise themselves and to worry about their rights. This will keep them away from pride which is a characteristic that leads to Hell. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 265.

A muslim must act on this divine name by only performing praiseworthy actions and adopting a praiseworthy character. This is arguably the greatest tradition of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 68 Al Qalam, verse 4:

“And indeed, you are of a great moral character.”

“...But most of them do not know.”

A great distraction which prevents one from submitting to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, is ignorance. It can be argued that it is the origin of every sin as the one who truly knows the consequences of sins would never commit them. This refers to true beneficial knowledge which is knowledge that is acted upon. In reality, all knowledge which is not acted on is not beneficial knowledge. The example of the one who behaves in this manner is described in the Holy Quran as a donkey which carries books of knowledge which do not benefit it. Chapter 62 Al Jumu'ah, verse 5:

“...and then did not take it on (did not act upon knowledge) is like that of a donkey who carries volumes [of books]...”

A person who acts on their knowledge rarely slips up and commits sins intentionally. In fact, when this occurs it is only caused by a moment of ignorance where a person forgets to act on their knowledge which results in them sinning.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, once highlighted the seriousness of ignorance in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2322. He declared that everything in the material world is cursed except for the remembrance of Allah, the Exalted, whatever is

connected to this remembrance, the scholar and the student of knowledge. This means that all the blessings in the material world will become a curse for the one who is ignorant as they will misuse them thereby committing sins.

In fact, ignorance can be considered a person's worse enemy as it prevents them from protecting themselves from harm and gaining benefit all of which can only be achieved through acting on knowledge. The ignorant commits sins without being aware of them. How can one avoid a sin if they do not know what is considered a sin? Ignorance causes one to neglect their obligatory duties. How can one fulfil their duties if they are unaware of what their duties are?

It is therefore a duty on all Muslims to gain enough knowledge to fulfil all their obligatory duties and avoid sins. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224.

“...Praise be to Allah!...”

All praise is only for Allah, the Exalted, as He created and continuously sustains the entire creation within the Heavens and Earth without any progeny, partner, or helper. His kindness in the form of countless blessings, such as faith, to the creation has no limits. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 18:

"And if you should count the favors of Allah, you could not enumerate them...."

Therefore, the creation should constantly praise Him through sincere obedience by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience.

Allah, the Exalted, is worthy of all praise, as He is full of perfection in terms of attributes and characteristics which are free from all shortcomings. This is still true even if He did not bestow any blessings on the creation. In addition, praising Allah, the Exalted, with the tongue and actions through sincere obedience is a means to increase the blessings one receives. Chapter 14 Ibrahim, verse 7:

"And [remember] when your Lord proclaimed, 'If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favor]..."

A muslim should praise Allah, the Exalted, as much as possible as it is has been declared the best supplication by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3800. In addition, this verse reminds mankind that whatever praise-worthy quality a person observes in the creation or within themselves is only possible because Allah, the Exalted, granted it. Therefore, all praise returns and solely belongs to Allah, the Exalted.

“...But most of them do not know.”

Ignorance leads to weakness of faith. A great obstacle to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, is weakness of faith. It is a blameworthy characteristic which gives rise to other negative characteristics, such as failing to act on one's knowledge, fearing others, placing the obedience of people above the obedience to Allah, the Exalted, having hope in forgiveness without striving for it and other undesired characteristics. The greatest affliction of weakness of faith is that it allows one to commit sins, such as neglecting the obligatory duties. The root cause of weakness of faith is ignorance of Islam.

One should strive to gain knowledge in order to strengthen their faith. With time they will eventually reach certainty of faith which is so strong that it safeguards a person through all tests and trials and ensures they fulfil their duties both religious and worldly. This knowledge is obtained when one studies the teachings of the Holy Quran and the Hadiths of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Specifically, those teachings which discuss the promises of reward for those who are obedient and the punishment for those who are disobedient to Allah, the Exalted. This creates fear of punishment and hope of reward in a muslim's heart which acts like a pull and push mechanism towards the obedience of Allah, the Exalted.

One can strengthen their faith by reflecting on the creations within the Heavens and the Earth. When done correctly this clearly indicates the

Oneness of Allah, the Exalted, and His infinite power. Chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 53:

“We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth...”

For example, if a muslim ponders over the night and day and how perfectly in sync they are and the other things linked to them they will truly believe that this is not a random thing meaning, there is a force which ensures everything runs like clockwork. This is the infinite power of Allah, the Exalted. In addition, if one ponders over the perfect timing of the night and day they will realise it clearly indicates that there is only one God namely, Allah, the Exalted. If there were more than one God each god would desire the night and day to occur according to their own desires. This would lead to utter chaos as one God might desire the Sun to rise whereas the other God might desire the night to continue. The perfect uninterrupted system found within the universe proves there is only one God namely, Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 21 Al Anbiya, verse 22:

“Had there been within them [i.e., the heavens and earth] gods besides Allah, they both would have been ruined...”

Another thing which can strengthen one's faith is to persist in righteous deeds and abstain from all sins. As faith is belief supported by actions it

weakens when sins are committed and strengthens when good deeds are performed. For example, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, once warned in a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 5662, that a muslim is not a believer when they drink alcohol.

Parable 35

Chapter 48 – Al Fath, Verse 29

مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ أَشِدَّاءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ
تَرَاهُمْ رُكَّعًا سُجَّدًا يَبْتَغُونَ فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانًا سِيمَاهُمْ فِي
وُجُوهِهِمْ مِّنْ أَثَرِ السُّجُودِ ذَلِكَ مَثَلُهُمْ فِي التَّوْرَةِ وَمَثَلُهُمْ فِي
الْإِنْجِيلِ كَزُرْعٍ أَخْرَجَ شَطْأَهُ فَآزَرَهُ فَاسْتَغْلَظَ فَاسْتَوَىٰ عَلَىٰ
سُوْقِهِ يُعْجِبُ الزُّرَّاعَ لِيغِيظَ بِهِمُ الْكُفَّارَ وَعَدَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا
وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

“Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah; and those with him are forceful against the disbelievers, merciful among themselves. You see them bowing and prostrating [in prayer], seeking bounty from Allah and [His] pleasure. Their sign is in their faces from the effect of prostration [i.e., prayer]. That is their description in the Torah. And their description in the Gospel is as a plant which produces its offshoots and strengthens them so they grow firm and stand upon their stalks, delighting the sowers - so that He [i.e., Allah] may enrage by them the disbelievers. Allah has promised those who believe and do righteous deeds among them forgiveness and a great reward.”

“Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah...”

The fact that the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, was reciting truthful historical accounts and beneficial lessons even though he was unlettered and had not studied the previous divine scriptures, which the non-Muslims of Mecca full well knew, was a clear sign of his Prophethood.

This was supported by the fact that they themselves testified to his sincerity and honesty. In fact, during his childhood the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, was always under the protection of Allah, the Exalted. Allah, the Exalted, saved him from the evils that were widespread during the age of ignorance: the time before Islam. When the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, reached maturity he was the finest person among his people, the best of them in character and repute, the best of neighbours, the most prudent, the most honest in speech and most trustworthy. He was completely removed from immorality and other evil characteristics. Because of this he became known among the people of Mecca as Al Amin, the trustworthy. This has been discussed in Imam Ibn Kathir's, *The Life of the Prophet*, Volume 1, Page 180.

The fact that the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, spent his entire life amongst the non-Muslims of Mecca was enough of a proof of his declaration of Prophethood. When the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, invited the non-Muslims of Mecca to embrace Islam he used his 40 years amongst them as proof that

he was speaking the truth. This evidence was undeniable even by the non-Muslims. This incident is recorded in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 4553. Only the arrogance of some prevented them from submitting to the truth. Chapter 10 Yunus, verse 16:

“...for I had remained among you a lifetime before it. Then will you not reason?”

“Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah...”

The one who testifies to this fact must fulfil his rights by sincerely obeying and following him.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim number 196, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that Islam is sincerity towards the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This includes striving to acquire knowledge in order to act on his traditions. These traditions include the ones related to Allah, the Exalted, in the form of worship, and his blessed noble character towards the creation. Chapter 68 Al Qalam, verse 4:

"And indeed, you are of a great moral character."

It includes to accept his commands and prohibitions at all times. This has been made a duty by Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 59 Al Hashr, verse 7:

"...And whatever the Messenger has given you - take; and what he has forbidden you - refrain from..."

Sincerity includes to give priority to his traditions over the actions of anyone else as all paths to Allah, the Exalted, are closed except the path of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 31:

"Say, [O Muḥammad], "If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins..."

One must love all those who supported him during his life and after his passing, whether they are from his Family or his Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all. Supporting those who walk on his path and teach his traditions is a duty on those who desire to be sincere to him. Sincerity also includes loving those who love him and disliking those who criticise him irrespective, of one's relationship with these people. This is all summarised in a single Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 16. It advises that a person cannot have true faith until they love Allah, the Exalted, and the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, more than the entire creation. This love must be shown through actions not just words.

“Muhammad is the Messenger of Allāh; and those with him...”

This verse indicates the importance of good companionship.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 5534, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, described the difference between a good and bad companion. The good companion is like a person who sells perfume. Their companion will either obtain some perfume or at least be affected by the pleasant smell. Whereas, a bad companion is like a blacksmith, if their companion does not burn their clothes they will certainly be affected by the smoke.

Muslims must understand that the people they accompany will have an effect on them whether this affect is positive or negative, obvious or subtle. It is not possible to accompany someone and not be affected by it. A Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4833, confirms that a person is on their companion's religion. Meaning, a person adopts the characteristics of their companion. It is therefore important for muslims to always accompany the righteous as they will undoubtedly affect them in a positive way meaning, they will inspire them to obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience. Whereas, bad companions will either inspire one to disobey Allah, the Exalted, or they will encourage a muslim to concentrate on the material world over preparing for the hereafter. This attitude will become a great regret for them on Judgment Day even if the things they strive for are lawful but beyond their needs.

Finally, as a person will end up with those they love in the hereafter according to the Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 3688, a muslim must practically show they love for the righteous by accompanying them in this world. But if they accompany bad or heedless people then it proves and indicates they love for them and their ultimate destination in the hereafter. Chapter 43 Az Zukhruf, verse 67:

“Close friends, that Day, will be enemies to each other, except for the righteous.”

“Muhammad is the Messenger of Allāh; and those with him...”

This verse indicates the importance of choosing the right role model.

If one turns the pages of history they will observe many people who achieved great worldly success and in some cases benefited mankind yet, they will also observe at least one thing which taints their achievements. But if one observes the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, they will observe nothing except success and countless things which benefit mankind. Even though, there are people who falsely criticise the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, it is quite evident from his highly accurate and detailed biography which has been verified by reliable muslim and non-muslim historians that this criticism is based on nothing but falsehood. This is why muslims must put aside all role models and instead study and adopt the flawless character of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, as this is the only way to achieve real untainted success in both one's worldly and religious life. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 31:

“Say, [O Muhammad], “If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins...”

There is no goal greater than this in this world. In fact, this is what people irrespective of their faith strive to achieve. And Allah, the Exalted, has

placed all of it in the footsteps of his Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 33 Al Ahzab, verse 21:

“There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Last Day and [who] remembers Allah often.”

It is simple, if a person desires worldly and religious success they should follow in the footsteps of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. But if they choose a path other than his whatever tainted success they achieve will eventually become a burden for them and it may lead to a punishment on a Great Day.

“Muhammad is the Messenger of Allāh; and those with him...”

Allah, the Exalted, did not refer to the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, as believers in this part of the verse and instead indicated their sincerity, loyalty, love, obedience and respect for the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, by stating that they are always with him. With him in times of ease and difficulties, in times of peace and war and in times of joy and sadness.

Every muslim openly declares that they desire the companionship of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, the other Holy Prophets, peace be upon him them, and the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, in the hereafter. They often quote the Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 3688, which advises that a person will be with those they love in the hereafter. And because of this they openly declare their love for these righteous servants of Allah, the Exalted. But it is strange how they desire this outcome and claim love for the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, yet they barely know him as they are too busy to study his life, character and teachings. This is foolish as how can one truly love someone they do not even know?

In addition, when these people are asked for proof of their love for the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, on Judgment Day what will they say? What will they present? The proof of this declaration is studying and acting on the life, character and teachings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. A declaration without this evidence will not be accepted by Allah, the Exalted. This is quite obvious as

no one understood Islam better than the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, did and this was not their attitude. They declared love for the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and supported their claim through actions by following in his footsteps. This is why they will be with him in the hereafter.

Those who believe love is in the heart and does not require it to be shown through actions is as foolish as the student who hands back a blank exam paper to their teacher claiming that knowledge is in their mind so they do not need to practically write it down on paper and then still expects to pass.

The one who behaves in such a manner does not love the righteous servants of Allah, the Exalted, only their own desires and they have undoubtedly been fooled by the Devil.

Finally, it is important to note that members of other religions also claim love for their Holy Prophets, peace be upon them. But as they failed to follow in their footsteps and act on their teachings they will certainly not be with them on Judgment Day. This is quite obvious if one ponders over this fact for a moment.

“Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh; and those with him are forceful against the disbelievers... That is their description in the Torah...so that He [Allāh] may enrage by them the disbelievers...”

This verse reminds muslims the importance of remaining steadfast whenever they are attacked by their enemies namely, the Devil, their inner Devil and those who invite them towards the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted. A muslim should not turn their back on the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, whenever they are tempted by these enemies. They should instead remain steadfast on the obedience to Allah, the Exalted, which involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience. This is achieved by avoiding the places, things and people who invite and tempt them towards sins and the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted. Avoiding the traps of the Devil is only achieved through gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge. The same way traps on a path are only avoided by possessing knowledge of them similarly; Islamic knowledge is required to avoid the traps of the Devil. For example, a muslim might spend much time reciting the Holy Quran but because of their ignorance they might destroy their righteous deeds without realising it through sins such as, backbiting. A muslim is bound to face these attacks so they should therefore prepare for them through the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted, and in return gain an uncountable reward. Allah, the Exalted, has guaranteed right guidance for those who struggle in this way for His sake. Chapter 29 Al Ankabut, verse 69:

“And those who strive for Us - We will surely guide them to Our ways...”

Whereas facing these attacks with ignorance and disobedience will only lead one to difficulties and disgrace in both worlds. The same way a soldier that possesses no weapons to defend himself would be defeated; an ignorant muslim will have no weapon to defend himself when facing these attacks which will result in their defeat. Whereas, the knowledgeable muslim is provided with the most powerful weapon which cannot be overcome or beaten namely, sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted. This is only achieved through sincerely gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge.

“Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh; and those with him are forceful against the disbelievers... That is their description in the Torah...so that He [Allāh] may enrage by them the disbelievers...”

This verse does not mean a Muslim cannot befriend a non-Muslim as this particular verse refers to the non-Muslims in the time of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Becoming intimately friendly to a non-Muslim who desired the destruction of Islam was especially dangerous at that time as the non-Muslims would spy on the Muslim community in order to gain vital intelligence which could aid them in their fight against Islam.

Generally speaking, the Holy Quran clearly advises that Allah, the Exalted, does not forbid befriending non-Muslims. Chapter 60 Al Mumtahanah, verse 8:

“Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes - from being righteous toward them and acting justly toward them. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly.”

In reality, the main verse warns Muslims not to befriend those who direct them away from the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted. This involves fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His

prohibitions and facing destiny with patience. This in reality can apply to both Muslims and non-Muslims. As warned in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4833, a Muslim is on the religion of their friend. This means a person will adopt the characteristics, good or bad, which their companions possess.

In addition, treating all people kindly, Muslims and non-Muslims, is the characteristic of a true Muslim and true believer. A Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 4998, advises that a true Muslim is the one who keeps other people, including non-Muslims, safe from their evil speech and actions. And a true believer does not harm people or their possessions through their speech or actions. So this verse warns Muslims to accompany the pious as they will direct them towards the mercy and obedience of Allah, the Exalted.

It is important to understand that there is a difference between healthy social conduct with others and deep friendship with others. Deep friendship can lead one to compromising on their faith out of love for their companion whereas, good social conduct with others will never take one to this level. Therefore, Muslims must adopt good character and manners towards everyone but reserve deep friendship for those who will encourage them towards the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted. This, only a Muslim can do for another Muslim. A non-Muslim on the other hand, will either directly or indirectly encourage a Muslim to disobey Allah, the Exalted, even if they do not intend this. This is because a non-Muslim lives by a separate code of conduct than a Muslim. And the behaviour which is acceptable to a non-Muslim may not be acceptable in the eyes of Islam.

“Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh; and those with him are forceful against the disbelievers... That is their description in the Torah...so that He [Allāh] may enrage by them the disbelievers...”

This also means that they would never compromise on the teachings of Islam.

Islam teaches muslims that they should never compromise on their faith in order to gain something from the material world. Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 135:

“O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives...”

As the material world is temporary whatever one gains from it will eventually fade away and they will be held accountable for their actions and attitude in the hereafter. On the other hand, faith is the precious jewel which guides a muslim through all difficulties in this world and in the hereafter safely. Therefore, it is plain foolishness to compromise the thing which is more beneficial and lasting for the sake of a temporary thing.

Many people especially women, will encounter moments in their lives where they will have to choose whether to compromise on their faith. For example, in some cases a muslim woman may believe that if she removed her scarf and dressed a certain way she would be more respected at work and may even climb the corporate ladder more quickly. Similarly, in the corporate world it is considered important to mingle with colleagues after work hours. So a muslim might find themselves being invited to a pub or club after work.

In times like this it is important to remember that ultimate victory and success will only be granted to those who remain steadfast on the teachings of Islam. Those who act in this way will be granted worldly and religious success. But more importantly their worldly success will not become a burden for them. In fact, it will become a means for Allah, the Exalted, to increase their rank and remembrance amongst mankind. Examples of this are the rightly guided Caliphs of Islam. They did not compromise on their faith and instead remained steadfast throughout their lives and in return Allah, the Exalted, granted them a worldly and religious empire.

All other forms of success are very temporal and sooner or later they become a difficulty for its bearer. One only needs to observe the many celebrities who compromised on their ideals and belief in order to obtain fame and fortune only for these things to become a cause of their sadness, anxiety, depression, substance abuse and even suicide.

Reflect on these two paths for a moment and then decide which one should be preferred and chosen.

“Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh; and those with him are forceful against the disbelievers... That is their description in the Torah...so that He [Allāh] may enrage by them the disbelievers...”

In a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4681, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised the characteristics which perfect a muslim's faith.

One of these characteristics is to hate for the sake of Allah, the Exalted. This means one should dislike the things Allah, the Exalted, dislikes such as His disobedience. It is important to note, this does not mean one should hate others as people can sincerely repent to Allah, the Exalted. Instead a muslim should dislike the sin itself which is proven by them avoiding it and warning others against it also. Muslims should continue to advise others instead of breaking ties with them as this act of kindness may well cause them to sincerely repent. This includes not disliking things based on one's own feelings, such as an action, which is lawful. Finally the proof of one disliking for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, is that when they show their dislike through their words and actions it will never be in a way which contradicts the teachings of Islam. Meaning, their dislike for something will never cause them to commit a sin as this would prove that their dislike for something is for their own sake.

“Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh; and those with him are forceful against the disbelievers... That is their description in the Torah...so that He [Allāh] may enrage by them the disbelievers...”

This verse is a clear warning to anyone who claims to believe in Islam yet criticises and hates the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them. This verse clearly indicates that only disbelievers hate them.

A sign of truly loving Allah, the Exalted, and the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, is to love all those who love Allah, the Exalted, and the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, even if this contradicts one's personal opinion about them. This love includes those who proclaim love through their words and more importantly through their actions. For example, it is obvious to all that all the household of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, may Allah be pleased with them, all the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, and the righteous predecessors possessed this true love. So loving each of them is a duty upon the one who claims love for Allah, the Exalted, and the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This has been proven through many Hadiths such as the one found in Sahih Bukhari, number 17. It advises that love for the helpers of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, meaning, the residents of the Holy city of Medina is a part of faith and hatred for them is a sign of hypocrisy. In another Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3862, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has clearly warned muslims not to criticize any of the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, as loving them is a sign of loving the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and hating them is a sign of hating the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings

be upon him, and Allah, the Exalted. This person will not succeed unless they sincerely repent. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, mentioned a similar statement regarding his blessed household, may Allah be pleased with them, in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 143.

If a muslim unjustifiably criticises any muslim who demonstrates their love for Allah, the Exalted, it proves their lack of love for Allah, the Exalted. If a muslim commits a sin other muslims should hate the sin but they should, for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, still have love for the sinful muslim because of their love for Allah, the Exalted, and the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. The sign of loving others is to treat them kindly and respectfully. Simply put, one should treat others how they wish people to treat them.

In addition, a muslim should dislike all those who show dislike for those who love Allah, the Exalted, and the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, irrespective of if the person is a relative or a stranger. A muslim's feelings should never prevent them from fulfilling this sign of true love for Allah, the Exalted, and the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This does not mean they should harm them but they should make it clear to them that hating those who love Allah, the Exalted, and the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, is unacceptable. If they persist on this deviant attitude then one should separate from them until they sincerely repent.

“Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh; and those with him are...merciful among themselves...That is their description in the Torah...”

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2701, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that Allah, the Exalted, loves gentleness in all matters.

This is an important characteristic which must be adopted by all muslims. It should be used in all aspects of one's life. It is important to understand that being gentle benefits the muslim themselves more than anyone else. Not only will they receive blessings and reward from Allah, the Exalted, and minimize the amount of sins they commit, as a gentle person is less likely to commit sins through their speech and actions, but it benefits them in worldly affairs also. For example, the person who treats their spouse gently will gain more love and respect in return than if they treated their spouse in a harsh manner. Children are more likely to obey and treat their parents with respect when they are treated gently. Colleagues at work are more likely to help the one who is gentle with them. The examples are endless. Only in very rare cases is a harsh attitude required. In most cases, gentle behaviour will be much more effective than a harsh attitude.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, possesses countless good qualities yet, Allah, the exalted, specifically highlighted his gentleness in the Holy Quran as it is a key ingredient required to affect others in a positive way. Chapter 3 Al Imran, verse 159:

“So by mercy from Allah, [O Muhammad], you were lenient with them. And if you had been rude [in speech] and harsh in heart, they would have disbanded from about you...”

A muslim must remember that they will never be better than a Holy Prophet, peace be upon them, nor will the person they interact with be worse than Pharaoh yet, Allah, the Exalted, commanded the Holy Prophet Mosa and the Holy Prophet Haroon, peace be upon them, to deal with Pharaoh in a kind manner. Chapter 20 Taha, verse 44:

“And speak to him with gentle speech that perhaps he may be reminded or fear [Allah].”

Therefore, a muslim should adopt gentleness in all affairs as it leads to much reward and affects others, such as one's family, in a positive way.

“Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh; and those with him are...merciful among themselves...That is their description in the Torah...”

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 7376, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that Allah, the Exalted, will not show mercy to the one who does not show mercy to others.

Islam is a very simple religion. One of its fundamental teachings is so simple that even uneducated people can understand and act on them namely, how people treat others is how they will be treated by Allah, the Exalted. For example, those who learn to overlook and forgive the mistakes of others will be forgiven by Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 24 An Nur, verse 22:

“...and let them pardon and overlook. Would you not like that Allah should forgive you?...”

Those who support others in beneficial worldly and religious matters such as emotional or financial aid will be supported by Allah, the Exalted, in both worlds. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4893. This same Hadith advises that the one who conceals the faults of others will have their faults concealed by Allah, the Exalted.

Simply put, if one treats others with kindness and respect according to the teachings of Islam they will be treated similarly by Allah, the Exalted. And those who mistreat others will be treated similarly by Allah, the Exalted, even if they fulfill the obligatory duties which are connected to Him such as the obligatory prayers. This is because a muslim must fulfill both duties in order to achieve success namely, the duties towards Allah, the Exalted, and people.

Finally, it is important to note a muslim will only be treated kindly by Allah, the Exalted, if they treat others kindly for His sake. If they do it for any other reason than they will undoubtedly forfeit the reward mentioned in these teachings. The foundation of all acts and Islam itself is one's intention. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1.

“Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh; and those with him are...merciful among themselves...That is their description in the Torah...”

All muslims hope that on Judgment Day Allah, the Exalted, will put aside, overlook and forgive their past mistakes and sins. But the strange thing is that most of these same muslims who hope and pray for this do not treat others in the same way. Meaning, they often latch on to the past mistakes of others and use them as weapons against them. This is not referring to those mistakes which have an effect on the present or future. For example, a car accident caused by a driver which physically disables another person is a mistake which will affect the victim in the present and future. This type of mistake is understandably difficult to let go and overlook. But many muslims often latch on to the mistakes of others which do not influence the future in anyway, such as a verbal insult. Even though, the mistake has faded away yet these people insist on reviving and using it against others when the opportunity presents itself. It is a very sad mentality to possess as one should understand that people are not Angels. At the very least a muslim who hopes for Allah, the Exalted, to overlook their past mistakes should overlook the past mistakes of others. Those who refuse to behave in this manner will find that the majority of their relationships are fractured as no relationship is perfect. They will always be a disagreement which can lead to a mistake in every relationship. Therefore, the one who behaves in this manner will end up lonely as their bad mentality causes them to destroy their relationships with others. It is strange that these very people hate to be lonely yet adopt an attitude which drives others away from them. This defies logic and common sense. All people want to be loved and respected while they are alive and after they pass away but this attitude causes the very opposite to occur. While they are alive people become fed up with them and when they die people do not remember them with true affection and love. If they do remember them it is merely out of custom.

Letting the past go does not mean one needs to be overly nice to others but the least one can do is be respectful according to the teachings of Islam. This does not cost anything and requires little effort. One should therefore learn to overlook and let the past mistakes of people go perhaps then Allah, the Exalted, will overlook their past mistakes on the Day of Judgement. Chapter 24 An Nur, verse 22:

“...and let them pardon and overlook. Would you not like that Allah should forgive you? And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.”

“Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh; and those with him are...merciful among themselves...That is their description in the Torah...”

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, once advised in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 13, that a person cannot become a true believer until they love for others what they love for themselves.

This does not mean a muslim will lose their faith if they fail to adopt this characteristic. It means that a muslim's faith will not be complete until they act on this advice. This Hadith also indicates that a muslim will not perfect their faith until they also dislike for others what they dislike for themselves. This is supported by another Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6586. It advises that the muslim nation is like one body. If one part of the body is in pain the rest of the body shares the pain. This mutual feeling includes loving and hating for others what one loves and hates for themselves.

A muslim can only achieve this status when their heart is free from evil traits, such as envy. These evil traits will always cause one to desire better for themselves. So in reality, this Hadith is an indication that one should purify their heart by adopting good characteristics, such as being forgiving, and eliminate evil traits, such as envy. This is only possible through learning and acting on the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

It is important for muslims to understand that desiring good for others will cause them to lose out on good things. The treasury of Allah, the Exalted, has no limits so there is no need to adopt a selfish and greedy mentality.

Desiring good for others includes striving to aid others in anyway one can, such as financial or emotional support, in the same way a person would desire others to aid them in their moment of need. Therefore, this love must be shown through actions not just words. Even when a muslim forbids evil and offers advice which contradicts the desire of others they should do so gently just like they would want others to advise them kindly.

As mentioned earlier, the main Hadith under discussion indicates the importance of eliminating all bad characteristics which contradict mutual love and care, such as envy. Envy is when a person desires to possess a specific blessing which is only obtainable when it is taken away from someone else. This attitude is a direct challenge to the distribution of blessings chosen by Allah, the Exalted. This is why it is a major sin and leads to the destruction of the envier's good deeds. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4903. If a Muslim must desire the lawful things others possess they should wish and supplicate to Allah, the Exalted, to grant them the same or similar thing without the other person losing the blessing. This type of jealousy is lawful and is praiseworthy in aspects of religion. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 1896. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that muslims should only be jealous of a wealthy person who uses their wealth correctly. And be jealous of a knowledgeable person who uses their knowledge to benefit themselves and others.

A Muslim should not only love for others to obtain lawful worldly blessings but also for them to gain religious blessings in both worlds. In fact, when one wishes this for others it encourages them to strive harder in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience. This type of healthy competition is welcomed in Islam. Chapter 83 Al Mutaffifin, verse 26:

“...So for this let the competitors compete.”

This encouragement will also inspire a muslim to assess themselves in order to find and eliminate any faults in their character. When these two elements combine meaning, striving in sincere obedience to Allah, the Exalted, and purifying one's character, it leads to success in both worlds.

A Muslim must therefore not only claim to love for others what they desire for themselves verbally but show it through their actions. It is hoped that the one who is concerned for others in this way will receive the concern of Allah, the Exalted, in both worlds. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1930.

“Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh; and those with him are...merciful among themselves...That is their description in the Torah...”

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6586, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, declared that the muslim nation is like one body. If any part of the body suffers pain the rest of the body shares in its pain.

This Hadith, like many others, indicates the importance of not becoming so self-absorbed into one's own life thereby behaving as if the universe revolves around them and their problems. The Devil inspires a muslim to focus so much on their own life and their problems that they lose focus on the bigger picture which leads to impatience and causes them to become heedless of others thereby failing their duty in supporting others according to their means. A muslim should always bear this in mind and strive to aid others as much as they can. This extends to beyond financial help and includes all verbal and physical help such as good and sincere advice.

Muslims should regularly observe the news and those who are in difficult situations all over the world. This will inspire them to avoid becoming self-centered and instead aid others. In reality, the one who only cares about themselves is lower in rank than an animal as even they care about their offspring. In fact, a muslim should be better than animals by practically caring for others beyond their own family.

Even though a muslim cannot remove all the problems of the world but they can play their part and help others according to their means as this is what Allah, the Exalted, commands and expects.

“Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh; and those with him are... You see them bowing and prostrating [in obedience]... Their sign is in their faces from the effect of prostration [i.e., prayer]. That is their description in the Torah...”

True obedience involves sincerity. In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim number 196, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that Islam is sincerity towards Allah, the Exalted.

Sincerity towards Allah, the Exalted, includes fulfilling all the duties given by Him in the form of commands and prohibitions, solely for His pleasure. As confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1, all will be judged by their intention. So if one is not sincere towards Allah, the Exalted, when performing good deeds they will gain no reward in this world or in the next. In fact, according to a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3154, those who performed insincere deeds will be told on Judgement Day to seek their reward from those who they acted for, which will not be possible. Chapter 98 Al Bayyinah, verse 5.

"And they were not commanded except to worship Allah, [being] sincere to Him in religion....."

If one is lax in fulfilling their duties towards Allah, the Exalted, it proves a lack of sincerity. Therefore, they should sincerely repent and struggle to

fulfil them all. It is important to bear in mind Allah, the Exalted, never burdens one with duties they cannot perform or handle. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 286.

"Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity...."

Being sincere towards Allah, the Exalted, means that one should always choose His pleasure over the pleasure of themselves and others. A Muslim should always give priority to those actions which are for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, over all else. One should love others and dislike their sins for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, and not for the sake of their own desires. When they help others or refuse to take part in sins it should be for the sake of Allah, the Exalted. The one who adopts this mentality has perfected their faith. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4681.

“Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh; and those with him are... You see them bowing and prostrating [in prayer]... Their sign is in their faces from the effect of prostration [i.e., prayer]. That is their description in the Torah...”

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2618, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that the difference between belief and disbelief is abandoning the obligatory prayers.

In this day and age this has become far too common. Many give up their obligatory prayers for trivial reasons all of which are undoubtedly rejected. If the obligation of the prayer has not been removed for the one who is engaging in battle how can it be removed from anyone else? Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 102:

“And when you [i.e., the commander of an army] are among them and lead them in prayer, let a group of them stand [in prayer] with you and let them carry their arms. And when they have prostrated, let them be [in position] behind you and have the other group come forward which has not [yet] prayed and let them pray with you, taking precaution and carrying their arms...”

Neither is the traveller or the sick exempt from offering their obligatory prayers. The traveller has been advised to reduce the amount of cycles in

some of the obligatory prayers in order to reduce the burden for them but they have not been exempt from offering them. Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 101:

“And when you travel throughout the land, there is no blame upon you for shortening the prayer...”

The sick have been advised to perform dry ablution if contact with water will harm them. Chapter 5 Al Ma'idah, verse 6:

“...But if you are ill or on a journey or one of you comes from the place of relieving himself or you have contacted women and do not find water, then seek clean earth and wipe over your faces and hands with it...”

In addition, the sick can perform the obligatory prayer in a way which is easier for them. Meaning, if they cannot stand they are allowed to sit and if they cannot sit they can lay down and offer the obligatory prayer. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 372. But again, no complete exemption is granted to the sick unless one is mentally ill which prevents them from comprehending the obligation of the prayer.

The other major issue is that some Muslims delay their obligatory prayers and offer them beyond their correct times. This clearly contradicts the Holy Quran as the believers have been described as those who offer their obligatory prayers on time. Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 103:

“...Indeed, prayer has been decreed upon the believers a decree of specified times.”

Many believe that the following verse of the Holy Quran refers to those who unnecessarily delay their obligatory prayers. This has been discussed in Tafseer Ibn Kathir, volume 10, pages 603-604. Chapter 107 Al Ma'un, verses 4-5:

“So woe to those who pray. [But] who are heedless of their prayer.”

Here Allah, the Exalted, has clearly cursed those who have adopted this evil trait. How can one find success in this world or the next if they have been removed from the mercy of Allah, the Exalted?

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, declared in a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 512, that delaying one's obligatory prayers unnecessarily is a sign of hypocrisy. The Holy Quran has

made it clear that one of the main reasons people will enter Hell is failing to establish the obligatory prayers. Chapter 74 Al Muddaththir, verses 42-43:

“[And asking them], "What put you into Saqar?" They will say, "We were not of those who prayed.”

Abandoning the obligatory prayers is such a serious sin that the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, declared in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2621, that whoever commits this sin has disbelieved in Islam.

In addition, no other good deed will benefit a muslim until their obligatory prayers are not established. A Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 553, clearly warns that one's good deeds are destroyed if they miss the afternoon obligatory prayer. If this is the case for abandoning one obligatory prayer can one imagine the penalty of abandoning them all?

Observing the obligatory prayers at their correct times has been advised to be one of the most beloved deeds to Allah, the Exalted, in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 252. From this one can determine that delaying the obligatory prayers beyond their time or completely missing them is one of the most hated deeds by Allah, the Exalted.

It is an important duty for all elders to encourage the children under their care to offer the obligatory prayers from a young age so that they establish them before it becomes legally binding on them. Those adults that delay this and wait until children are older have failed in this extremely important duty. The children who were only encouraged to offer the obligatory prayers when it became obligatory on them very rarely established them quickly. In most cases, it takes years for them to fulfil this important duty correctly. And the blame falls on the elders of the family especially, the parents. This is why the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has advised in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 495, that families most encourage their children to offer the obligatory prayers when they turn seven years old.

Another major issue many muslims face is that they may offer the obligatory prayers but fail to do so correctly. For example, many do not complete the stages of the prayer correctly and instead rush through it. In fact, a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 757, clearly warns that the one who prays like this has not prayed at all. Meaning, they are not recorded as a person who offered their prayer and therefore their obligation has not been fulfilled. A Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 265, clearly warns that the prayer of the one who does not settle in each position of the prayer is not accepted.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, described the one who does not bow or prostrate correctly in the prayer as the worse thief. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Muwatta Malik, Book number 9, Hadith number 75. Unfortunately, many muslims who have spent decades offering their obligatory and many voluntary prayers like this

will find that none of them have counted and thus they will be treated as one who did not fulfil their obligation. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 1313.

The Holy Quran indicates the importance of offering the obligatory prayers with congregation usually at a Mosque. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 43:

“...and bow with those who bow [in worship and obedience].”

In fact, due to this verse and Hadiths of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, some reliable scholars have declared this obligatory on muslim men. For example, one Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 550, clearly warns that the muslims who would not offer their obligatory prayers with congregation at the Mosque were considered hypocrites by the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them. In fact, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, even threatened to burn the houses of the men who failed to perform their obligatory prayers at the Mosque with congregation without a valid excuse. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 1482. Those muslims who are in a position to perform this important deed should do so. They should not fool themselves into claiming they are performing other righteous deeds such as helping their family with house chores. Even though, this is a tradition of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, according to a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 676, but it is important not to rearrange the importance of his traditions according to one's desires. Whoever does this is not following his traditions they are only following their own desires even if they are

performing a righteous deed. In fact, this same Hadith concludes by advising that when it was time for the obligatory prayer the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, would leave for the Mosque.

“Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh; and those with him are... You see them bowing and prostrating [in prayer]... Their sign is in their faces from the effect of prostration [i.e., prayer]. That is their description in the Torah...”

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 528, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that the five obligatory prayers erase one's sins just like taking a bath five times a day would clean the body of dirt.

The first thing to note is that this Hadith refers to minor sins only as major sins require sincere repentance.

In addition, it is important for muslims to not only purify their outer beings of minor sins by establishing the five obligatory prayers but also fulfill the other aspect of purification namely, inner purification. This is indicated by the fact that the five obligatory prayers were spread across the day instead of being put together. Meaning, a muslim should repeatedly inwardly turn to Allah, the Exalted, throughout the day just like their body turns to Allah, the Exalted, five times a day through the obligatory prayers. This inner purification involves correcting one's intention so that they are only perform actions in order to please Allah, the Exalted. This is the foundation of Islam and is what Allah, the Exalted, assesses when judging an action. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1. Those who act for the sake of other people will be told to gain their reward from them on Judgment Day which will not be possible. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3154.

Finally, this inner purification includes learning and acting on the teachings of Islam so that one removes the bad characteristics they possess, such as envy and instead adopt good characteristics, such as patience. The outer purification is important but if a muslim desires to achieve success and overcome all difficulties in both worlds they must purify their inner being as well as their outer being.

“Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh; and those with him are... You see them bowing and prostrating [in prayer]... Their sign is in their faces from the effect of prostration [i.e., prayer]. That is their description in the Torah...”

In a Divine Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1145, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that Allah, the Exalted, descends every night to the nearest Heaven according to His infinite majesty and invites people to ask Him to fulfill their needs so that He can fulfill them.

Voluntary night time worship proves one's sincerity towards Allah, the Exalted, as no other eyes are watching them. Offering it is a means to having an intimate conversation with Allah, the Exalted. And it is a sign of one's servanthood to Him. It has countless virtues for example, a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 1614, declares that it is the best voluntary prayer.

No one will have a rank higher on Judgment Day or in Paradise than the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and this rank has been directly connected to the voluntary night prayer. This shows that those who establish the night voluntary prayer will be blessed with the highest ranks in both worlds. Chapter 17 Al Isra, verse 79:

“And from [part of] the night, pray with it [i.e., recitation of the Quran] as additional [worship] for you; it is expected that your Lord will resurrect you to a praised station.”

A Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3579, advises that a muslim is closest to Allah, the Exalted, in the last part of the night. Therefore, one can derive countless blessings if they remember Allah, the Exalted, at this time.

All muslims desire their supplications to be answered and their needs to be fulfilled. Therefore, they should strive to offer the voluntary night prayer as a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 1770, advises that there is a special hour in every night when good supplications are always answered.

Establishing the voluntary night prayer is an excellent way to prevent one from committing sins, it helps a person to stay away from pointless social gatherings and it protects a person from many physical illnesses. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3549.

One should prepare for the voluntary night prayer by not over eating or drinking especially, before bed as it induces laziness. One should not unnecessarily tire themselves out during the day. A short nap during the day can help with this. Finally, one should avoid sins and strive to obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and

by facing destiny with patience as the obedient find it easier to offer the voluntary night prayer.

“Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh; and those with him are... Their sign is in their faces from the effect of prostration. That is their description in the Torah...”

This could be referring to their humility. This has been discussed in Tafsir Ibn Kathir, Volume 9, Page 179.

The servants of Allah, the Exalted, have understood that anything good they possess is solely because Allah, the Exalted, granted it to them. And any evil they are saved from is because Allah, the Exalted, protected them. Is it not foolish to be proud of something that does not belong to someone? Just like a person does not boast about a sports car which does not belong to them muslims must realize nothing in reality belongs to them. This attitude ensures one remains humble at all times. The humble servants of Allah, the Exalted, fully believe in the Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, found in Sahih Bukhari, number 5673, which declares that the righteous deeds of a person will not take them to Paradise. Only the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, can cause this to occur. This is because every righteous deed is only possible when Allah, the Exalted, provides one with the knowledge, strength, opportunity and inspiration to perform it. Even the acceptance of the deed is dependent on the mercy of Allah, the Exalted. When one bares this in mind it saves them from pride and inspires them to adopt humility. One should always remember that being humble is not a sign of weakness as Islam has encouraged one to defend themselves if necessary. In other words, Islam teaches muslims to be humble without weakness. In fact, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2029, that whoever humbles themselves before Allah, the Exalted, will be raised by Him. So in reality, humility leads

to honor in both worlds. One only needs to reflect on the most humble of the creation to understand this fact namely, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Allah, the Exalted, has clearly ordered people by ordering the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, to adopt this important quality. Chapter 26 Ash Shu'ara, verse 215:

“And lower your wing [i.e., show kindness] to those who follow you of the believers.”

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, led a humble life. For example, he happily carried out the domestic duties at home thereby proving these chores are gender-neutral. This is confirmed in Imam Bukhari's, Adab Al Mufrad, number 538.

Chapter 25 Al Furqan, verse 63, shows that humility is an inner characteristic that manifests outwards such as the way one walks. This is discussed in another verse chapter 31 Luqman, verse 18:

“And do not turn your cheek [in contempt] toward people and do not walk through the earth exultantly...”

Allah, the Exalted, has made it clear that Paradise is for the humble servants who possess no trace of pride. Chapter 28 Al Qasas, verse 83:

“That home of the Hereafter We assign to those who do not desire exaltedness upon the earth or corruption. And the [best] outcome is for the righteous.”

In fact, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1998, that whoever possesses an atom’s worth of pride will not enter Paradise. Only Allah, the Exalted, has the right to be proud as He is the Creator, Sustainer and Owner of the entire universe.

It is important to note, pride is when one believes they are superior to others and rejects the truth when it is presented to them as they dislike accepting the truth when it comes from other than them. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4092.

“Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh; and those with him are... Their sign is in their faces from the effect of prostration. That is their description in the Torah...”

In a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4119, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that the best people are those who remind others of Allah, the Exalted, when they are observed.

This does not refer to those who adopt an Islamic outward appearance, such as growing a beard or wearing a scarf, as many of these people do not remind others of Allah, the Exalted, at all. This Hadith refers to those who learn and act on Islamic knowledge so that they sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This leads to the purification of one's heart which leads to the purification of their outward limbs. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3984. This will cause others to remember Allah, the Exalted, when they observe these righteous muslims. And this remembrance will only increase when these righteous muslims speak as they only speak in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, meaning, they avoid evil and vain speech and only speak on beneficial matters in respect to the world and the hereafter. This remembrance further increases when one observes their actions as they practically implement the teachings of Islam thereby, acting only in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. For example, they love, dislike, give and withhold only for the sake of Allah, the Exalted. This leads to perfecting one's faith according to a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4681.

“Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh; and those with him are...seeking bounty from Allāh and [His] pleasure...That is their description in the Torah...”

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3154, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that those who perform deeds for the sake of people, such as showing off, instead of doing them for the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted, will be told to gain their reward on Judgment Day from the people they acted for which in reality is not possible to do.

It is important to understand that the foundation of all deeds and even Islam itself is one's intention. It is the very thing which Allah, the Exalted, judges people on according to a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1. A muslim should ensure they perform all religious and useful worldly actions for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, so that they gain reward from Him in both worlds. A sign of this correct mentality is that this person neither expects nor desires people to appreciate or show gratitude to them for the deeds they perform. If one desires this then it indicates their incorrect intention.

In addition, acting with the correct intention prevents sadness and bitterness as the one who acts for the sake of people will eventually encounter ungrateful people who will make them annoyed and bitter as they feel they wasted their effort and time. Unfortunately, this is seen in parents and relatives as they often fulfill their duties towards their children and relatives for their sake instead of for the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted. But the one who acts for the sake of Allah, the exalted, will fulfill all their

duties towards others such as their children and never become bitter or enraged when they fail to show gratitude towards them. This attitude leads to peace of mind and general happiness as they know Allah, the Exalted, is fully aware of their righteous deed and will reward them for it. This is the way all muslims must act otherwise they may well be left empty handed on the Day of Judgment.

“Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh; and those with him are...seeking bounty from Allāh and [His] pleasure...That is their description in the Torah...”

In a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3989, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that even slightly showing off is polytheism.

This is a minor type of polytheism which does not cause one to lose their faith. Instead it leads to the loss of reward as this muslim acted for the sake of pleasing people when they should have acted to please Allah, the Exalted. In fact, these people will be told on Judgment Day to seek their reward from those they acted for, which will not be possible. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3154.

If the Devil cannot prevent one from performing righteous deeds he will attempt to corrupt their intention thereby destroying their reward. If he cannot corrupt their intention in an obvious way he tries to corrupt it through subtle ways. This includes when people subtly show off their righteous deeds to others. Sometimes it is so subtle that the person themselves are not fully aware of what they are doing. As gaining and acting on knowledge is a duty on all, according to a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224, claiming ignorance will not be accepted by Allah, the Exalted, on Judgment Day.

Subtly showing off often occurs through social media and one's speech. For example, a muslim might inform others they are fasting even though no one directly asked them if they were fasting. Another example is when one publically recites the Holy Quran from memory in front of others thereby showing others they have memorized the Holy Quran. Even criticizing oneself publically can be considered showing off one's humility to others.

To conclude, showing off subtly destroys a muslim's reward and must be avoided in order to safeguard their righteous deeds. This is only possible by learning and acting on Islamic knowledge, such as how to safeguard one's speech.

“Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh; and those with him...And their description in the Gospel is as a plant which produces its offshoots and strengthens them so they grow firm and stand upon their stalks, delighting the sowers...”

This verse indicates their steadfastness.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 159, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, gave a short but far reaching piece of advice. He advised people to sincerely declare their belief in Allah, the Exalted, and then remain steadfast on it.

Remaining steadfast on one's faith means that they must strive in the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in all aspects of their life. It consists of fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, which relate to Him, such as the obligatory fasts and those which relate to people, such as treating others kindly. It includes refraining from all the prohibitions of Islam which are between a person and Allah, the Exalted, and those involving others. A muslim must also face destiny with patience truly believing Allah, the Exalted, chooses what is best for His servants. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

Steadfastness can include refraining from both types of polytheism. The major type is when one worships something other than Allah, the Exalted. The minor type is when one shows off their good deeds to others. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3989. Therefore, an aspect of steadfastness is to always act for the sake of Allah, the Exalted.

It includes obeying Allah, the Exalted, at all times instead of obeying and pleasing oneself or others. If a Muslim disobeys Allah, the Exalted, by pleasing themselves or others they should know neither their desires nor people will protect them from Allah, the Exalted. On the other hand, the one who is sincerely obedient to Allah, the Exalted, will be protected from all things by Him even if this protection is not apparent to them.

Remaining steadfast on one's faith includes following the path set out by the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and not adopting a path which deviates from this. The one who strives to adopt this path will not need anything else as this is enough to keep them steadfast on their faith.

As people are not perfect they will undoubtedly make mistakes and commit sins. So being steadfast in matters of faith does not mean one has to be perfect but it means they must strive to adhere strictly to the obedience of

Allah, the Exalted, as outlined earlier, and to sincerely repent if they commit a sin. This has been indicated in chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 6:

“...so take a straight course to Him and seek His forgiveness...”

This is further supported by a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1987, which advises to fear Allah, the Exalted, and to erase a (minor) sin which has occurred by performing a righteous deed. In another Hadith found in Imam Malik's Muwatta, book 2, Hadith number 37, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised muslims to try their best to remain steadfast on the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, even though they will not be able to do it perfectly. Therefore, a muslim's duty is to fulfil the potential they have been given through their intention and physical actions in the steadfast obedience of Allah, the Exalted. They have not been commanded to achieve perfection as this is not possible.

It is important to note, that one cannot remain steadfast in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, through their physical actions without purifying their heart first. As indicated in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3984, the limbs of the body will only act in a pure way if the spiritual heart is pure. Purity of heart is only achieved by gaining and acting on the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

Steadfast obedience requires one to control their tongue as it expresses the heart. Without controlling the tongue steadfast obedience to Allah, the Exalted, is not possible. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2407.

Finally, if any deficiency in the steadfast obedience of Allah, the Exalted, occurs one must make sincere repentance to Allah, the Exalted, and seek the forgiveness of people if it involves their rights. Chapter 46 Al Ahqaf, verse 13:

“Indeed, those who have said, “Our Lord is Allah,” and then remained on a right course - there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve.”

“Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh; and those with him...And their description in the Gospel is as a plant which produces its offshoots and strengthens them so they grow firm and stand upon their stalks, delighting the sowers...”

This verse also indicates the gradual strengthening of their faith.

All muslims have faith in Islam but the strength of their faith varies from person to person. For example, the one who follows the teachings of Islam because their family told them to is not the same as the one who believes in it through evidence. A person who has heard about something will not believe in it in the same way as the one who has witnessed the thing with their own eyes.

As confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224, gaining useful knowledge is a duty on all muslims. One of the reasons for this is that it is the best way a muslim can strengthen their faith in Islam. This is important to pursue as the stronger one's certainty of faith the greater the chance they will remain steadfast on the correct path, especially when facing difficulties. In addition, having certainty of faith has been described as one of the best things one can possess in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3849. This knowledge should be obtained by studying the Holy Quran and the Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, through a reliable source.

Allah, the Exalted, did not only declare a truth in the Holy Quran but He also provided evidence for it through examples. Not only examples which are to be found in the past nations but examples which have been placed in one's very own life. For example, in the Holy Quran Allah, the Exalted, advises that sometimes a person loves a thing even though it will cause them trouble if they obtained it. Similarly, they might hate a thing while there is much hidden good in it for them. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

There are many examples of this truth in history such as the Pact of Hudaiba. Some muslims believed this pact, which was made with the non-muslims of Mecca, would completely favour the latter group. Yet, history clearly shows that it favoured Islam and the muslims. This event is discussed in the Hadiths found in Sahih Bukhari, numbers 2731 and 2732.

If one reflects on their own life they will find many examples when they believed something was good when it was actually bad for them and vice versa. These examples prove the authenticity of this verse and help one's faith strengthen.

Another example is found in chapter 79 An Naziat, verse 46:

“It will be, on the Day they see it (Judgement Day) as though they had not remained [in the world] except for an afternoon or a morning thereof.”

If one turns the pages of history they will clearly observe how great empires came and went. But when they left they passed away in such a way as if they were only on Earth for a moment. All but a few of their signs have faded away as if they were never present on Earth in the first place. Similarly, when one reflects on their own life they will realise that no matter how old they are and no matter how slow certain days might have felt overall their life so far has passed in a flash. Understanding the truthfulness of this verse strengthens one's certainty of faith and this inspires them to prepare for the hereafter before their time runs out.

The Holy Quran and the Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, are full of such examples. Therefore, one should strive to learn and act on these divine teachings so that they adopt certainty of faith. The one who achieves this will not be shaken by any difficulty they face and will remain steadfast on the path which leads to the gates of Paradise. Chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 53:

“We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth...”

“Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh; and those with him...Allāh has promised those who believe and do righteous deeds among them...”

In a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 4998, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised the signs of a true muslim and a true believer. A true muslim is the one who keeps their verbal and physical harm away from others. This in fact, includes all people irrespective of their faith. It includes all types of verbal and physical sins which can cause harm or distress to another. This can include failing to give the best advice to others as this contradicts sincerity towards others which has been commanded in a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 4204. It includes advising others to disobey Allah, the Exalted, thereby, inviting them towards sins. A muslim should avoid this behavior as they will be taken account for every person who acts on their bad advice. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 2351.

Physical harm includes causing problems for other people's livelihood, committing fraud, conning others and physical abuse. All of these characteristics contradict Islamic teachings and must be avoided.

A true believer, according to the main Hadith under discussion, is the one who keeps their harm away from the lives and property of others. Again, this applies to all people irrespective of their faith. This includes stealing, misusing or damaging the property and belongings of others. Whenever one is entrusted with someone else's property they must ensure they only use it with the owner's permission and in a way which is pleasing and

agreeable to the owner. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has warned in a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 5421, that whoever illegally takes someone else's property, through a false oath, even if it is as small as a twig of a tree will go to Hell.

To conclude a muslim must support their verbal declaration of belief with actions as they are the physical proof of one's belief which will be needed in order to obtain success on the Day of Judgment. In addition, a muslim should fulfill the characteristics of true belief in respect to Allah, the Exalted, and people. An excellent way of achieving this in respect to people is to simply treat others how they wish to be treated by people, which is with respect and peace.

“Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh; and those with him...Allāh has promised those who believe and do righteous deeds among them...”

Righteousness cannot be achieved without gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge so that one can fulfill the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refrain from His prohibitions and face destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 35 Fatir, verse 28:

“...Only those fear Allah, from among His servants, who have knowledge...”

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2451, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon, advised that a muslim cannot become righteous until they avoid something which is not harmful to their religion out of caution that it will lead to something which is harmful. Therefore, an aspect of righteousness is to avoid things which are doubtful not just unlawful. This is because doubtful things takes a muslim one step closer to the unlawful and the closer one is to the unlawful the easier it is to fall into it. It is why a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1205, advises that the one who avoids unlawful and doubtful things will protect their religion and honor. If one observes those who have become misguided in society, in most cases, this occurred gradually not in one sudden step. Meaning, the person first indulged in doubtful things before falling into the unlawful. This is the reason why Islam stresses the need to avoid unnecessary and vain things in one's life as they can lead them to

the unlawful. For example, vain and useless speech which is not classified sinful by Islam often leads to evil speech, such as backbiting, lying and slander. If a person avoids the first step by not indulging in vain speech they will undoubtedly avoid evil speech. This process can be applied to all things which are vain, unnecessary and especially, doubtful.

“Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh; and those with him...Allāh has promised those who believe and do righteous deeds among them...”

In a divine Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6502, Allah, the Exalted, declares that when one strives in fulfilling the obligatory duties and performing voluntary righteous deeds He blesses their five senses so that they use them in obedience to Him. This righteous servant will very rarely commit sins. This increase in guidance has been indicated in Chapter 29 Al Ankabut, verse 69:

“And those who strive for Us - We will surely guide them to Our ways...”

This muslim reaches the level of excellence which has been discussed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 99. This is when a muslim performs actions, such as the prayer, as if they observe Allah, the Exalted. The one who reaches this level will guard their mind and body from sins. This is the one who when they speak they speak for Allah, the Exalted, when they are silent they are silent for Allah, the Exalted. When they act they act for Him and when they are still they are for His sake. This is an aspect of monotheism and understanding the Oneness of Allah, the Exalted.

The next thing mentioned in the main Hadith under discussion is that this muslim's supplication will be fulfilled and they will be granted the refuge and protection of Allah, the Exalted. This is a clear lesson for those who desire lawful worldly things. They should not seek to obtain them using any means except through the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted. No spiritual teacher or anyone else will be able to grant things to a person unless the person strives in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted and they are destined to obtain those things.

To conclude this Hadith makes it clear that the proximity of Allah, the Exalted, is only gained through sincere obedience to Him in the form of fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and being patient with destiny. This is the path of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and the only path of success in both worlds.

“Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh; and those with him...Allāh has promised those who believe and do righteous deeds among them...”

Disbelief can be a literal rejecting of Islam or through actions, which involves disobeying Allah, the Exalted, even though one believes in Him. This can be clearly understood by an example. If an unaware person is warned by another of an approaching lion and the unaware person takes practical steps to obtain safety they will be considered someone who believed in the warning given to them as they adapted their behaviour based on the warning. Whereas, if the unaware person does not practically change their behaviour after being warned, people will suspect that they do not believe in the warning given to them even if the unaware person verbally claims belief in the warning given to them.

Some people claim that their belief and obedience to their God is in their hearts and they therefore do not need to demonstrate it practically. Unfortunately, this foolish mentality has infected many Muslims who believe they possess a pure faithful heart even though they fail to fulfil the obligatory duties of Islam. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has clearly declared in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3984, that when one's heart is pure the body becomes pure which means their actions become correct. But if one's heart is corrupt the body becomes corrupt which means their actions will be corrupt and incorrect. Therefore, the one who does not obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling their duties practically can never have a pure heart.

In addition, demonstrating one's faith in Allah, the Exalted, practically is their proof and evidence which is required on Judgment Day in order to be granted Paradise. Not having this practical evidence is as silly as a student who hands back a blank exam paper to their teacher claiming their knowledge is in their mind so they therefore do not need to write it down by answering the exam questions. The same way this student would undoubtedly fail so will a person who reaches Judgment Day without the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in the form of fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience, even if they possess faith in their heart.

“Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh; and those with him...Allāh has promised those who believe and do righteous deeds among them forgiveness...”

Allah, the Exalted, conceals and covers the faults of His repentant servants without punishing them or holding it against them in anyway.

A muslim should therefore never lose hope in the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, as this leads to unbelief. Chapter 12 Yusuf, verse 87:

“...and despair not of relief from Allah. Indeed, no one despairs of relief from Allah except the disbelieving people.”

A muslim should understand that the forgiveness of Allah, the Exalted, is unlimited while their sins will always be limited. The limited can never overcome the unlimited. But it is important to note this applies to the one who repents sincerely not the person who continues sinning believing they will be forgiven. This is merely wishful thinking not true hope in the forgiveness of Allah, the Exalted. Sincere repentance involves feeling remorse, seeking forgiveness from Allah, the Exalted, and if necessary from people, sincerely promising to refrain from the same or similar sin again and making up for any rights which have been violated in respect to Allah, the Exalted, and people.

Muslims should act on this blessed divine name by overlooking and forgiving the mistakes of others. It is logical to understand that if one desires the forgiveness of Allah, the Exalted, they should learn to forgive others. Chapter 24 An Nur, verse 22:

“...and let them pardon and overlook. Would you not like that Allah should forgive you? And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.”

“Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh; and those with him...Allāh has promised those who believe and do righteous deeds among them forgiveness and a great reward.”

It is important for muslims to strive in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience as Allah, the Exalted, has guaranteed a good life in both worlds for the one who behaves in this manner. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

“Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do.”

This good life will protect a muslim from severe grief, depression and other extreme moods and mental disorders which can destroy a person's life. Even though, muslims will face difficulties which will sadden them but if they obey Allah, the Exalted, this sadness will never become extreme and effect their entire life on a long term basis. This is because a muslim who strives in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, has an excellent reason to continue moving forward through their difficulty without giving up and turning to depression and even suicide. For example, they look forward to the countless reward which will be granted to the patient. Chapter 39 Az Zumar, verse 10:

“...Indeed, the patient will be given their reward without account [i.e., limit].”

Whereas, the muslim who does not strive in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, and only claims the title of being a muslim with their tongue will not be granted this attitude and a good life. And whenever they face difficulties it will drive them to extreme moods and mental disorders which will destroy their entire life.

“Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh; and those with him...Allāh has promised those who believe and do righteous deeds among them forgiveness and a great reward.”

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2465, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that whoever prioritises the hereafter over this material world will be granted contentment, their affairs will be corrected for them and they will receive their destined provision in an easy way.

This half of the Hadith means that whoever correctly fulfils their duties in respect to Allah, the Exalted, and to the creation, such as providing for their family in a lawful manner while avoiding the excess of this material world will be granted contentment. This is when one is pleased with what they possess without being greedy and actively striving to obtain more worldly things. In reality, the one who is content with what they possess is a truly rich person even if they possess little wealth as they become independent of things. Independence of anything makes one rich in respect to it.

In addition, this attitude will allow one to comfortably deal with any worldly issues which may arise during their life. This is because the less one interacts with the material world and focuses on the hereafter the less worldly issues they will face. The less worldly issues a person faces the more comfortable their life will become. For example, the one who possesses one house will have fewer issues to deal with in respect to it, such as a broken cooker, than the one who possesses ten houses. Finally, this person will easily and pleasantly obtain their lawful provision. Not only

this but Allah, the Exalted, will place such grace in their provision that it will cover all their responsibilities and necessities meaning, it will satisfy them and their dependents.

But as mentioned in the other half of this Hadith the one who prioritises the material world over the hereafter meaning, by neglecting their duties or striving for the unnecessary and excess of this material world will find that their need, meaning greed, for worldly things is never satisfied which by definition makes them poor even if they possess much wealth. These people will go from one worldly issue to another throughout the day failing to achieve contentment as they have opened too many worldly doors. And they will receive their destined provision with difficulty and it will not give them satisfaction and never seem enough to fill their greed. This may even push them towards the unlawful which only leads to a loss in both worlds.

“Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh; and those with him...Allāh has promised those who believe and do righteous deeds among them forgiveness and a great reward.”

It is a universal aim and goal for all people, irrespective of their faith or social class, to achieve peace of mind in this world. It is the ultimate reason why people strive in this material world, work long hours and dedicate the majority of their efforts to this world. People desire to obtain such a life whereby they have no stresses or worries such as financial difficulties. But it is strange how people, especially muslims, look for peace of mind in the wrong place. Just like a person who desires to watch a football game yet, goes to a cricket match. Allah, the Exalted, has made it clear that true peace of mind only lies in His obedience which involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and being patient with destiny. Chapter 13 Ar Ra'd, verse 28:

“...Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah hearts are assured.”

Whenever a person seeks peace of mind in the material world it will only lead them further away from their goal. Whenever a person sets a target in respect to this material world that target will only lead onto more targets. This continues until the person departs this world without obtaining what they were looking for. It is obvious that the rich do not obtain true peace of mind as they stress more than normal people and whatever they obtain of the world ends up becoming a burden for them. It is why the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2465, that the one who focuses on the

hereafter will be blessed with a rich heart and Allah, the Exalted, will organize their affairs meaning, they will obtain peace of mind. But the one who focuses on the material world will only see their poverty and their affairs will become scattered meaning, they will not achieve peace of mind. The one who obeys Allah, the Exalted, will find peace of mind even if they possess little of this world. But the one who is lost in the material world will go from one worldly door to another but will never find true peace as it has not been placed there. If a person wants to watch a football game they should not go to a cricket match and if a muslim desires peace of mind they should not search for it in the material world as it lies only in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted. It is important to note, that those who adhere to the teachings of Islam will encounter difficulties throughout their lives as this is guaranteed but through their obedience Allah, the Exalted, will remove fear and grief from them so that they remain firm and steadfast on the correct path. This is similar to the one who only feels slight discomfort from a medical procedure as they have been anaesthetised.

“Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh; and those with him...Allāh has promised those who believe and do righteous deeds among them forgiveness and a great reward.”

It is important to note, that one will only enter Paradise through the mercy of Allah, the Exalted. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 5673. This is because every righteous deed is only possible through the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, in the form of knowledge, inspiration, strength and opportunity to do the deed. This understanding prevents one from adopting pride which is vital to avoid as only an atom's worth of pride is needed to take a person to Hell. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 267.

In addition, a muslim must understand that this mercy of Allah, the Exalted, in the form of righteous deeds is in reality a light which one must gather in this world if they desire to obtain a guiding light in the hereafter. If a muslim lives in heedlessness and refrains from gathering this light in the world by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience then how can they expect to receive this guiding light in the hereafter?

All muslims desire to inhabit Paradise with the greatest servants of Allah, the Exalted, such as the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. But it is important to understand that simply wishing for this without action will not make it come true otherwise the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, would have done this. Simply put, the more one strives in learning and acting on the traditions of the Holy Prophet

Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, the closer they will be to him in the hereafter.

The greatest blessing of Paradise is physically observing Allah, the Exalted, which is discussed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 7436. If a muslim desires to obtain this unimaginable blessing they must practically strive to achieve the level of excellence mentioned in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 99. This is when one performs actions, such as the prayer, as if they can observe Allah, the Exalted, overlooking them. This attitude ensures one's persistent and sincere obedience to Allah, the Exalted. It is hoped that the one who strives for this level of faith will receive the blessing of physically observing Allah, the Exalted, in the hereafter.

“Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh; and those with him... That is their description in the Torah. And their description in the Gospel...”

The people of the book recognised the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, just like they recognized the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

The scholars from the people of the Book (Jews and Christians) living in Medina were fully aware of the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, as they had been described in their divine scriptures. Chapter 6 Al An'am, verse 20:

“Those to whom We have given the Scripture recognize it [the Holy Quran] as they recognize their [own] sons...”

And chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 146:

“Those to whom We gave the Scripture know him [Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him] as they know their own sons...”

It is important to note, that all the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, came with the same religion, Islam – submission to Allah, the Exalted. The only thing they differed in were smaller issues but their core and fundamental teachings were one in the same. As the Holy Quran was in harmony with the unaltered teachings of the previous divine scriptures there was no good reason why the people of the book should have rejected the Holy Quran and the one to whom it was given namely, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. In fact, it was more appropriate for them to accept Islam as the scholars of the people of the book possessed knowledge which allowed them to recognize the truth easily.

In addition, the fact that the Holy Quran confirmed the unaltered teachings of the previous divine scriptures meant that when one rejected the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, they were in essence rejecting their previous divine scriptures and their Holy Prophets, such as the Holy Prophet Musa, peace be upon them, also.

After all these signs verifying the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, many of the scholars of the people of the book still concealed and misinterpreted their divine teachings out of envy and fear of losing the social status and wealth they had obtained as leaders of their societies.

For example, in the ninth year after the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, migrated to Medina a delegation visited the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This Christian delegation did not accept Islam but agreed to a peace treaty with the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. When the delegation left Medina two brothers, Abu Haritha and Kurz Bin Alqama, were riding near each other. The mule of Abu Haritha stumbled and Kurz in frustration rebuked the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, indirectly. Abu Haritha in response rebuked him. When Kurz asked about his response Abu Haritha told him that the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, was undoubtedly the final Holy Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, they had been waiting for and who had been described in their divine scriptures. When Kurz asked him why he rejected Islam even though he knew it was the truth Abu Haritha replied that he did so because of the honor, wealth and authority their people had given them and he was afraid he would lose it all if he accepted Islam. This has been discussed in Imam Ibn Kathir's, the Life of the Prophet, Volume 4, Pages 75-76.

It is therefore vital for Muslims to avoid the excess love for wealth and social status. In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2376, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that craving for wealth and status is more destructive to one's faith than the destruction caused by two hungry wolves which are set free on a herd of sheep.

This shows that hardly any of a Muslim's faith remains secure if they crave after wealth and fame in this world just as hardly any of the sheep will be saved from two hungry wolves. So this great similitude contains a severe

warning against the evil of craving after excess wealth and social status in the world.

The first type of craving for wealth is when one has extreme love for wealth and strives without fatigue to acquire it through lawful means. To behave in such a manner is not the sign of wise person as a Muslim should firmly believe their provision is guaranteed to them and this allotment can never change. In fact, the provision of the creation was allocated over fifty thousand years before the creation of the Heavens and the Earth. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6748. This person will undoubtedly neglect their duties as they are too preoccupied with obtaining wealth. A body which is too busy acquiring wealth will never prepare adequately for the hereafter. In fact, this person will dedicate so much effort to acquiring wealth that they may not even get a chance to enjoy it. Instead, they will depart this world and leave it behind for other people to enjoy even though they will be held accountable for it. This person may acquire wealth lawfully but they will still not find peace of mind as no matter how much they obtain they will only desire more. This person is needy and therefore, a real pauper even if they possess much wealth.

The only craving which is beneficial is craving for accumulating true wealth namely, righteous deeds in order to prepare for one's day of return.

The second type of craving for wealth is similar to the first type but in addition to it this type of person acquires wealth through unlawful means and fails to fulfil the rights of people, such as the obligatory charity. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has warned

against this in many Hadiths. For example, in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6576, he warned that this attitude destroyed the past nations as they made unlawful things lawful, withheld the rights of others and killed others for the sake of excess wealth. This person strives for the wealth they are not entitled to which leads to countless major sins. When one adopts this attitude they become intensely greedy. As warned by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1961, the greedy person is far from Allah, the Exalted, far from Paradise, far from people and close to Hell. In fact, a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 3114, warns that extreme greed and true faith will never combine in the heart of a true Muslim.

If a Muslim adopts this type of craving then the extreme danger of it is clear even to an uneducated Muslim. It will destroy their faith until nothing except a little remains just like the main Hadith under discussion warns that this destruction to one's faith is more severe than the destruction caused by two hungry wolves which are let loose on a herd of sheep. This Muslim risks losing the little faith they possess at the moment of their death, which is the greatest loss. A person's craving for fame and status is arguably more destructive to one's faith than craving for excess wealth. A person will often spend their beloved wealth on obtaining fame and prestige.

It is rare for someone to obtain status and fame and still remain firm on the correct path whereby they prioritise the hereafter over the material world. In fact, a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6723, warns that a person who seeks status in society, such as leadership, will be left to deal with it themselves but if someone receives it without asking for it they will be aided by Allah, the Exalted, in remaining obedient to Him. This is the reason the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, would not

appoint a person who requested to be appointed in a position of authority or even showed desire for it. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6923. Another Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 7148, warns that people will be keen to obtain status and authority but it will be a great regret for them on the Day of Judgment. This is a dangerous craving as it forces one to strive intensely to obtain it and then strive further in order to hold on to it even if it encourages them to commit oppression and other sins.

The worse type of craving for status is when one obtains this through religion. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has warned in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2654, that this person will go to Hell.

Therefore, it is safer for a Muslim to avoid the craving for excess wealth and high social status as they are two things which can lead to the destruction of their faith by distracting them from preparing adequately for the hereafter.

Parable 36

Chapter 49 – Al Hujurat, Verse 12

يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ
وَلَا تَجَسَّسُوا وَلَا يَغْتَب بَّعْضُكُم بَعْضًا أَيُّحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَن
يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا فَكَرِهْتُمُوهُ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَّابٌ
رَّحِيمٌ

“O you who have believed, avoid much [negative] assumption. Indeed, some assumption is sin. And do not spy or backbite each other. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his brother when dead? You would detest it. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is Accepting of Repentance and Merciful.”

“O you who have believed...”

True belief involves sincerity. In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim number 196, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that Islam is sincerity towards Allah, the Exalted.

Sincerity towards Allah, the Exalted, includes fulfilling all the duties given by Him in the form of commands and prohibitions, solely for His pleasure. As confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1, all will be judged by their intention. So if one is not sincere towards Allah, the Exalted, when performing good deeds they will gain no reward in this world or in the next. In fact, according to a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3154, those who performed insincere deeds will be told on Judgement Day to seek their reward from those who they acted for, which will not be possible. Chapter 98 Al Bayyinah, verse 5.

"And they were not commanded except to worship Allah, [being] sincere to Him in religion....."

If one is lax in fulfilling their duties towards Allah, the Exalted, it proves a lack of sincerity. Therefore, they should sincerely repent and struggle to fulfil them all. It is important to bear in mind Allah, the Exalted, never burdens one with duties they cannot perform or handle. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 286.

"Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity...."

Being sincere towards Allah, the Exalted, means that one should always choose His pleasure over the pleasure of themselves and others. A Muslim should always give priority to those actions which are for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, over all else. One should love others and dislike their sins for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, and not for the sake of their own desires. When they help others or refuse to take part in sins it should be for the sake of Allah, the Exalted. The one who adopts this mentality has perfected their faith. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4681.

“...avoid much [negative] assumption. Indeed, some assumption is sin...”

In a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4993, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that thinking well about people is an aspect of worshipping Allah, the Exalted, correctly. Meaning, it is an aspect of obeying Allah, the Exalted.

Interpreting things in a negative way often leads to sins such as backbiting and slander. In all cases a muslim should interpret things where possible in a positive way in order to give the benefit of the doubt to others. Unfortunately, adopting a negative mind-set effects people from a family unit to a national level. For example, how many times has a nation gone to war over an assumption and suspicion? The vast majority of scandals which are found in the media are based on assumptions. Even laws have been created which support the use of assumptions and suspicion. This often leads to fractured and broken relationships as people with this mind-set always believe others are taking a dig at them through their words or actions. This prevents one from taking advice from others as they believe they are only being mocked by the one giving advice and it prevents one from giving advice as they believe the other person will not pay any attention to what they say. And a person will refrain from advising the one who possesses this negative mind-set as they believe it will only lead to an argument. This leads to other negative traits such as bitterness.

It is important for muslims to understand that even if they assume someone is taking a dig at them they should still accept their advice if it is based on

the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. They should strive to interpret things where possible in a positive way which leads to a positive mentality. And a positive mindset leads to healthy relationships and feelings. Chapter 49 Al Hujurat, verse 12:

“O you who have believed, avoid much [negative] assumption. Indeed, some assumption is sin...”

“...And do not spy...”

This is when a person purposely enquires about people or a thing in order to find out things which do not concern them. This behaviour only leads to further sins, such as backbiting and slandering. In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6064, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, specifically ordered muslims not to spy on one another and indicated that it prevents Muslims living in harmony. This habit will always block a Muslim from perfecting their faith as one cannot achieve this without staying away from the things which do not concern them. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2317.

Spying causes one to uncover the faults of others which according to a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 2546, leads to the exposure of one's own faults and their public disgrace.

It is therefore better for a Muslim to concentrate on things which concern them, such as rectifying their own faults. And the same way a Muslim would dislike people spying on them they should not spy on others.

“...And do not spy...”

Throughout the divine scriptures there are many examples which indicate that a person shall be treated according to how they act. For example, in one verse of the Holy Quran Allah, the Exalted, declares that He will remember the person who remembers Him. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 152.

“So remember Me; I will remember you.”

Another example is found in chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 40:

“...fulfill My covenant [upon you] that I will fulfill your covenant [from Me]...”

Finally, in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1924, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that whoever shows mercy to others will be shown mercy by Allah, the Exalted.

It is quite obvious that people strive in this material world as they desire peace of mind and contentment. In light of the earlier discussion, peace in one's life is often achieved when a person allows others to live in peace. If one reflects on their own life they will realise that people can be split into two categories: those who mind their business and allow others to live in peace and those who do not. It does not take a genius to figure out that those who let others live in peace are the ones who gain peace. Whereas, members of the other group never find peace irrespective of how many worldly blessings they may possess. This is one of the reasons why the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3976, that a muslim cannot perfect their Islam until they avoid things which do not concern them. Those who ignore this advice and busy themselves with interfering with other people are the ones who never find peace. As they deprive others of peace in turn Allah, the Exalted, deprives them of it.

Therefore, a large step towards achieving peace of mind is to let others live in peace. It is important to note, this does not mean one should abandon commanding good and forbidding evil as this is an important duty. But it means that those things which are not sinful should be left alone as constantly chiding others on issues which are not unlawful only leads to enmity and the loss of peace in peoples' lives. There was a day and age when people loved being advised by others on all lawful and unlawful matters even if this meant they were being chided as they desired to reform themselves for the better. But that day has long passed. Nowadays, most people dislike being chided over the unlawful let alone those things which are lawful yet undesirable. So it is best to avoid this attitude if one desires to gain a bit of peace in their life.

“...And do...backbite each other. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his brother when dead? You would detest it...”

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6593, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, explained the meaning of backbiting and slander.

Backbiting is when one criticizes someone behind their back in a way which would be displeasing to them even though it is the truth. Whereas, slander is similar to backbiting except that the statement is not true. These sins mainly involve speech but can include other things, such as using hand signals. These are major sins and backbiting has been compared to eating the flesh of a dead corpse in the main verse under discussion.

It is important to understand that these sins are worse than most of the sins which are between a person and Allah, the Exalted. This is because the sins between a person and Allah, the Exalted, will be forgiven by Him if the sinner sincerely repents. But Allah, the Exalted, will not forgive a backbiter or a slanderer until their victim forgives them first. If they do not then on Judgment day the good deeds of the backbiter/slanderer will be given to their victim as compensation and if needed the sins of the victim will be given to their backbiter/slanderer until justice is established. This may well cause the backbiter/slanderer to be hurled into Hell. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6579.

The only times backbiting is lawful is if one is warning and protecting another person of harm or if a person is resolving a complaint against another with a third party, such as a legal case.

One should avoid backbiting and slandering by firstly gaining knowledge on the evil consequences of these major sins. Secondly, a person should only utter words which they would happily say in front of the person full well knowing they would not take it in an offensive way. Thirdly, a muslim should only utter words about another if they would not mind someone else saying those or similar words about them. Meaning, they should talk about others how they want people to talk about them. Finally, a muslim should concentrate on fixing their own faults and when done sincerely it will prevent them from backbiting and slandering others.

“...And do...backbite each other. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his brother when dead? You would detest it...”

A muslim must adopt the opposite characteristic and instead defend the honour of others.

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1931, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that whoever protects the honor of another will be protected from Hellfire by Allah, the Exalted.

Just like a muslim would desire others to protect their honor in their presence or absence they should protect the honor of others in their presence or absence also. In fact, loving for others what one desires for themselves is the characteristic of a true believer according to a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2515. A muslim should protect the honor of others when anyone else speaks ill about them, such as backbiting or slander, irrespective of if what they are saying is true or not. This is an aspect of concealing the faults of others which leads to Allah, the Exalted, concealing their faults in both worlds. This is advised in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 225. Behaving in such a manner is a clear proof of one's love for others for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, which is a characteristic which leads to Paradise according to a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2688.

The main Hadith under discussion clearly shows that a muslim benefits from supporting others so even if they are too preoccupied from caring about others they should at least act in this manner for their own sake.

But the one who fails to defend the honor of others when they have the opportunity and strength to do so without fear of harm should fear that Allah, the Exalted, will not protect their honor in a time and place where it is being violated by others and especially, on the Day of Resurrection.

Finally, as the main Hadith under discussion advises protecting the honor of others it indirectly indicates the importance of not violating the honor of others. This is in fact the very sign of a true muslim and believer according to a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 4998. Specifically, it advises that a true muslim and believer keeps their verbal and physical harm away from the self and possessions of others.

“O you who have believed, avoid much [negative] assumption. Indeed, some assumption is sin. And do not spy or backbite each other. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his brother when dead? You would detest it...”

In a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 4998, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised the signs of a true muslim and a true believer. A true muslim is the one who keeps their verbal and physical harm away from others. This in fact, includes all people irrespective of their faith. It includes all types of verbal and physical sins which can cause harm or distress to another. This can include failing to give the best advice to others as this contradicts sincerity towards others which has been commanded in a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 4204. It includes advising others to disobey Allah, the Exalted, thereby, inviting them towards sins. A muslim should avoid this behavior as they will be taken account for every person who acts on their bad advice. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 2351.

Physical harm includes causing problems for other people's livelihood, committing fraud, conning others and physical abuse. All of these characteristics contradict Islamic teachings and must be avoided.

A true believer, according to the main Hadith under discussion, is the one who keeps their harm away from the lives and property of others. Again, this applies to all people irrespective of their faith. This includes stealing, misusing or damaging the property and belongings of others. Whenever one is entrusted with someone else's property they must ensure they only

use it with the owner's permission and in a way which is pleasing and agreeable to the owner. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has warned in a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 5421, that whoever illegally takes someone else's property, through a false oath, even if it is as small as a twig of a tree will go to Hell.

To conclude a muslim must support their verbal declaration of belief with actions as they are the physical proof of one's belief which will be needed in order to obtain success on the Day of Judgment. In addition, a muslim should fulfill the characteristics of true belief in respect to Allah, the Exalted, and people. An excellent way of achieving this in respect to people is to simply treat others how they wish to be treated by people, which is with respect and peace.

“O you who have believed, avoid much [negative] assumption. Indeed, some assumption is sin. And do not spy or backbite each other. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his brother when dead? You would detest it...”

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 67, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, declared that the blood, property and honor of a muslim are sacred in Islam.

This Hadith, like many others, teaches muslims that success can only be obtained when one fulfills the rights of Allah, the Exalted, such as the obligatory prayers, and the rights of people. One without the other is not good enough.

A true believer and muslim is the one who keeps their verbal and physical harm away from the self and possessions of others. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 4998. Therefore, it is vital for muslims not to harm others through their actions or words.

A muslim must respect the possessions of others and not try to wrongfully acquire them for example, in a legal case. A Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 353, warns that someone who does this will go to Hell even if the thing they acquired was as insignificant as a twig of a tree. Muslims should

only use the possessions of others according to their wishes and return them in a way pleasing to its owner.

The honor of a muslim should not be violated through actions or speech, such as backbiting or slander. A muslim should instead defend the honor of others whether in their presence or absence as this will lead to their protection from the fire of Hell. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1931.

To conclude, one should avoid wronging the self, possessions or honor of others by treating others exactly how they desire others to treat them. Just like one loves this for themselves they should love it for others and prove this through their actions and speech. This is the sign of a true believer according to a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2515.

“O you who have believed, avoid much [negative] assumption. Indeed, some assumption is sin. And do not spy or backbite each other. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his brother when dead? You would detest it...”

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6579, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that the bankrupt muslim is the one who accumulates many righteous deeds, such as fasting and prayer, but as they mistreated people their good deeds will be given to their victims and if necessary their victim's sins will be given to them on Judgement Day. This will lead to them being hurled into Hell.

It is important to understand that a muslim must fulfil two aspects of faith in order to achieve success. The first are the duties in respect to Allah, the Exalted, such as the obligatory prayer. The second aspect is in respect to people which includes treating them kindly. In fact, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has declared in a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 4998, that a person cannot be a true believer until they keep they physical and verbal harm away from the life and possessions of others.

It is important to understand that Allah, the Exalted, is infinitely forgiving meaning, He will forgive those who sincerely repent to Him. But He will not forgive the sins which involve other people until the victim forgives first. As people are not so forgiving a muslim should be fearful that those who they have wronged will exact revenge on them by taking away their precious good deeds on Judgment Day. Even if a muslim fulfils the rights of Allah,

the Exalted, they may still end up in Hell simply because they have wronged others. It is therefore important for muslims to strive to fulfil both aspects of their duties in order to obtain success in both worlds.

“...And fear Allāh...”

Piety/Fearing Allah, the Exalted, cannot be achieved without gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge so that one can fulfill the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refrain from His prohibitions and face destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 35 Fatir, verse 28:

“...Only those fear Allah, from among His servants, who have knowledge...”

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2451, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon, advised that a muslim cannot become pious until they avoid something which is not harmful to their religion out of caution that it will lead to something which is harmful. Therefore, an aspect of piety is to avoid things which are doubtful not just unlawful. This is because doubtful things takes a muslim one step closer to the unlawful and the closer one is to the unlawful the easier it is to fall into it. It is why a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1205, advises that the one who avoids unlawful and doubtful things will protect their religion and honor. If one observes those who have become misguided in society, in most cases, this occurred gradually not in one sudden step. Meaning, the person first indulged in doubtful things before falling into the unlawful. This is the reason why Islam stresses the need to avoid unnecessary and vain things in one's life as they can lead them to the unlawful. For example, vain and useless speech which is not classified sinful by Islam often leads to evil speech, such as backbiting, lying and slander. If a person avoids the

first step by not indulging in vain speech they will undoubtedly avoid evil speech. This process can be applied to all things which are vain, unnecessary and especially, doubtful.

“...indeed, Allāh is Accepting of Repentance...”

In a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4251, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that people commit sins but the best person who commits sins is the one who sincerely repents.

As people are not Angels they are bound to commit sins. The thing that makes these people special is when they sincerely repent from their sins. Sincere repentance includes feeling remorse, seeking the forgiveness of Allah, the Exalted, and anyone who has been wronged, making a firm promise not to commit the sin or a similar sin again and making up for any rights which have been violated in respect to Allah, the Exalted, and people.

It is important to note, minor sins can be erased through righteous deeds which has been advised in many Hadiths, such as the one found in Sahih Muslim, number 550. It advises that the five daily obligatory prayers and two consecutive Friday congregational prayers erase the minor sins committed in between them as long as major sins are avoided.

Major sins are only erased through sincere repentance. Therefore, a muslim should strive to avoid all sins, minor and major, and if they happen to occur to immediately sincerely repent as the time of death is unknown.

And they should continue obeying Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience.

“...indeed, Allāh is Accepting of Repentance...”

Allah, the Exalted, conceals and covers the faults of His repentant servants without punishing them or holding it against them in anyway.

A muslim should therefore never lose hope in the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, as this leads to unbelief. Chapter 12 Yusuf, verse 87:

“...and despair not of relief from Allah. Indeed, no one despairs of relief from Allah except the disbelieving people.”

A muslim should understand that the forgiveness of Allah, the Exalted, is unlimited while their sins will always be limited. The limited can never overcome the unlimited. But it is important to note this applies to the one who repents sincerely not the person who continues sinning believing they will be forgiven. This is merely wishful thinking not true hope in the forgiveness of Allah, the Exalted. Sincere repentance involves feeling remorse, seeking forgiveness from Allah, the Exalted, and if necessary from people, sincerely promising to refrain from the same or similar sin again and making up for any rights which have been violated in respect to Allah, the Exalted, and people.

Muslims should act on this blessed divine name by overlooking and forgiving the mistakes of others. It is logical to understand that if one desires the forgiveness of Allah, the Exalted, they should learn to forgive others. Chapter 24 An Nur, verse 22:

“...and let them pardon and overlook. Would you not like that Allah should forgive you? And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.”

“...indeed, Allāh is...Merciful.”

Allah, the Exalted, is the Most Merciful according to His infinite status. This attribute means that Allah, the Exalted, bestows countless favours on the creation and is always extremely kind to them. This same characteristic has been attributed to others such as the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 9 At Tawbah, verse 128:

“There has certainly come to you a Messenger from among yourselves. Grievous to him is what you suffer; [he is] concerned over you [i.e., your guidance] and to the believers is kind and merciful.”

When used in reference to the creation merciful means soft-hearted and compassionate. A muslim must adopt these qualities by looking at the creation through the eye of mercy and by treating them with mercy and compassion whether they are obedient or sinful. Many Hadiths such as the one found in Sahih Muslim, number 6030, indicate that the one who does not show mercy to others will not be shown mercy by Allah, the Exalted. So it is vital for muslims to show mercy to all through their actions such as financial and physical help and through their words such as supplicating for them. Islam in fact rewards a muslim who shows mercy to all living things such as animals. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 2550. In addition, the mercy they show should not be selective or occasional instead they should strive to demonstrate mercy at all times with all of creation.

“...And fear Allāh; indeed, Allāh is Accepting of Repentance and Merciful.”

In a long divine Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 7405, Allah, the Exalted, advises that He acts and treats His servant according to their perception of Him. This means if a muslim has good thoughts and expects good from Allah, the Exalted, He in turn will not disappoint them. Similarly, if a person harbours negative thoughts about Allah, the Exalted, such as believing they will not be forgiven then Allah, the Exalted, may act according to their belief.

It is important to note, there is a vast difference between true hope in Allah, the Exalted, which this Hadith refers to and wishful thinking. Wishful thinking is when one fails to strive in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience and then expects Allah, the Exalted, to forgive them. This is not true hope it is merely wishful thinking. This is like a farmer who fails to plant any seeds, fails to water their crop and still hopes to reap a large harvest. True hope is when one strives to obey Allah, the Exalted, and whenever they slip up they sincerely repent and then hope for the mercy and forgiveness of Allah, the Exalted. This is like a farmer who plants seeds, waters their crop, dedicates effort to keeping the crop healthy and then hopes for a large harvest. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has summarised this explanation in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2459.

Generally speaking, a muslim should harbour more fear of Allah, the Exalted, during their life as it prevents sins which is superior to hope which inspires one to perform righteous deeds especially, the voluntary type. But during periods of illness and difficulty and especially at the time of death a muslim should have nothing but hope in the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, even if they have spent their life disobeying Him as this has specifically been commanded by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 2877.

Parable 37

Chapter 57 – Al Hadid, Verses 20-21

أَعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَهَوٌّ وَزِينَةٌ وَتَفَاخُرٌ
بَيْنَكُمْ وَتَكَاتُرٌ فِي الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ كَمَثَلِ غَيْثٍ أَعْجَبَ
الْكُفَّارَ بِنَائِهِ ثُمَّ يَهِيجُ فَتَرْتَهُ مُصْفَرًّا ثُمَّ يَكُونُ حُطَمًا
وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانٌ وَمَا
الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْغُرُورِ ﴿٢٠﴾

سَابِقُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا كَعَرْضِ
السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ أُعِدَّتْ لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ
ذَٰلِكَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَن يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ
الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٢١﴾

“Know that the life of this world is but amusement and diversion and adornment and boasting to one another and competition in increase of

wealth and children - like the example of a rain whose [resulting] plant growth pleases the tillers; then it dries and you see it turned yellow; then it becomes [scattered] debris. And in the Hereafter is severe punishment and forgiveness from Allah and approval. And what is the worldly life except the enjoyment of delusion.

Race [compete] toward forgiveness from your Lord and a Garden whose width is like the width of the heavens and earth, prepared for those who believed in Allah and His messengers. That is the bounty of Allah which He gives to whom He wills, and Allah is the possessor of great bounty.”

“Know that the life of this world is but amusement and diversion and adornment and boasting to one another and competition in increase of wealth and children - like the example of a rain whose [resulting] plant growth pleases the tillers; then it dries and you see it turned yellow; then it becomes [scattered] debris... And what is the worldly life except the enjoyment of delusion.”

This verse indicates the fickle nature of the material world. Even though it pleases people yet this pleasure does not last long. These worldly things will only become a source of stress for them and they will eventually slip through their fingers during their lives or at the time of their death. The one who fails to use these worldly blessings in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, because they are too preoccupied fulfilling their desires will be left empty handed on Judgement Day.

It is important to note, the material world which one should detach from actually refers to one's desires. It does not refer to the physical world, such as the mountains. This is indicated by chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 14:

“Beautified for people is the love of that which they desire - of women and sons, heaped-up sums of gold and silver, fine branded horses, and cattle and tilled land. That is the enjoyment of worldly life, but Allah has with Him the best return [i.e., Paradise].”

These things are connected to the desires of people and by them one becomes distracted from preparing for the hereafter. When one abstains from their desires they are in fact detaching from the material world. This is why a muslim who does not possess worldly things can still be regarded a worldly person because of their inner desire and love for it. Whereas, a muslim who possesses worldly things, like some of the righteous predecessors, can be considered detached from the material world as they do not desire and occupy their minds, hearts and actions with them. Instead they desire lies in the eternal hereafter.

The first level of abstinence is turning away from unlawful and vain desires which are not connected to the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted. This person busies themselves in fulfilling their duties and responsibilities all the while focusing on the hereafter. They turn away from things and people who prevent them from fulfilling this important deed.

The next stage of abstinence is when one takes only the things they need from the material world in order to fulfil their necessities and responsibilities. They do not occupy their time on things which will not derive them benefit in the next world. This is the advice given by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6416. He advised a muslim to live in this material world as a stranger or a traveller. Both types of people will only take what they need from the material world in order to reach their destination meaning, the hereafter safely. A muslim can achieve this by understanding how close their death and departure to the hereafter is. Not only can death pounce on a person at any time but even if one lives a long life it seems as though it passed in a moment. By realising this reality one sacrifices the moment for the sake of the eternal hereafter. Shortening one's hope for a

long life in this material world will encourage them to perform righteous deeds, sincerely repent from their sins and prioritise preparing for the hereafter over all else. The one who hopes for a long life will be inspired to behave in the opposite manner.

The one who is truly abstinent in the material world neither blames it nor praises it. They do not rejoice when they gain it nor do they grieve when it passes them by. The mind of this pious muslim is too focused on the eternal hereafter to greedily notice the small material world.

“Know that the life of this world is but amusement and diversion and adornment and boasting to one another and competition in increase of wealth and children - like the example of a rain whose [resulting] plant growth pleases the tillers; then it dries and you see it turned yellow; then it becomes [scattered] debris... And what is the worldly life except the enjoyment of delusion.”

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In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 2886, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, criticized the slaves of wealth and fine clothing. These people are pleased when they receive these things and become displeased when they do not.

In reality, this applies to all non-essential worldly things. This criticism is not directed at those who strive in the material world in order to fulfill their needs and the needs of their dependents as this is a part of obeying Allah, the Exalted. But it is directed at those who either pursue the unlawful in order to obtain wealth and other worldly things in order to satisfy their desires and the desires of others. And it is directed at those who pursue non-essential lawful things in such a way that it causes them to neglect

obeying Allah, the Exalted, correctly. This obedience involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This prevents them from preparing adequately for the hereafter and their final judgment.

In addition, this criticism is for those who are impatient when they do not obtain their unnecessary desires in this world. This attitude can cause a muslim to obey Allah, the Exalted, on the edge. Meaning, they obey Him when they obtain their desires but when they do not they angrily turn away from His obedience. The Holy Quran has warned of a severe loss in both worlds for the one who adopts this attitude. Chapter 22 Al Hajj, verse 11:

“And of the people is he who worships Allah on an edge. If he is touched by good, he is reassured by it; but if he is struck by trial, he turns on his face [to unbelief]. He has lost [this] world and the Hereafter. That is what is the manifest loss.”

Muslims should instead learn to be patient and content with what they possess as this is true richness according to a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 2420. In reality, the person full of desires is needy meaning, poor even if they possess much wealth. A muslim should know Allah, the Exalted, grants people what is best for them and not according to their desires as this in most cases would lead to their destruction. Chapter 42 Ash Shuraa, verse 27:

“And if Allah had extended [excessively] provision for His servants, they would have committed tyranny throughout the earth. But He sends [it] down in an amount which He wills. Indeed He is, of His servants, Aware and Seeing.”

“Know that the life of this world is but amusement and diversion and adornment and boasting to one another and competition in increase of wealth and children - like the example of a rain whose [resulting] plant growth pleases the tillers; then it dries and you see it turned yellow; then it becomes [scattered] debris... And what is the worldly life except the enjoyment of delusion.”

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In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2376, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that craving for wealth and status is more destructive to one's faith than the destruction caused by two hungry wolves which are set free on a herd of sheep.

This shows that hardly any of a muslim's faith remains secure if they crave after wealth and fame in this world just as hardly any of the sheep will be saved from two hungry wolves. So this great similitude contains a severe warning against the evil of craving after excess wealth and social status in the world.

The first type of craving for wealth is when one has extreme love for wealth and strives without fatigue to acquire it through lawful means. To behave in such a manner is not the sign of wise person as a muslim should firmly believe their provision is guaranteed to them and this allotment can never change. In fact, the provision of the creation was allocated over fifty thousand years before the creation of the Heavens and the Earth. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6748. This person will undoubtedly neglect their duties as they are too preoccupied with obtaining wealth. A body which is too busy acquiring wealth will never prepare adequately for the hereafter. In fact, this person will dedicate so much effort to acquiring wealth that they may not even get a chance to enjoy it. Instead, they will depart this world and leave it behind for other people to enjoy even though they will be held accountable for it. This person may acquire wealth lawfully but they will still not find peace of mind as no matter how much they obtain they will only desire more. This person is needy and therefore, a real pauper even if they possess much wealth.

The only craving which is beneficial is craving for accumulating true wealth namely, righteous deeds in order to prepare for one's day of return.

The second type of craving for wealth is similar to the first type but in addition to it this type of person acquires wealth through unlawful means and fails to fulfil the rights of people, such as the obligatory charity. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has warned against this in many Hadiths. For example, in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6576, he warned that this attitude destroyed the past nations as they made unlawful things lawful, withheld the rights of others and killed others for the sake of excess wealth. This person strives for the

wealth they are not entitled to which leads to countless major sins. When one adopts this attitude they become intensely greedy. As warned by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1961, the greedy person is far from Allah, the Exalted, far from Paradise, far from people and close to Hell. In fact, a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 3114, warns that extreme greed and true faith will never combine in the heart of a true muslim.

If a muslim adopts this type of craving then the extreme danger of it is clear even to an uneducated muslim. It will destroy their faith until nothing except a little remains just like the main Hadith under discussion warns that this destruction to one's faith is more severe than the destruction caused by two hungry wolves which are let loose on a herd of sheep. This muslim risks losing the little faith they possess at the moment of their death, which is the greatest loss. A person's craving for fame and status is arguably more destructive to one's faith than craving for excess wealth. A person will often spend their beloved wealth on obtaining fame and prestige.

It is rare for someone to obtain status and fame and still remain firm on the correct path whereby they prioritise the hereafter over the material world. In fact, a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6723, warns that a person who seeks status in society, such as leadership, will be left to deal with it themselves but if someone receives it without asking for it they will be aided by Allah, the Exalted, in remaining obedient to Him. This is the reason the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, would not appoint a person who requested to be appointed in a position of authority or even showed desire for it. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6923. Another Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 7148, warns that people will be keen to obtain status and authority but it will

be a great regret for them on the Day of Judgment. This is a dangerous craving as it forces one to strive intensely to obtain it and then strive further in order to hold on to it even if it encourages them to commit oppression and other sins.

The worse type of craving for status is when one obtains this through religion. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has warned in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2654, that this person will go to Hell.

Therefore, it is safer for a muslim to avoid the craving for excess wealth and high social status as they are two things which can lead to the destruction of their faith by distracting them from preparing adequately for the hereafter.

“Know that the life of this world is but amusement and diversion and adornment and boasting to one another and competition in increase of wealth and children - like the example of a rain whose [resulting] plant growth pleases the tillers; then it dries and you see it turned yellow; then it becomes [scattered] debris...And what is the worldly life except the enjoyment of delusion.”

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In a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3997, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that he did not fear poverty for the muslim nation. Instead he feared that the world would become easy to obtain and plentiful for them. This would cause them to compete for it which would lead to their destruction as this same competition destroyed the previous nations.

It is important to understand that this does not only apply to wealth. But this warning applies to all aspects of people's worldly desires which can be encompassed by the desire for fame, wealth, authority and the social aspects of one's life, such as family, friends and a career. Whenever one aims to fulfil their desires by pursuing these things, even if they are lawful,

beyond their needs it will distract them from preparing for the hereafter. It will lead them to bad character such as being wasteful and extravagant and may even take them towards sins in order to obtain these things. Failing to obtain them may lead to impatience and other acts of defiance and disobedience towards Allah, the Exalted. It is obvious these desires have taken control over many muslims as they would happily get up in the middle of the night in order to obtain these things such as wealth or go on a holiday but will fail to do so when advised to offer the voluntary night prayer or attend the morning obligatory prayer at the Mosque with congregation.

There is no harm in obtaining these things as long as they are lawful and required in order to fulfil a person's needs and the needs of their dependents. But when a person goes beyond this then they will become preoccupied with them at the loss of their hereafter as the more one pursues their desires the less they will strive in preparing for the hereafter. And therefore, the warning given in this Hadith will apply to them.

“Know that the life of this world is but amusement and diversion and adornment and boasting to one another and competition in increase of wealth and children - like the example of a rain whose [resulting] plant growth pleases the tillers; then it dries and you see it turned yellow; then it becomes [scattered] debris... And what is the worldly life except the enjoyment of delusion...”

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Therefore, one must use the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, so that they obtain peace and success in both worlds.

In reality, in most cases nothing in this material world in itself is good or bad, such as wealth. What makes a thing good or bad is the way it is used. It is important to understand that the very purpose of everything which was created by Allah, the Exalted, was for it to be used correctly according to the teachings of Islam. When something is not used correctly it in reality becomes useless. For example, wealth is useful in both worlds when it is used correctly such as being spent on the necessities of a person and their dependents. But it can become useless and even a curse for its bearer if it

is not used correctly, such as being hoarded or spent on sinful things. Simply hoarding wealth causes wealth to lose value. How can paper and metal coins one tucks away be useful? In this respect, there is no difference between a blank piece of paper and a note of money. It is only useful when it is used correctly.

So if a Muslim desires all their worldly possessions to become a blessing for them in both worlds all they have to do is use them correctly according to the teachings found in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. But if they use them incorrectly then the same blessing will become a burden and curse for them in both worlds. It is as simple as that.

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Therefore, one must use the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, so that they obtain peace and success in both worlds.

It is important for muslims to understand that they should not define a situation as good or bad according to worldly definitions. For example, according to a worldly definition being wealthy is good whereas being poor is bad. Instead, muslims should ascribe good and bad to events and things according to the teachings of Islam. Meaning, anything which takes one closer to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in the form of fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience, is good even if it is seen as bad from a worldly point of view. And

anything which takes one away from the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, is bad even if it appears good.

There are many examples throughout the teachings of Islam which demonstrate this. For example, Qarun was an extremely wealthy person who lived in the time of the Holy Prophet Mosa, peace be upon him. Many people then and now may consider his wealth to be a good thing but as it led him to pride it became a means of his destruction. So in his case being wealthy was a bad thing. Chapter 28 Al Qasas, verses 79-81.

“So he came out before his people in his adornment. Those who desired the worldly life said, “Oh, would that we had like what was given to Qārūn. Indeed, he is one of great fortune. But those who had been given knowledge said, “Woe to you! The reward of Allah is better for he who believes and does righteousness. And none are granted it except the patient.” And We caused the earth to swallow him and his home. And there was for him no company to aid him other than Allah, nor was he of those who [could] defend themselves.”

On the other hand, the third rightly guided Caliph of Islam, Usman Bin Affan, may Allah be pleased with him, was also wealthy yet he used his wealth in the correct way. In fact, once after donating a large amount of wealth he was told by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, that nothing could harm his faith after that day. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3701. So in his case wealth was a good thing.

To conclude, a muslim should remember that every difficulty they face has wisdoms behind it even if they do not observe them. So they should not believe something is good or bad from a worldly point of view. Meaning, if the thing encourages them towards the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, then it is good even if it looks bad. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

“Know that the life of this world is but amusement and diversion and adornment and boasting to one another and competition in increase of wealth and children - like the example of a rain whose [resulting] plant growth pleases the tillers; then it dries and you see it turned yellow; then it becomes [scattered] debris... And what is the worldly life except the enjoyment of delusion.”

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Therefore, one must use the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, so that they obtain peace and success in both worlds.

When a muslim observes the teachings of Islam they will find that certain worldly blessings have been described in a positive way but in other places it has been described in a negative way. This is because in reality most things are not innately good or bad. What makes them good or bad is whether they take one towards the obedience and pleasure of Allah, the Exalted, or not. For example, the Holy Quran has described a spouse as a way of finding tranquillity, mercy and affection. Chapter 30 Ar Rum, verse 21:

“And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy...”

But the same Holy Quran has also warned that a spouse and children can be enemies to a muslim as well. Chapter 64 At Taghabun, verse 14:

“O you who have believed, indeed, among your spouses and your children are enemies to you, so beware of them...”

This indicates that they become a source of tranquillity when they encourage one towards the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, which involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience. But one’s family can become an enemy to them if they divert them away from the obedience of Allah, the Exalted.

So muslims should regularly assess and judge the worldly blessings they possess in order to determine whether they encourage them towards the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, or divert them from it. And if necessary take steps in order to benefit themselves in both worlds. Whoever does this self-assessment regularly during their lives will find that their final judgment

on the Day of Resurrection will be easy as they remained obedient to Allah, the Exalted. But if they fail to do this self-assessment they will get lost in the material world and fail to prepare for the hereafter adequately which will lead to a difficult accountability and a potential severe punishment. Chapter 9 At Tawbah, verse 24:

“Say, [O Muhammad], “If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your wives, your relatives, wealth which you have obtained, commerce wherein you fear decline, and dwellings with which you are pleased are more beloved to you than Allah and His Messenger and striving in His cause, then wait until Allah executes His command.”

“Know that the life of this world is but amusement and diversion and adornment and boasting to one another and competition in increase of wealth and children - like the example of a rain whose [resulting] plant growth pleases the tillers; then it dries and you see it turned yellow; then it becomes [scattered] debris... And what is the worldly life except the enjoyment of delusion.”

This verse indicates the fickle nature of the material world. Even though it pleases people yet this pleasure does not last long. These worldly things will only become a source of stress for them and they will eventually slip through their fingers during their lives or at the time of their death. The one who fails to use these worldly blessings in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, because they are too preoccupied fulfilling their desires will be left empty handed on Judgement Day.

Therefore, one must use the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, so that they obtain peace and success in both worlds.

It is important for muslims to strive in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience as Allah, the Exalted, has guaranteed a good life in both worlds for the one who behaves in this manner. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

“Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do.”

This good life will protect a muslim from severe grief, depression and other extreme moods and mental disorders which can destroy a person's life. Even though, muslims will face difficulties which will sadden them but if they obey Allah, the Exalted, this sadness will never become extreme and effect their entire life on a long term basis. This is because a muslim who strives in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, has an excellent reason to continue moving forward through their difficulty without giving up and turning to depression and even suicide. For example, they look forward to the countless reward which will be granted to the patient. Chapter 39 Az Zumar, verse 10:

“...Indeed, the patient will be given their reward without account [i.e., limit].”

Whereas, the muslim who does not strive in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, and only claims the title of being a muslim with their tongue will not be granted this attitude and a good life. And whenever they face difficulties it will drive them to extreme moods and mental disorders which will destroy their entire life.

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Therefore, one must use the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, so that they obtain peace and success in both worlds.

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2465, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that whoever prioritises the hereafter over this material world will be granted contentment, their affairs will be corrected for them and they will receive their destined provision in an easy way.

This half of the Hadith means that whoever correctly fulfils their duties in respect to Allah, the Exalted, and to the creation, such as providing for their family in a lawful manner while avoiding the excess of this material world will be granted contentment. This is when one is pleased with what they possess without being greedy and actively striving to obtain more worldly things. In reality, the one who is content with what they possess is a truly rich person even if they possess little wealth as they become independent of things. Independence of anything makes one rich in respect to it.

In addition, this attitude will allow one to comfortably deal with any worldly issues which may arise during their life. This is because the less one interacts with the material world and focuses on the hereafter the less worldly issues they will face. The less worldly issues a person faces the more comfortable their life will become. For example, the one who possesses one house will have fewer issues to deal with in respect to it, such as a broken cooker, than the one who possesses ten houses. Finally, this person will easily and pleasantly obtain their lawful provision. Not only this but Allah, the Exalted, will place such grace in their provision that it will cover all their responsibilities and necessities meaning, it will satisfy them and their dependents.

But as mentioned in the other half of this Hadith the one who prioritises the material world over the hereafter meaning, by neglecting their duties or striving for the unnecessary and excess of this material world will find that their need, meaning greed, for worldly things is never satisfied which by definition makes them poor even if they possess much wealth. These people will go from one worldly issue to another throughout the day failing to achieve contentment as they have opened too many worldly doors. And they will receive their destined provision with difficulty and it will not give

them satisfaction and never seem enough to fill their greed. This may even push them towards the unlawful which only leads to a loss in both worlds.

“Know that the life of this world is but amusement and diversion and adornment and boasting to one another and competition in increase of wealth and children - like the example of a rain whose [resulting] plant growth pleases the tillers; then it dries and you see it turned yellow; then it becomes [scattered] debris... And what is the worldly life except the enjoyment of delusion.”

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Therefore, one must use the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, so that they obtain peace and success in both worlds.

It is a universal aim and goal for all people, irrespective of their faith or social class, to achieve peace of mind in this world. It is the ultimate reason why people strive in this material world, work long hours and dedicate the majority of their efforts to this world. People desire to obtain such a life whereby they have no stresses or worries such as financial difficulties. But it is strange how people, especially muslims, look for peace of mind in the wrong place. Just like a person who desires to watch a football game yet, goes to a cricket match. Allah, the Exalted, has made it clear that true

peace of mind only lies in His obedience which involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and being patient with destiny. Chapter 13 Ar Ra'd, verse 28:

"...Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah hearts are assured."

Whenever a person seeks peace of mind in the material world it will only lead them further away from their goal. Whenever a person sets a target in respect to this material world that target will only lead onto more targets. This continues until the person departs this world without obtaining what they were looking for. It is obvious that the rich do not obtain true peace of mind as they stress more than normal people and whatever they obtain of the world ends up becoming a burden for them. It is why the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2465, that the one who focuses on the hereafter will be blessed with a rich heart and Allah, the Exalted, will organize their affairs meaning, they will obtain peace of mind. But the one who focuses on the material world will only see their poverty and their affairs will become scattered meaning, they will not achieve peace of mind. The one who obeys Allah, the Exalted, will find peace of mind even if they possess little of this world. But the one who is lost in the material world will go from one worldly door to another but will never find true peace as it has not been placed there. If a person wants to watch a football game they should not go to a cricket match and if a muslim desires peace of mind they should not search for it in the material world as it lies only in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted. It is important to note, that those who adhere to the teachings of Islam will encounter difficulties throughout their lives as this is guaranteed but through their obedience Allah, the Exalted, will remove fear and grief from them so that they remain firm and steadfast on the correct

path. This is similar to the one who only feels slight discomfort from a medical procedure as they have been anaesthetised.

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Therefore, one must use the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, so that they obtain peace and success in both worlds.

Islam teaches muslims that they should never compromise on their faith in order to gain something from the material world. Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 135:

“O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives...”

As the material world is temporary whatever one gains from it will eventually fade away and they will be held accountable for their actions and attitude in the hereafter. On the other hand, faith is the precious jewel which guides a muslim through all difficulties in this world and in the hereafter safely. Therefore, it is plain foolishness to compromise the thing which is more beneficial and lasting for the sake of a temporary thing.

Many people especially women, will encounter moments in their lives where they will have to choose whether to compromise on their faith. For example, in some cases a muslim woman may believe that if she removed her scarf and dressed a certain way she would be more respected at work and may even climb the corporate ladder more quickly. Similarly, in the corporate world it is considered important to mingle with colleagues after work hours. So a muslim might find themselves being invited to a pub or club after work.

In times like this it is important to remember that ultimate victory and success will only be granted to those who remain steadfast on the teachings of Islam. Those who act in this way will be granted worldly and religious success. But more importantly their worldly success will not become a burden for them. In fact, it will become a means for Allah, the Exalted, to increase their rank and remembrance amongst mankind. Examples of this are the rightly guided Caliphs of Islam. They did not

compromise on their faith and instead remained steadfast throughout their lives and in return Allah, the Exalted, granted them a worldly and religious empire.

All other forms of success are very temporal and sooner or later they become a difficulty for its bearer. One only needs to observe the many celebrities who compromised on their ideals and belief in order to obtain fame and fortune only for these things to become a cause of their sadness, anxiety, depression, substance abuse and even suicide.

Reflect on these two paths for a moment and then decide which one should be preferred and chosen.

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Therefore, one must use the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, so that they obtain peace and success in both worlds. One can adopt the correct attitude when they understand the purpose of these blessings.

Every worldly blessing a Muslim possesses is only a means which should aid them in reaching the hereafter safely. It is not an end in itself. For example, wealth is a means one should use in order to obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, fulfilling their necessities and the necessities of their dependents. It is not an end or an ultimate goal in itself.

This not only aids a Muslim in maintaining their focus on the hereafter but it also aids them whenever they lose worldly blessings. When a Muslim treats each worldly blessing, such as a child, as a means to please Allah, the Exalted, and reach the hereafter safely then losing it will not have such a detrimental impact on them. They may become sad, which is an acceptable emotion, but they will not become grieved which leads to impatience and other mental problems, such as depression. This is because they firmly believe the worldly blessing they possessed was only a means so losing it does not cause a loss in the ultimate goal namely, Paradise, the loss of which is disastrous. Therefore, still possessing and concentrating on the ultimate goal will prevent them from becoming grieved.

In addition, they will understand that just like the thing they lost was only a means they firmly believe they will be provided with another means to reach and fulfil their ultimate goal by Allah, the Exalted. This will also prevent them from grieving. Whereas, the one who believes their worldly blessing is the end instead of a means will experience severe grief when losing it as their whole purpose and objective has been lost. This grief will lead to depression and other mental issues.

To conclude, Muslims should treat each blessing they possess as a means to reach the hereafter safely not as an end in itself. This is how one can possess things without being possessed by them. This is how they can keep worldly things in their hands and not in their hearts.

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One must adopt the correct perception and understanding in respect to this material world and the hereafter if they desire to avoid this outcome.

In a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4108, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that the material world compared to the hereafter is like a drop of water compared to an ocean.

In reality, this parable was given in order for people to understand how small the material world is compared to the hereafter. But in reality they cannot be compared as the material world is temporal whereas the hereafter is eternal. Meaning, the limited cannot be compared to the unlimited. The material world can be split into four categories: fame, fortune, authority and one's social life, such as their family and friends. No matter what worldly blessing one obtains which falls within these groups it will always be imperfect, transient and death will cut a person off from the blessing. On the other hand, the blessings in the hereafter are lasting and perfect. So in this respect the material world is no more than a drop compared to an endless ocean.

In addition, a person is not guaranteed to experience a long life in this world as the time of death is unknown. Whereas, everyone is guaranteed to experience death and reach the hereafter. So it is foolish to strive for a day, such as one's retirement, which they may never reach over striving for the hereafter which they are guaranteed to reach.

This does not mean one should abandon the world as it is a bridge which must be crossed in order to reach the hereafter safely. Instead, a muslim should take from this material world enough to fulfill their necessities and the necessities of their dependents according to the teachings of Islam without waste, excessiveness or extravagance. And then dedicate the rest of their efforts in preparing for the eternal hereafter by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the teachings of Islam.

An intelligent person will not prioritize the drop of water over an endless ocean and an intelligent muslim would not prioritize the temporal material world over the eternal hereafter.

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In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2377, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, declared that he was not concerned over the excess of this material world and his example in this world is of a rider who takes a short rest under the shade of a tree and then leaves it behind by moving on.

In reality, each person is a traveller who stays in this world for a very limited time compared to where they came from meaning, the world of the souls and to where they are heading which is the eternal hereafter. In fact, this world in comparison is like waiting at a bus stop. In this Hadith this world has been compared to a shadow. This is because a shadow does not last long and fades away quickly without people even taking notice which is exactly how a person's days and nights pass away. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, did not mention a traveller's inn or a hotel as these are solid structures which indicate permanence. A fading shadow better describes this material world. This is because no matter how old a person is they always admit that their life flashed by and felt like a moment. Chapter 79 An Naziat, verse 46:

“It will be, on the Day they see it (Judgment Day), as though they had not remained [in the world] except for an afternoon or a morning thereof.”

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, indicated a rider not someone walking as the one who is walking would rest more under the shade of the tree than a rider. This further indicates the limited time people spend in this world.

Taking a rest in the shade indicates the importance of one correctly using the material world in order to obtain the provisions they need just like the rider takes the provision they need namely, rest. A muslim should therefore prepare for their immediate departure from this world by preparing for the hereafter by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience.

This does not mean one should abandon this world as this Hadith clearly indicates one should make use of the material world in order to prepare for the hereafter. The rider takes a rest and muslims must gather the things which will benefit them in the hereafter instead of dedicating their time to unnecessary things which will leave them empty handed on Judgment Day. Chapter 89 Al Fajar, verses 23-24:

“And brought [within view], that Day, is Hell - that Day, man will remember, but how [i.e., what good] to him will be the remembrance? He will say, "Oh, I wish I had sent ahead [some good] for my life.”

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One must adopt the correct perception and understanding in respect to this material world and the hereafter if they desire to avoid this outcome.

It is important for a muslim to be observant in their daily life and avoid being too self-absorbed in their own worldly matters so that they become heedless over the things which are occurring around them and the things which have already occurred. This is an important quality to possess as it is an excellent way to strengthen one's faith which in turn helps one to remain obedient to Allah, the Exalted, at all times. For example, when a muslim observes a sick person they should not only aid them by whatever means they possess, even if it is only a supplication, but they should reflect on their own health and understand that they too will eventually lose their good

health either by an illness, ageing or even death. This should inspire them to be grateful for their good health and show this through their actions by taking advantage of their good health in both worldly and religious matters which are pleasing to Allah, the Exalted.

When they observe the death of a rich person they should not only feel sad for the deceased and their family but realise that one day which is unknown to them they will die also. They should understand that just like the rich person was abandoned by their wealth, fame and family at their grave so will they too be left only with their deeds in their grave. This will encourage them to prepare for their grave and the hereafter.

This attitude can and should be applied to all things one observes. A muslim should learn a lesson from everything around them which has been advised in the Holy Quran. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 191:

“...and give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth, [saying], "Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly; exalted are You [above such a thing]; then protect us from the punishment of the Fire.””

Those who behave in this manner will strengthen their faith on a daily basis whereas those who are too self-absorbed in their worldly life will remain heedless which may lead them to their destruction.

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One must adopt the correct perception and understanding in respect to this material world and the hereafter if they desire to avoid this outcome.

It is important for muslims to develop the correct perception so that they can increase their obedience to Allah, the Exalted, which involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience. This is what the righteous predecessors possessed and it encouraged them to avoid the excess luxuries of the material world and instead prepare for the hereafter. This is an important characteristic to possess and it can be explained with a worldly example. Two people are extremely thirsty and come across a cup of murky water. They both desire to drink it even though it is not pure and even if it means they have to argue

over it. As their thirst grows the more focused on the cup of murky water they become to the point they lose focus on everything else. But if one of them shifted their focus and observed a river of pure water which was only a short distance ahead they would immediately lose focus on the cup of water to the point they would no longer care about it and no longer argue over it. And instead they would endure their thirst patiently knowing a river of pure water is close. The person who is unaware of the river would probably believe the other person is crazy after observing their change in attitude. This is the case of the two types of people in this world. One group greedily focuses on the material world. The other group has shifted their focus to the hereafter and the pure and eternal blessings therein. When one shifts their focus to the bliss of the hereafter worldly problems do not seem like such a big deal. Therefore, patience becomes easier to adopt. But if one keeps their focus on this world then it will seem like everything to them. They will argue, fight, love and hate for it. Just like the person in the example mentioned earlier who only focuses on the cup of murky water.

This correct perception is only achieved through gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge found within the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 53:

“We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth...”

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One must adopt the correct perception and understanding in respect to this material world and the hereafter if they desire to avoid this outcome.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 7420, the Holy prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that the only wealth one truly possesses is connected to three things.

The first is what a person spends of their wealth on obtaining and consuming food. A muslim should spend reasonably on food without

excessiveness, waste or extravagance as this can be considered a sin. Chapter 7 Al A'raf, verse 31:

"...and eat and drink, but be not excessive. Indeed, He likes not those who commit excess."

It is vital for muslims to only consume the lawful as one's supplication is rejected if they consume the unlawful according to a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 2346. If one's supplication is rejected how can the rest of their actions possibly be accepted by Allah, the Exalted?

The next thing one spends their true wealth on is on their clothes. Again, a muslim should avoid extravagance and wasting as these people have been labeled the siblings of the Devil. Chapter 17 Al Isra, verse 27:

"Indeed, the wasteful are brothers of the devils..."

A muslim should be pleased with nice, clean and simple clothing as this is an aspect of faith according to a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4118.

The final wealth a person truly owns is what they send ahead to the hereafter by spending in ways which are pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. This includes spending on one's necessities and the necessities of their dependents according to the teachings of Islam without waste, excessiveness or extravagance.

To conclude, a muslim should remember that the first two things have already been guaranteed by Allah, the Exalted, as they are a part of their provision which cannot change and was allocated to them over fifty thousand years before the creation of the Heavens and the Earth. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6748. Therefore, they should focus their efforts on the last aspect. All other forms of obtaining and using wealth in reality, does not belong to a person and will be left behind for others to enjoy even though they will be held accountable for it on Judgment Day.

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One must adopt the correct perception and understanding in respect to this material world and the hereafter if they desire to avoid this outcome.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6442, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that a person's true wealth is what they send ahead to the hereafter whereas, what they leave behind is in reality the wealth of their inheritors.

It is important for muslims to send as many blessings, such as their wealth, as they can to the hereafter by using them in ways which are pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. This includes spending on one's needs and the needs of their dependents without being wasteful, excessive or extravagant. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 4006.

But if a muslim does not use their blessings correctly they will become a burden for them in both worlds. And if they hoard them and leave them behind for their inheritors then they will be held accountable for obtaining them even though others will enjoy them after they depart. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2379.

In addition, if their inheritors use the blessings correctly then they will obtain reward from Allah, the Exalted, while the one who collected it will be left empty handed on Judgment Day. Or their inheritor will misuse the blessings which will become a great regret for both the one who earned the blessing and their inheritor especially, if they did not teach their inheritor, such as their child, how to correctly use the blessings as this is a duty on them. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 2928.

Muslims should therefore fulfill their responsibilities towards Allah, the Exalted, and people and ensure they take the rest of their blessings with them to the hereafter by using them correctly as prescribed by Islam. Otherwise, they will be left empty handed and full of regrets on Judgment Day.

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One must understand the temporal nature of this world and their lifespan in order to avoid this outcome.

Death is something which is certain to occur but the time is unknown so it therefore makes sense that a muslim who believes in the hereafter prioritises preparing for it over preparing for things which might not occur, such as marriage, children or their retirement. It is strange how many muslims have adopted the opposite mentality even though they testify that the world is temporary and uncertain whereas the hereafter is permanent and they are certain to reach it. No matter how one behaves they will be judged regarding their deeds. A muslim should not be fooled into believing that they can and will prepare for the hereafter in the future as this attitude

only causes them to delay further until their death occurs and they leave this world with regrets that will not aid them.

So the important thing is not that people will die as this is unavoidable but the key is acting in such a way that one is fully prepared for it. The only way to prepare for it correctly is by acting on the teachings of Islam namely, fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience. This is only possible when one prioritises preparing for the hereafter over preparing for things which might not occur.

“Know that the life of this world is but amusement and diversion and adornment and boasting to one another and competition in increase of wealth and children - like the example of a rain whose [resulting] plant growth pleases the tillers; then it dries and you see it turned yellow; then it becomes [scattered] debris... And what is the worldly life except the enjoyment of delusion.”

This verse indicates the fickle nature of the material world. Even though it pleases people yet this pleasure does not last long. These worldly things will only become a source of stress for them and they will eventually slip through their fingers during their lives or at the time of their death. The one who fails to use these worldly blessings in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, because they are too preoccupied fulfilling their desires will be left empty handed on Judgement Day.

One must understand the temporal nature of this world and their lifespan in order to avoid this outcome.

It is strange that even though people believe they can die at any moment yet the vast majority behave as if they will live a long life. Some dedicate their efforts to this material world to such a degree that even if they were guaranteed a long life they could not exert any more effort for the sake of the material world. Unfortunately, muslims delay preparing for the hereafter believing they can do it in the future. They often keep delaying this preparation until they suddenly encounter death unprepared.

It is important for muslims to understand that no matter how long they live life goes by in a flash. So they should take every opportunity they have in order to prepare for the eternal hereafter. This does not mean they should abandon the world completely. It means they should prioritize preparing for the hereafter by only taking what they need from the material world in order to fulfil their necessities and responsibilities according to the commands of Allah, the Exalted. This attitude will allow them to enjoy the lawful pleasures of this world and prepare adequately for the next one also. A muslim only fails preparing for the hereafter correctly because of their pursuit of the excess of this material world, not by striving to fulfil their necessities and responsibilities.

A muslim should remember the Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 7424, which warns that only a person's deeds will accompany them in their grave while their family and wealth abandons them at this crucial moment. Therefore, a muslim should give priority to the thing which will aid them in their moment of need.

Muslims should not delay preparing for the hereafter otherwise they may well encounter death suddenly while unprepared as death does not come at a particular age or time. If they fail to prepare they will be left with nothing but regrets at a time when regrets will not benefit them. Chapter 89 Al Fajr, verse 23:

“And brought [within view], that Day, is Hell - that Day, man will remember, but how [i.e., what good] to him will be the remembrance?”

“Know that the life of this world is but amusement and diversion and adornment and boasting to one another and competition in increase of wealth and children - like the example of a rain whose [resulting] plant growth pleases the tillers; then it dries and you see it turned yellow; then it becomes [scattered] debris... And what is the worldly life except the enjoyment of delusion.”

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A great obstacle to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, is having false hope for a long life. It is an extremely blameworthy characteristic as it is the main cause for a muslim giving priority to amassing the material world over preparing for the hereafter. One only needs to assess their average 24 hour day and observe how much time they dedicate to the material world and how much time they dedicate to the hereafter in order to realise this truth. In fact, having false hope for a long life is one of the strongest weapons the Devil uses in order to misguide people. When a person believes they will live long they delay preparing for the hereafter falsely

believing they can prepare for it in the near future. In most cases, this near future never comes and a person passes away without adequately preparing for the hereafter.

In addition, false hope for a long life causes one to delay sincere repentance and changing one's character for the better as they believe they have much time left to do this. It encourages a person to hoard the things of this material world, such as wealth, as it convinces them they will need these things during their long life on Earth. The Devil scares people into thinking they must hoard wealth for their old age as they may find no one to support them when they become physically weaker and therefore can no longer work for themselves. They forget that the same way Allah, the Exalted, took care of their provision when they were younger He will provide for them in old age too. In fact, the provision of the creation was allocated over fifty thousand years before the creation of the Heavens and the Earth. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6748. It is strange how a person will dedicate 40 years of their life saving for their retirement which very rarely lasts longer than 20 years but fails to prepare in the same way for the eternal hereafter.

Islam does not teach muslims to not prepare anything for the world. There is no harm in saving for the near future as long as priority is given to the hereafter. Even though, people admit they may die at any time yet, some behave as if they will live forever in this world. Even to the point that if they were given a promise of eternal life on Earth they would not be able to strive harder in order to accumulate more of the material world due to the restrictions of the day and night. How many people have passed away earlier than expected? And how many learn a lesson from this and change their behaviour?

In reality, one of the greatest pains a person will feel at the time of death or any other stage of the hereafter is regret for delaying their preparation for the hereafter. Chapter 63 Al Munafiqun, verses 10-11:

“And spend [in the way of Allah] from what We have provided you before death approaches one of you and he says, “My Lord, if only You would delay me for a brief term so I would give charity and be of the righteous.” But never will Allah delay a soul when its time has come. And Allah is Aware of what you do.”

A person would be labelled a fool if they dedicated more time and wealth on a house which they were only going to live in for a short while compared to a house they were planning to live in for a very long time. This is the example of giving priority to the temporal world over the eternal hereafter.

Muslims should work for both the world and the hereafter but know that death does not come to a person at a time, situation or age known to them but it is certain to come. Therefore, preparing for it and what it leads to should take priority over preparing for a future in this world which is not certain to occur.

“Know that the life of this world is but amusement and diversion and adornment and boasting to one another and competition in increase of wealth and children - like the example of a rain whose [resulting] plant growth pleases the tillers; then it dries and you see it turned yellow; then it becomes [scattered] debris... And what is the worldly life except the enjoyment of delusion.”

This verse indicates the fickle nature of the material world. Even though it pleases people yet this pleasure does not last long. These worldly things will only become a source of stress for them and they will eventually slip through their fingers during their lives or at the time of their death. The one who fails to use these worldly blessings in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, because they are too preoccupied fulfilling their desires will be left empty handed on Judgement Day.

One must understand the temporal nature of this world and their lifespan in order to avoid this outcome.

When people, irrespective of their faith, go on holiday they only pack the things they need and maybe a little extra but they try to avoid over packing. Even the amount of money they take with them they limit in respect to their stay abroad. When they arrive they often stay in a hotel which usually has the main necessities of living with a few extras. If they believe they will never return to the same destination in the future they will never buy a house as they will claim they stay is short and they will not return. They do not get a job during their holiday claiming that they stay is short so they do not need to earn more money. They do not get married nor have children

claiming the holiday destination is not their homeland where they would get married and have children. Generally speaking, this is the attitude and mind-set of holiday makers.

It is strange how muslims truly believe they will depart from this world soon meaning, they stay in the world is temporary just like being on holiday, and they believe their stay in the hereafter will be permanent yet, they do not adequately prepare for it. If they truly realised the short time they have, similarly to a holiday, they would not dedicate too much effort on their homes and instead be content with a simple home just like the traveller who is content with a simple hotel. So in reality, this world is like the holiday destination in the example yet, muslims do not treat it like one. Instead, they dedicate the majority of their efforts in beautifying their world while neglecting the eternal hereafter. It is sometimes hard to believe some muslims actually believe in the permanent hereafter when one observes the amount of effort they dedicate to the temporal world. Muslims should therefore strive in preparing for the hereafter by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience while being pleased with obtaining and utilising the necessities of this world. It is why the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised muslims to live in this world as travellers in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6416. They should not take this world as a permanent home and instead treat it like a holiday destination.

“Know that the life of this world is but amusement and diversion and adornment and boasting to one another and competition in increase of wealth and children - like the example of a rain whose [resulting] plant growth pleases the tillers; then it dries and you see it turned yellow; then it becomes [scattered] debris... And what is the worldly life except the enjoyment of delusion.”

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One must understand the temporal nature of this world and their lifespan in order to avoid this outcome.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6412, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that there are two blessings people often do not appreciate until they lose them namely, good health and free time.

Everything in this material can be bought, even through illegal means, except time. Once it passes it does not return. Even though this reality is not denied by anyone irrespective of their faith yet, many muslims do not appreciate and make good use of the time they have been given. Many have adopted the mentality that they will prepare for the hereafter tomorrow. But as each day passes this tomorrow keeps getting delayed until, in many cases, this tomorrow never comes. And they only realise this tomorrow when it is too late meaning, at the time of their death. Those who are fortunate enough to reach this tomorrow during their lives may inhabit the Mosques when they reach elderly age but as they have dedicated so much time and energy to the material world their bodies might be in Mosques yet, their hearts and tongues are still engrossed in the material world. This is obvious to those who regularly attend Mosques. These muslims are unlikely to learn and act on Islamic teachings because of their elderly age and their worldly mentalities.

In addition, with the passing of time, in most cases, one's responsibilities only increase such as marriage and raising children. So delaying preparing for the hereafter until one is supposedly more free is simply foolish. Islam does not teach muslims to abandon the world but it does encourage them to make correct use of their time by taking enough from the material world in order to fulfil their necessitates and responsibilities without extravagance or waste and then dedicate the rest of their efforts to preparing for the permanent hereafter. This is how one uses their time correctly. How many muslims can honestly say they dedicate the majority of their efforts to preparing for the hereafter over beautifying their temporal world?

“...And in the Hereafter is severe punishment...”

The Sun will be brought within two miles of the creation on the Day of Judgment. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 2864.

This will cause people to sweat according to the deeds they performed during their lives on Earth. Some people's sweat will reach up to their ankles, some their knees and for others it will reach their mouths.

One only needs to ponder over the times they were subjected to intense summer weather and how the heat affected their attitude and behaviour. Through this one can imagine how difficult the situation on Judgment Day will be when the Sun is brought so close to them. This shows that those who strive hard and exert sincere efforts in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, will find relaxation on Judgment Day. But those who were lazy and relaxed during their lives on Earth will be subjected to great stress on Judgment Day. Simply put, the one who strives here will relax there but the one who relaxes here will strive there in difficulty.

The same way people strive hard in this material world so that they obtain a comfortable life and even a comfortable retirement, even though reaching this retirement age is not guaranteed, muslims should strive even harder in this world by obeying Allah, the Exalted, in all aspects of

their life so that they can obtain peace and comfort on a day that is guaranteed to occur. It is a sign of great ignorance to strive for a day one may never reach namely, the day of retirement, and not strive for a day they are guaranteed to reach and experience namely, Judgment Day.

“...And in the Hereafter is severe punishment...”

People will be commanded to cross the Bridge which will be placed over Hell on the Day of Judgment. This has been discussed extensively in Islamic teachings, such as the Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6573. It warns that extremely large hooks will be on the Bridge which will affect people according to their deeds. Some will be flung into Hell by them, some will be subjected to great torture before they cross the Bridge, others will only face minimal injury from them and finally the righteous will not be harmed by them. Another Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 455, warns that the Bridge is narrower than a strand of hair and sharper than a sword.

The important thing to learn from this is that each person will cross the Bridge according to their deeds. So it is important for Muslims not to neglect any duties if they desire to cross the Bridge safely. They must fulfil the commands of Allah, the Exalted, and refrain from His prohibitions. These include duties in respect to Allah, the Exalted, and people. One should not neglect this and simply hope they will magically cross the Bridge unaffected.

In addition, the ease at which a person will cross this Bridge will be a mirror of how much they remained steadfast on the straight path of Islam in this world. This straight path is the path of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 31:

“Say, [O Muhammad], “If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins...”

Anyone who abandons this path will not successfully cross this Bridge. Simply put, the more one remains steadfast on the straight path in this world the easier they will cross the Bridge over Hell on Judgment Day. The straight path has been made clear in this world so muslims are left with no excuses from following it thereby ensuring they safely cross the Bridge on Judgment Day.

“...And in the Hereafter is severe punishment...”

The thing to remember is that in reality each person who will end up in Hell takes the fire, which they will encounter in Hell, with them from this world in the form of their sins. When a muslim engraves this reality into their mind they will observe each sin, major or minor, as a piece of unbearable fire. The same way a person avoids fire in this world they should avoid sins as in reality sins are like hidden fire which will be shown to them in the hereafter.

In addition, a muslim should not live in heedlessness and believe they can simply claim love for Allah, the Exalted, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, without supporting this verbal declaration with actions. If this was true then the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, would not have strived so hard in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, and they undoubtedly understood Islam and Judgment Day better than the people after them. Simply put, a declaration of love without actions will not save one from Hell. In fact, it has been made clear that some muslims will enter Hell on Judgment Day. The muslim who abandons acting on Islamic teachings should understand that their attitude may cause them to lose their faith before their death so that they enter Judgment Day as a non-muslim, which is the greatest loss.

The same way one would not enter a battle without armour and a shield a muslim should not enter Judgment Day without the armour and shield of righteous deeds. Otherwise, the same way the soldier who has no protection will most likely be harmed so will a muslim who reaches

Judgment Day without the protection provided by the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, which involves fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience. A muslim should remember that the luxuries and pleasures of the material world they enjoyed will not make them feel better if they end up in Hell. In fact, it will only make them feel worse.

“...And in the Hereafter is...forgiveness from Allāh...”

Allah, the Exalted, conceals and covers the faults of His repentant servants without punishing them or holding it against them in anyway.

A muslim should therefore never lose hope in the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, as this leads to unbelief. Chapter 12 Yusuf, verse 87:

“...and despair not of relief from Allah. Indeed, no one despairs of relief from Allah except the disbelieving people.”

A muslim should understand that the forgiveness of Allah, the Exalted, is unlimited while their sins will always be limited. The limited can never overcome the unlimited. But it is important to note this applies to the one who repents sincerely not the person who continues sinning believing they will be forgiven. This is merely wishful thinking not true hope in the forgiveness of Allah, the Exalted. Sincere repentance involves feeling remorse, seeking forgiveness from Allah, the Exalted, and if necessary from people, sincerely promising to refrain from the same or similar sin again and making up for any rights which have been violated in respect to Allah, the Exalted, and people.

Muslims should act on this blessed divine name by overlooking and forgiving the mistakes of others. It is logical to understand that if one

desires the forgiveness of Allah, the Exalted, they should learn to forgive others. Chapter 24 An Nur, verse 22:

“...and let them pardon and overlook. Would you not like that Allah should forgive you? And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.”

“...And in the Hereafter is...from Allāh and approval...”

It is important to note, one will gain the approval of Allah, the Exalted, when they approve and are content with His decrees.

It is important for muslims to understand a simple thing which can aid them with patiently facing destiny and the difficulties it brings. A person happily takes a bitter medicine which their doctor prescribes fully trusting in their knowledge, experience and choice all the while believing that their doctor knows what is best for them. This is true even though they are only human and prone to errors. Yet, many muslims fail to place this same level of trust in Allah, the Exalted, even though His knowledge is infinite and His choices always the wisest. Muslims should try to accept destiny and the troubles it brings just like they take the bitter medicine without complaining knowing it is best for them. They should understand that the troubles and difficulties they face are best for them even if they do not understand or observe the wisdoms in them just like they do not understand the science behind the bitter medicine they happily take. Even though in most cases, they will never understand the science behind the bitter medicine they take a time will certainly come, whether in this world or in the hereafter, when the wisdom behind the bitter difficulties they faced will be revealed to them. So a muslim should anticipate this time patiently knowing all will be revealed shortly. Pondering deeply over this can increase one's patience when dealing with difficulties. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

“...And in the Hereafter is...from Allāh and approval...”

It is important to note, one will gain the approval of Allah, the Exalted, when they approve and are content with His decrees.

Parents often take away things or prevent their children from obtaining certain things such as unhealthy food in order to protect them. This behaviour often causes the child to become sad or angry as they are completely unaware of the wisdom behind the actions of their parent. This parental behaviour is something which is widely accepted in society and is rightfully believed to be a characteristic of a good and responsible parent. Similarly, in life people often lose or are prevented from obtaining certain worldly things by Allah, the Exalted. A muslim must understand that the same way parents keep harmful things away from their children even though their children do not understand the reason behind their choice similarly Allah, the Exalted, acts in this manner according to His infinite wisdom and knowledge in order to protect His servants even if people do not understand the wisdom behind His choices. Therefore, every time a muslim finds themselves in this situation they should reflect on this simple example, which no one would reject irrespective of their faith, so that they are inspired to remain patient and show gratitude for the divine protection Allah, the Exalted, has granted them. They should not act like an immature child by becoming angry and impatient as adults are meant to behave better than children. In fact, children are excused from behaving in such a manner as they lack knowledge and experience whereas adults should not lack this and will therefore be held accountable for their behaviour in both worlds.

“...And in the Hereafter is...from Allāh and approval...”

It is important to note, one will gain the approval of Allah, the Exalted, when they approve and are content with His decrees.

Often when muslims receive blessings especially, beyond their need, it distracts them from the hereafter and instead focuses their minds on this material world. So in this respect, the wisdom behind a difficulty is to refocus a muslim's attention on what is truly important which is preparing for the hereafter. This is like a person who is so preoccupied with their phone that they cross a road without seeing an oncoming vehicle. Another person violently pulls them away from the oncoming car which causes them distress yet, saves their life. Even though being pulled violently causes distress and even pain but it is only done in order to refocus their attention on the life threatening danger namely, the oncoming car. Similarly, a muslim faces emotional and physical difficulties in order to refocus their attention on more important things such as the hereafter. If a muslim was left to only face times of ease without difficulties there is no doubt that they would become lost in enjoying the excess of this material world. This neglect in the long run would be disastrous for them. So they face a small difficulty in order to protect them from greater difficulties namely, the difficulties of the hereafter. Therefore, muslims should remember this truth every time they face a difficulty so that they leave the difficulty refocused on more important things and act correctly over this blessing instead of demonstrating impatience and heedlessness to this vital benefit. This is in fact one of the biggest favours of Allah, the Exalted.

“...And in the Hereafter is...from Allāh and approval...”

It is important to note, one will gain the approval of Allah, the Exalted, when they approve and are content with His decrees. The prove of this is remaining sincerely obedient to Allah, the Exalted, in both times of ease and difficulty.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 7500, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that every situation is blessed for a believer. The only condition is that they need to respond to each situation they encounter while obeying Allah, the Exalted, specifically, patience in difficulties and gratitude in times of ease.

There are two aspects of life. One aspect are the situations people find themselves in whether they are times of ease or difficulties. The control of what situation a person faces is out of their hands. Allah, the Exalted, has decided this and there is no escaping them. Therefore, stressing over the situations one faces does not make sense as they are destined and therefore inevitable. The other aspect is a person's reaction to each situation. This is in each person's control and this is what they are judged on for example, showing patience or impatience in a difficult situation. Therefore, a muslim must concentrate on their behaviour and reaction in each situation instead of stressing over being in a situation as this is unavoidable. If a muslim desires to succeed in both worlds they should assess each situation and always act in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted. For example, in times of ease they must use the blessings they possess as prescribed by Islam which is true gratitude to Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 14 Ibrahim, verse 7:

“And [remember] when your Lord proclaimed, 'If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favor]...”

And in times of difficulty they must show patience knowing Allah, the Exalted, chooses what is best for His servants even if they do not understand the wisdom behind the choices. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

“...And in the Hereafter is severe punishment and forgiveness from Allāh and approval...”

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 7232, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that people will be resurrected on Judgment Day in the same state they died on Earth.

This means that if a person dies on good they will be resurrected on good. But if they die on evil they will be raised in an evil way.

A muslim should not live in heedlessness by believing just because they have faith in Islam it guarantees they will die and therefore be raised in a good state on Judgment Day. If they persist on the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted, and then die in this state without sincerely repenting then they will be raised in an evil way. It does not take a scholar to determine what will happen to this person on Judgment Day.

From this Hadith one can understand that the way they will die will be in the same state they have lived. Meaning, if they lived in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by sincerely fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, then they will die in a good state and therefore be raised in a good state which includes being raised with the righteous as they practically followed in their footsteps. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 3688.

A muslim should therefore not walk the path to Hell by disobeying Allah, the Exalted, and believe that they will somehow be raised with the pious and end up in Paradise.

“...And in the Hereafter is severe punishment and forgiveness from Allāh and approval...”

In a long divine Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 7405, Allah, the Exalted, advises that He acts and treats His servant according to their perception of Him. This means if a muslim has good thoughts and expects good from Allah, the Exalted, He in turn will not disappoint them. Similarly, if a person harbours negative thoughts about Allah, the Exalted, such as believing they will not be forgiven then Allah, the Exalted, may act according to their belief.

It is important to note, there is a vast difference between true hope in Allah, the Exalted, which this Hadith refers to and wishful thinking. Wishful thinking is when one fails to strive in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience and then expects Allah, the Exalted, to forgive them. This is not true hope it is merely wishful thinking. This is like a farmer who fails to plant any seeds, fails to water their crop and still hopes to reap a large harvest. True hope is when one strives to obey Allah, the Exalted, and whenever they slip up they sincerely repent and then hope for the mercy and forgiveness of Allah, the Exalted. This is like a farmer who plants seeds, waters their crop, dedicates effort to keeping the crop healthy and then hopes for a large harvest. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has summarised this explanation in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2459.

Generally speaking, a muslim should harbour more fear of Allah, the Exalted, during their life as it prevents sins which is superior to hope

which inspires one to perform righteous deeds especially, the voluntary type. But during periods of illness and difficulty and especially at the time of death a muslim should have nothing but hope in the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, even if they have spent their life disobeying Him as this has specifically been commanded by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 2877.

***“...And what is the worldly life except the enjoyment of delusion.
Race [compete] toward forgiveness from your Lord...”***

In a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 1081, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised muslims how to gain blessings in their provision, divine support and an improvement in their condition and state.

The first thing is to sincerely repent to Allah, the Exalted, before one dies. As the time of death is unknown this Hadith actually indicates sincerely repenting whenever one commits a sin meaning, repenting without delay. This consists of seeking forgiveness from Allah, the Exalted, and whoever else has been wronged, feeling regret, making a firm promise not to commit the same or a similar sin again. And finally, if possible, to make up for any rights which have been violated in respect to Allah, the Exalted, and people.

***“...And what is the worldly life except the enjoyment of delusion.
Race [compete] toward forgiveness from your Lord...”***

In a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4251, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that people commit sins but the best person who commits sins is the one who sincerely repents.

As people are not Angels they are bound to commit sins. The thing that makes these people special is when they sincerely repent from their sins. Sincere repentance includes feeling remorse, seeking the forgiveness of Allah, the Exalted, and anyone who has been wronged, making a firm promise not to commit the sin or a similar sin again and making up for any rights which have been violated in respect to Allah, the Exalted, and people.

It is important to note, minor sins can be erased through righteous deeds which has been advised in many Hadiths, such as the one found in Sahih Muslim, number 550. It advises that the five daily obligatory prayers and two consecutive Friday congregational prayers erase the minor sins committed in between them as long as major sins are avoided.

Major sins are only erased through sincere repentance. Therefore, a muslim should strive to avoid all sins, minor and major, and if they happen to occur to immediately sincerely repent as the time of death is unknown. And they should continue obeying Allah, the Exalted, by

fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience.

“...And what is the worldly life except the enjoyment of delusion. Race [compete] toward forgiveness from your Lord and a Garden whose width is like the width of the heavens and earth...”

These verses are connected to chapter 47 Muhammad, verse 7:

“O you who have believed, if you support Allah, He will support you and plant firmly your feet.”

This verse means that if one aids Islam then Allah, the Exalted, will help them in both worlds. It is strange how countless people desire the help of Allah, the Exalted, yet do not fulfil the first part of this verse through the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience. The excuse most people give is that they do not have time to perform righteous deeds. They desire the help of Allah, the Exalted, yet will not make time to do the things which please Him. Does this make sense? Those who do not fulfil the obligatory duties and then expect the aid of Allah, the Exalted, in their moment of need are quite foolish. And those who do fulfil the obligatory duties yet refuse to go beyond them will find that the aid they receive is limited. How one behaves is how they are treated. The more time and energy dedicated to Allah, the Exalted, the more support they will receive. It really is that simple.

A muslim needs to understand that the majority of the obligatory duties, such as the five daily prayers, only takes a small amount of time in one's day. A muslim cannot expect to barely dedicate an hour a day to offering the obligatory prayers and then neglect Allah, the Exalted, for the rest of the day and still expect His continuous support through all difficulties. A person would dislike a friend who treated them in such a manner. How then can one treat Allah, the Exalted, the Lord of the worlds, like this then?

Some only dedicate extra time to pleasing Allah, the Exalted, when they encounter a worldly problem then demand Him to fix it as if they done Allah, the Exalted, a favour by performing voluntary good deeds. This foolish mentality clearly contradicts servanthood to Allah, the Exalted. It is amazing how this type of person finds time to do all their other leisurely activities, such as spending time with family and friends, watching TV and attending social functions yet finds no time to dedicate to pleasing Allah, the Exalted. They cannot seem to find time to recite and adopt the teachings of the Holy Quran. They do not seem to find time to study and act on the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. These people somehow find wealth to spend on their unnecessary luxuries yet seem to find no wealth to donate in voluntary charity.

It is important to understand that a muslim will be treated according to how they behave. Meaning, if a Muslim dedicates extra time to please Allah, the Exalted, then they will find the support they need to journey through all difficulties safely. But if they fail to fulfil the obligatory duties or only fulfil them without dedicating any other time to pleasing Allah, the Exalted, then they will find a similar response from Allah, the Exalted. Put simply, the

more one gives the more they shall receive. If one does not give much they should not expect much in return.

“...And what is the worldly life except the enjoyment of delusion. Race [compete] toward forgiveness from your Lord and a Garden whose width is like the width of the heavens and earth...”

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 159, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, gave a short but far reaching piece of advice. He advised people to sincerely declare their belief in Allah, the Exalted, and then remain steadfast on it.

Remaining steadfast on one's faith means that they must strive in the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in all aspects of their life. It consists of fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, which relate to Him, such as the obligatory fasts and those which relate to people, such as treating others kindly. It includes refraining from all the prohibitions of Islam which are between a person and Allah, the Exalted, and those involving others. A muslim must also face destiny with patience truly believing Allah, the Exalted, chooses what is best for His servants. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

Steadfastness can include refraining from both types of polytheism. The major type is when one worships something other than Allah, the Exalted.

The minor type is when one shows off their good deeds to others. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3989. Therefore, an aspect of steadfastness is to always act for the sake of Allah, the Exalted.

It includes obeying Allah, the Exalted, at all times instead of obeying and pleasing oneself or others. If a Muslim disobeys Allah, the Exalted, by pleasing themselves or others they should know neither their desires nor people will protect them from Allah, the Exalted. On the other hand, the one who is sincerely obedient to Allah, the Exalted, will be protected from all things by Him even if this protection is not apparent to them.

Remaining steadfast on one's faith includes following the path set out by the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and not adopting a path which deviates from this. The one who strives to adopt this path will not need anything else as this is enough to keep them steadfast on their faith.

As people are not perfect they will undoubtedly make mistakes and commit sins. So being steadfast in matters of faith does not mean one has to be perfect but it means they must strive to adhere strictly to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, as outlined earlier, and to sincerely repent if they commit a sin. This has been indicated in chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 6:

“...so take a straight course to Him and seek His forgiveness...”

This is further supported by a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1987, which advises to fear Allah, the Exalted, and to erase a (minor) sin which has occurred by performing a righteous deed. In another Hadith found in Imam Malik's Muwatta, book 2, Hadith number 37, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised muslims to try their best to remain steadfast on the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, even though they will not be able to do it perfectly. Therefore, a muslim's duty is to fulfil the potential they have been given through their intention and physical actions in the steadfast obedience of Allah, the Exalted. They have not been commanded to achieve perfection as this is not possible.

It is important to note, that one cannot remain steadfast in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, through their physical actions without purifying their heart first. As indicated in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3984, the limbs of the body will only act in a pure way if the spiritual heart is pure. Purity of heart is only achieved by gaining and acting on the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

Steadfast obedience requires one to control their tongue as it expresses the heart. Without controlling the tongue steadfast obedience to Allah, the Exalted, is not possible. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2407.

Finally, if any deficiency in the steadfast obedience of Allah, the Exalted, occurs one must make sincere repentance to Allah, the Exalted, and seek the forgiveness of people if it involves their rights. Chapter 46 Al Ahqaf, verse 13:

“Indeed, those who have said, “Our Lord is Allah,” and then remained on a right course - there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve.”

“...And what is the worldly life except the enjoyment of delusion. Race [compete] toward forgiveness from your Lord and a Garden whose width is like the width of the heavens and earth...”

Disbelief can be a literal rejecting of Islam or through actions, which involves disobeying Allah, the Exalted, even though one believes in Him. This can be clearly understood by an example. If an unaware person is warned by another of an approaching lion and the unaware person takes practical steps to obtain safety they will be considered someone who believed in the warning given to them as they adapted their behaviour based on the warning. Whereas, if the unaware person does not practically change their behaviour after being warned, people will suspect that they do not believe in the warning given to them even if the unaware person verbally claims belief in the warning given to them.

Some people claim that their belief and obedience to their God is in their hearts and they therefore do not need to demonstrate it practically. Unfortunately, this foolish mentality has infected many Muslims who believe they possess a pure faithful heart even though they fail to fulfil the obligatory duties of Islam. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has clearly declared in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3984, that when one's heart is pure the body becomes pure which means their actions become correct. But if one's heart is corrupt the body becomes corrupt which means their actions will be corrupt and incorrect. Therefore, the one who does not obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling their duties practically can never have a pure heart.

In addition, demonstrating one's faith in Allah, the Exalted, practically is their proof and evidence which is required on Judgment Day in order to be granted Paradise. Not having this practical evidence is as silly as a student who hands back a blank exam paper to their teacher claiming their knowledge is in their mind so they therefore do not need to write it down by answering the exam questions. The same way this student would undoubtedly fail so will a person who reaches Judgment Day without the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in the form of fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience, even if they possess faith in their heart.

“...And what is the worldly life except the enjoyment of delusion. Race [compete] toward forgiveness from your Lord and a Garden whose width is like the width of the heavens and earth...”

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2306, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised muslims to hasten in performing righteous deeds before seven things occur.

The first is overwhelming poverty. This can refer to financial difficulties which distract a person from the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, which involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience. In addition, stressing over wealth can even push one towards the unlawful. A muslim should remember that any righteous deed rooted in the unlawful will be rejected by Allah, the Exalted. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 2342. Allah, the Exalted, has allocated provision for the entire creation over fifty thousand years before He created the Heavens and the Earth according to a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6748. Therefore, a muslim should trust that their lawful provision will reach them as long as they continue to strive for it in lawful ways according to the teachings of Islam. A muslim should remember that Allah, the Exalted, chooses what is best for His servants according to His infinite wisdom. He does not give according to someone's desires as this will most likely lead to their destruction. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

And chapter 42 Ash Shuraa, verse 27:

“And if Allah had extended [excessively] provision for His servants, they would have committed tyranny throughout the earth. But He sends [it] down in an amount which He wills...”

The next thing mentioned in the main Hadith under discussion is that muslims should hasten in performing righteous deeds before they become distracted by wealth. Wealth itself is not evil but depending on how one obtains it and uses it can either make it a great blessing for them or a great burden for them in both worlds. If a muslim strives to obtain excess wealth while neglecting their duties to Allah, the Exalted, and people while hoarding or misspending their wealth it will become a great curse for them in both worlds. But if a muslim obtains enough to fulfill their needs and the needs of their dependents without excessiveness, waste or extravagance and spends in other ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, then they will achieve true richness in both worlds.

The next thing mentioned in the main Hadith under discussion which prevents righteous actions is a debilitating sickness. This is a warning to make use of one's good health before they encounter sickness. One should observe those who have lost their good health either through sickness or through ageing and therefore make use of the good health they possess by striving to gain success in lawful worldly matters as well as religious

matters while giving priority to religion over the world. For example, a muslim should use their good health to journey to the Mosques regularly in order to offer their obligatory prayers with congregation before a time comes when they desire to do this but do not possess the physical strength to do so. The amazing thing about utilizing one's good health correctly is that when a muslim eventually loses it Allah, the Exalted, will continue to grant them the same reward they used to receive when doing good deeds during their time of good health. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Imam Bukhari's, Adab Al Mufrad, number 500. But those who live in heedlessness fail to utilise their good health and therefore receive no reward during their good health or when they fall ill.

This is connected to the next thing mentioned in the main Hadith under discussion namely, senility. A muslim should make use of their youth and strong intelligence before they reach senility. This includes gaining and acting on knowledge and using one's mental strength to obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience. It is important to behave in this manner before senility occurs as even the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, sought refuge from senility in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6390.

The next thing mentioned in the main Hadith under discussion which prevents righteous actions is a sudden death. Death is certain but the time is unknown. A muslim should not live in heedlessness believing that their death is far away as countless people have and will die long before reaching their life expectancy. Nor should they live in such a way as if they are not going to die at all. Having hopes of a long life can be considered the root of all evil as it causes one to delay performing righteous deeds

believing they can always perform them tomorrow. It causes them to delay sincere repentance thereby, failing to change for the better believing they can do this tomorrow. And having hopes for a long life causes one to prioritize obtaining worldly things, such as wealth, in order to make their expected long life on this Earth comfortable. These prevent one from preparing adequately for the hereafter. Muslims should therefore reduce their hope for a long life so that they change for the better and direct their focus to the permanent hereafter. Muslims should not delay and instead act today as the tomorrow they hope for may never arrive. They should also strive to perform the righteous deeds which will benefit them in case their life ends unexpectedly, such as an ongoing charity, which benefits others as long as the thing is being used, such as a water well. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1376.

The next thing mentioned in the main Hadith under discussion is the arrival of the anti-Christ. This event will prevent one from performing righteous deeds and instead tempt them towards disbelief. One lesson to learn from this is the importance of avoiding doubtful things. Just like a person who journeys close to a border is more likely to cross it similarly, a muslim who is surrounded by temptations will more likely be led astray and fail to perform righteous deeds. The one who avoids places and things which tempt them to commit sins will protect their faith and honour. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1205. Muslims should therefore guard their faith by avoiding things, places and the people who invite or tempt them towards the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted, and ensure their dependents, such as their children, do the same.

The final thing mentioned in the main Hadith under discussion which prevents one from performing righteous deeds is the Final Hour.

This is when the trumpet blast will occur. The trumpet blast will lead to the death of the creation. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 7381. The important thing to learn is that this is a call which no one can or will reject responding to. It will lead to the resurrection and final judgment. Therefore, muslims should respond to the call of Allah, the Exalted, through the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, through sincere obedience by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 8 An Anfal, verse 24:

“O you who have believed, respond to Allah and to the Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life...”

Whoever responds to this call in this world will find the final call easy to endure and respond to. Whereas, the one who lives heedless to the call of Allah, the Exalted, in this world will not find peace in this world and they will be forced to answer the call of the trumpet which will be a great burden for them to endure and respond to. A person can only ignore the call of Allah, the Exalted, for so long as the final call will occur, sooner or later, and no one will be able to avoid or ignore it. If this is inevitable it makes sense that one respond to it now, today, instead of living in heedlessness. If one hears the trumpet blast while heedless no action or regret will benefit them and what comes after for this person will be even more terrifying.

“...And what is the worldly life except the enjoyment of delusion. Race [compete] toward forgiveness from your Lord and a Garden whose width is like the width of the heavens and earth, prepared for those who believed in Allāh and His messengers...”

True belief involves sincerity. In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim number 196, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that Islam is sincerity towards Allah, the Exalted, His book, meaning, the Holy Quran and to the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

Sincerity towards Allah, the Exalted, includes fulfilling all the duties given by Him in the form of commands and prohibitions, solely for His pleasure. As confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1, all will be judged by their intention. So if one is not sincere towards Allah, the Exalted, when performing good deeds they will gain no reward in this world or in the next. In fact, according to a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3154, those who performed insincere deeds will be told on Judgement Day to seek their reward from those who they acted for, which will not be possible. Chapter 98 Al Bayyinah, verse 5.

"And they were not commanded except to worship Allah, [being] sincere to Him in religion....."

If one is lax in fulfilling their duties towards Allah, the Exalted, it proves a lack of sincerity. Therefore, they should sincerely repent and struggle to fulfil them all. It is important to bear in mind Allah, the Exalted, never burdens one with duties they cannot perform or handle. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 286.

"Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity...."

Being sincere towards Allah, the Exalted, means that one should always choose His pleasure over the pleasure of themselves and others. A Muslim should always give priority to those actions which are for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, over all else. One should love others and dislike their sins for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, and not for the sake of their own desires. When they help others or refuse to take part in sins it should be for the sake of Allah, the Exalted. The one who adopts this mentality has perfected their faith. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4681.

Sincerity towards the Holy Quran includes having deep respect and love for the words of Allah, the Exalted. This sincerity is proven when one fulfils the three aspects of the Holy Quran. The first is to recite it correctly and regularly. The second is to understand its teachings through a reliable source and teacher. The final aspect is to act on the teachings of the Holy Quran with the aim of pleasing Allah, the Exalted. The sincere muslim gives priority to acting on its teachings over acting on their desires which contradict the Holy Quran. Modelling one's character on the Holy Quran is the sign of true sincerity towards the book of Allah, the Exalted. This is the

tradition of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, which is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 1342.

The next thing mentioned in the main Hadith under discussion is sincerity towards the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This includes striving to acquire knowledge in order to act on his traditions. These traditions include the ones related to Allah, the Exalted, in the form of worship, and his blessed noble character towards the creation. Chapter 68 Al Qalam, verse 4:

"And indeed, you are of a great moral character."

It includes to accept his commands and prohibitions at all times. This has been made a duty by Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 59 Al Hashr, verse 7:

"...And whatever the Messenger has given you - take; and what he has forbidden you - refrain from..."

Sincerity includes to give priority to his traditions over the actions of anyone else as all paths to Allah, the Exalted, are closed except the path of the

Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 3
Alee Imran, verse 31:

"Say, [O Muḥammad], "If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins..."

One must love all those who supported him during his life and after his passing, whether they are from his Family or his Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all. Supporting those who walk on his path and teach his traditions is a duty on those who desire to be sincere to him. Sincerity also includes loving those who love him and disliking those who criticise him irrespective, of one's relationship with these people. This is all summarised in a single Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 16. It advises that a person cannot have true faith until they love Allah, the Exalted, and the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, more than the entire creation. This love must be shown through actions not just words.

“...And what is the worldly life except the enjoyment of delusion. Race [compete] toward forgiveness from your Lord and a Garden whose width is like the width of the heavens and earth, prepared for those who believed in Allāh and His messengers. That is the bounty of Allāh which He gives to whom He wills, and Allāh is the possessor of great bounty.”

Allah, the Exalted, is the One who is infinitely bountiful and bestows favours and blessings without recompense or external cause. He gives generously without being asked.

The muslim who understands this divine name will always seek bounty and blessings from Allah, the Exalted, as they know the Bestower loves to be asked. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3571. But it is important to note, the one who seeks bounty from the Bestower should know it is not gained through His disobedience. Any worldly blessings obtained through the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted, will only become a burden for its possessor in both worlds. A muslim should instead strive to obtain beneficial blessings from the Bestower by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience. When a muslim truly understands that all blessings have been given by the Bestower they will show true gratitude to Him. This is when one uses all the blessings they possess according to the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted. This leads to an increase in blessings. Chapter 14 Ibrahim, verse 7:

“And [remember] when your Lord proclaimed, 'If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favor]...”

A muslim should act on this divine name by bestowing the blessings they have been given to others for the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted. The one who gives to others will be given more than they could have ever imagined. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 245:

“Who is it that would loan Allah a goodly loan so He may multiply it for him many times over? And it is Allah who withholds and grants abundance, and to Him you will be returned.”

“...And what is the worldly life except the enjoyment of delusion. Race [compete] toward forgiveness from your Lord and a Garden whose width is like the width of the heavens and earth, prepared for those who believed in Allāh and His messengers. That is the bounty of Allāh which He gives to whom He wills, and Allāh is the possessor of great bounty.”

It is important to note, that one will only enter Paradise through the mercy of Allah, the Exalted. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 5673. This is because every righteous deed is only possible through the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, in the form of knowledge, inspiration, strength and opportunity to do the deed. This understanding prevents one from adopting pride which is vital to avoid as only an atom's worth of pride is needed to take a person to Hell. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 267.

In addition, a muslim must understand that this mercy of Allah, the Exalted, in the form of righteous deeds is in reality a light which one must gather in this world if they desire to obtain a guiding light in the hereafter. If a muslim lives in heedlessness and refrains from gathering this light in the world by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience then how can they expect to receive this guiding light in the hereafter?

All muslims desire to inhabit Paradise with the greatest servants of Allah, the Exalted, such as the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. But it is important to understand that simply wishing for this

without action will not make it come true otherwise the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, would have done this. Simply put, the more one strives in learning and acting on the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, the closer they will be to him in the hereafter.

The greatest blessing of Paradise is physically observing Allah, the Exalted, which is discussed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 7436. If a muslim desires to obtain this unimaginable blessing they must practically strive to achieve the level of excellence mentioned in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 99. This is when one performs actions, such as the prayer, as if they can observe Allah, the Exalted, overlooking them. This attitude ensures one's persistent and sincere obedience to Allah, the Exalted. It is hoped that the one who strives for this level of faith will receive the blessing of physically observing Allah, the Exalted, in the hereafter.

Parable 38

Chapter 59 – Al Hashr, Verse 21

لَوْ أَنْزَلْنَا هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ عَلَى جَبَلٍ لَرَأَيْتَهُ خَاشِعًا
مُتَصَدِّعًا مِّنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ وَتِلْكَ الْأَمْثَلُ نَضْرِبُهَا
لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢١﴾

“If We had sent down this Quran upon a mountain, you would have seen it humbled and splitting from fear of Allah. And these examples We present to the people that perhaps they will give thought.”

“If We had sent down this Quran upon a mountain, you would have seen it humbled and splitting from fear of Allah. And these examples We present to the people that perhaps they will give thought.”

This verse encourages people not to become heedless towards the Holy Quran so that they fail to be rightly guided by it. This is achieved when one fulfils its rights.

In a Hadith found in Imam Munzari's, Awareness and Apprehension, number 30, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that the Holy Quran will intercede on Judgment Day. Those who follow it during their lives on Earth will be led to Paradise on Judgment Day. But those who neglect it during their lives on Earth will find that it pushes them into Hell on Judgment Day.

The Holy Quran is a book of guidance. It is not merely a book of recitation. Muslims must therefore strive to fulfill all aspects of the Holy Quran to ensure that it guides them to success in both worlds. The first aspect is reciting it correctly and regularly. The second aspect is to understand it. And the final aspect is to act on its teachings according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Those who behave in such a manner are the ones who are given glad tidings of right guidance through every difficulty in this world and its intercession on the Day of Judgment. But as warned by this Hadith the Holy Quran is only guidance and a mercy for those who correctly act on its aspects according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. But those who misinterpret it and instead act according to their

desires in order to gain worldly things, such as fame, will be deprived of this right guidance and its intercession on Judgment Day. In fact, their complete loss in both worlds will only increase until they sincerely repent. Chapter 17 Al Isra, verse 82:

“And We send down of the Quran that which is healing and mercy for the believers, but it does not increase the wrongdoers except in loss.”

Finally, it is important to understand that even though the Holy Quran is a cure for worldly problems a muslim should not only use it for this purpose. Meaning, they should not only recite it in order to fix their worldly problems thereby, treating the Holy Quran like a tool which is removed during a difficulty and then placed back in a toolbox. The main function of the Holy Quran is to guide one to the hereafter safely. Neglecting this main function and only using it to fix one's worldly problems is not correct as it contradicts the behaviour of a true muslim. It is like the one who purchases a car with many different accessories yet, it possesses no engine. There is no doubt that this person is simply foolish.

“If We had sent down this Quran upon a mountain, you would have seen it humbled and splitting from fear of Allah. And these examples We present to the people that perhaps they will give thought.”

This verse encourages people not to become heedless towards the Holy Quran so that they fail to be rightly guided by it. The one who is unaffected by the Holy Quran possesses a spiritual heart harder than stone. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 74:

“Then your hearts became hardened after that, being like stones or even harder. For indeed, there are stones from which rivers burst forth, and there are some of them that split open and water comes out, and there are some of them that fall down for fear of Allāh...”

Therefore, one must ensure they avoid adopting a corrupt and hard spiritual heart.

The corruption and hardness of the spiritual heart is an extremely important matter which has been discussed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 52. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and, blessings be upon him, warned that when the spiritual heart becomes corrupt then the whole body becomes corrupt. This corruption is then reflected in one’s speech and actions. Similarly, the Holy Quran has highlighted the importance of a soft and sound heart by advising that one will not derive benefit from their

possessions or relatives on Judgment Day unless they possess a sound spiritual heart. Chapter 26 Ash Shu'ara, verses 88-89:

"The Day when there will not benefit [anyone] wealth or children. But only one who comes to Allah with a sound heart."

The one with a hard spiritual heart can be described as a person who rejects the truth when it is presented to them believing they are superior in knowledge. They lack submission and the fear of Allah, the Exalted, which leads to abandoning good deeds, committing sins, excessive love and striving for the material world while remaining heedless to preparing for the eternal hereafter. The hard hearted are easily influenced by the Devil into committing sins and rejecting good deeds. Chapter 22 Al Hajj, verse 53:

"[That is] so He may make what Satan throws in [i.e., asserts] a trial for those within whose hearts is disease and those hard of heart..."

Two specific blameworthy characteristics are adopted by the one who possesses a hard spiritual heart. They intentionally misinterpret divine scriptures in order to fulfil their own desires such as obtaining fame. They criticise those who strive to adhere to the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, as they desire people to follow their thinking and love for the material world. The second is that they cherry pick verses and Hadiths which suit their desires.

They label those who strive to adopt and act on all verses and Hadiths as extremists thereby making their own attitude seem pleasing to others. Chapter 5 Al Ma'idah, verse 13:

“So for their breaking of the covenant We cursed them and made their hearts hardened. They distort words from their [proper] places [i.e., usages] and have forgotten a portion of that of which they were reminded. And you will still observe deceit among them, except a few of them...”

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has warned that those who talk excessively without mentioning Allah, the Exalted, are prone to adopting a spiritual hard heart. The one who possesses a hard spiritual heart is furthest from Allah, the Exalted. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2411.

As mentioned earlier those who abandon the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, which involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience, will be cursed with a hard heart. Chapter 5 Al Ma'idah, verse 13:

“So for their breaking of the covenant We cursed them and made their hearts hardened...”

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2305, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that the one who laughs excessively will become hard hearted. It is important to understand this does not mean one cannot smile as this has been classified as an act of charity by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1970. Laughing excessively causes one to adopt a mentality whereby they only discuss funny issues. This causes one to avoid serious issues such as death and Judgment Day. If one avoids these important issues how can they prepare for them? A lack of preparation will lead to one's spiritual heart becoming hard.

Some say over eating can cause hardness of the spiritual heart. This is because over eating causes one to become lazy. Laziness leads to a reduction in good deeds which can cause the spiritual heart to become hard.

As warned by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3334, when a person sins a black spot is etched on their spiritual heart. If the number of sins increases then this blackness increases which leads to a hard spiritual heart. Chapter 83 Al Mutaffifin, verse 14:

“No! Rather, the stain has covered their hearts of that which they were earning.”

This is why it has been said persistently sinning can cause the spiritual heart to die.

It is important for muslims to strive to soften their heart as it leads to its purification. As advised by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 4094, when the spiritual heart is purified all the limbs of the body become purified also. This purification will encourage one to perform righteous deeds and abandon sins for the sake of Allah, the Exalted.

“If We had sent down this Quran upon a mountain, you would have seen it humbled and splitting from fear of Allah. And these examples We present to the people that perhaps they will give thought.”

This verse encourages people not to become heedless towards the Holy Quran so that they fail to be rightly guided by it. The one who is unaffected by the Holy Quran possesses a spiritual heart harder than stone. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 74:

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Therefore, one must ensure they avoid adopting a corrupt and hard spiritual heart.

It is important for muslims to strive to soften their heart as it leads to its purification. As advised by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 4094, when the spiritual heart is purified all the limbs of the body become purified also. This purification will encourage one to perform righteous deeds and abandon sins for the sake of Allah, the Exalted.

There are many ways to soften the spiritual heart, such as spending time remembering Allah, the Exalted, via the tongue and heart. It is important to involve one's heart by concentrating on what is being recited so that it can become softened. But even if one fails to constantly involve the heart they should never give up. As remembering Allah, the Exalted, only via the tongue is much better than not remembering Him at all. The most superior form of remembering Allah, the Exalted, is reciting the Holy Quran. In order for one to involve their heart in the recitation they should strive to understand what they are reciting by either learning Arabic or by studying the Holy Quran in a language they understand. Chapter 39 Az Zumar, verse 23:

“Allah has sent down the best statement: a consistent Book wherein is reiteration. The skins shiver therefrom of those who fear their Lord; then their skins and their hearts relax at the remembrance [i.e., mention] of Allah...”

The next action which can lead to a soft spiritual heart is being kind to the poor, such as poor orphans and widows. Aiding the poor reminds one of the countless blessings Allah, the Exalted, has bestowed on them. The fact that Allah, the Exalted, has made a person self-sufficient and the helper of others can soften the heart as long as the muslim has a good intention.

Pondering about death often can cause the spiritual heart to become soft. This is why the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon

him, advised in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4258, that muslims should often remember the destroyer of pleasures meaning, death. This will cause one to take things seriously as they know they must prepare for death and the hereafter. This preparation will lead to a soft spiritual heart.

Muslims can also soften their spiritual heart by visiting graves regularly. In fact, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 1569, that muslims should visit graves as it will remind them of the hereafter. But it is important to note, that this deed will only cause one's spiritual heart to become soft if they ponder over their death, grave and hereafter. Merely visiting graves will make a person's mood more serious but it will not soften their spiritual heart until this self-reflection is done.

Muslims can also contemplate on the past nations who were destroyed by Allah, the Exalted, because of their persistent disobedience. As discussed extensively throughout the Holy Quran and Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, the past nations were more powerful, lived longer and obtained more worldly blessings than the people of the modern world yet, as they disobeyed Allah, the Exalted, none of these things benefited them. Their massive and unparalleled empires faded away leaving only a few signs behind in order to warn those who came after them. When a muslim truly reflects on these things their spiritual heart will soften which will encourage them to prepare for the hereafter before their time runs out.

Muslims must strive to soften their hearts through the advice given. Only then will they be able to focus on the hereafter and adequately prepare for it. The person whose spiritual heart is cured of hardness becomes one whose heart is soft, pure and strong. This means that its purity recognises the difference between truth and falsehood. Its softness encourages the person to act on the truth. Its strength allows one to reject falsehood through struggle and effort. When all these combine within a person through the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, they will obtain success in this world and the next. Chapter 26 Ash Shu'ara, verses 88-89:

"The Day when there will not benefit [anyone] wealth or children. But only one who comes to Allah with a sound heart."

“...And these examples We present to the people that perhaps they will give thought.”

Ignorance prevents one from being positively affected by the examples given by Allah, the Exalted.

A great distraction which prevents one from submitting to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, is ignorance. It can be argued that it is the origin of every sin as the one who truly knows the consequences of sins would never commit them. This refers to true beneficial knowledge which is knowledge that is acted upon. In reality, all knowledge which is not acted on is not beneficial knowledge. The example of the one who behaves in this manner is described in the Holy Quran as a donkey which carries books of knowledge which do not benefit it. Chapter 62 Al Jumu'ah, verse 5:

“...and then did not take it on (did not act upon knowledge) is like that of a donkey who carries volumes [of books]...”

A person who acts on their knowledge rarely slips up and commits sins intentionally. In fact, when this occurs it is only caused by a moment of ignorance where a person forgets to act on their knowledge which results in them sinning.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, once highlighted the seriousness of ignorance in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2322. He declared that everything in the material world is cursed except for the remembrance of Allah, the Exalted, whatever is connected to this remembrance, the scholar and the student of knowledge. This means that all the blessings in the material world will become a curse for the one who is ignorant as they will misuse them thereby committing sins.

In fact, ignorance can be considered a person's worse enemy as it prevents them from protecting themselves from harm and gaining benefit all of which can only be achieved through acting on knowledge. The ignorant commits sins without being aware of them. How can one avoid a sin if they do not know what is considered a sin? Ignorance causes one to neglect their obligatory duties. How can one fulfil their duties if they are unaware of what their duties are?

It is therefore a duty on all Muslims to gain enough knowledge to fulfil all their obligatory duties and avoid sins. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224.

“...And these examples We present to the people that perhaps they will give thought.”

Ignorance prevents one from being positively affected by the examples given by Allah, the Exalted. Therefore, one must gain and act on Islamic knowledge in order to obtain certainty of faith.

All muslims have faith in Islam but the strength of their faith varies from person to person. For example, the one who follows the teachings of Islam because their family told them to is not the same as the one who believes in it through evidence. A person who has heard about something will not believe in it in the same way as the one who has witnessed the thing with their own eyes.

As confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224, gaining useful knowledge is a duty on all muslims. One of the reasons for this is that it is the best way a muslim can strengthen their faith in Islam. This is important to pursue as the stronger one's certainty of faith the greater the chance they will remain steadfast on the correct path, especially when facing difficulties. In addition, having certainty of faith has been described as one of the best things one can possess in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3849. This knowledge should be obtained by studying the Holy Quran and the Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, through a reliable source.

Allah, the Exalted, did not only declare a truth in the Holy Quran but He also provided evidence for it through examples. Not only examples which are to be found in the past nations but examples which have been placed in one's very own life. For example, in the Holy Quran Allah, the Exalted, advises that sometimes a person loves a thing even though it will cause them trouble if they obtained it. Similarly, they might hate a thing while there is much hidden good in it for them. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

There are many examples of this truth in history such as the Pact of Hudaiba. Some muslims believed this pact, which was made with the non-muslims of Mecca, would completely favour the latter group. Yet, history clearly shows that it favoured Islam and the muslims. This event is discussed in the Hadiths found in Sahih Bukhari, numbers 2731 and 2732.

If one reflects on their own life they will find many examples when they believed something was good when it was actually bad for them and vice versa. These examples prove the authenticity of this verse and help one's faith strengthen.

Another example is found in chapter 79 An Naziat, verse 46:

“It will be, on the Day they see it (Judgement Day) as though they had not remained [in the world] except for an afternoon or a morning thereof.”

If one turns the pages of history they will clearly observe how great empires came and went. But when they left they passed away in such a way as if they were only on Earth for a moment. All but a few of their signs have faded away as if they were never present on Earth in the first place. Similarly, when one reflects on their own life they will realise that no matter how old they are and no matter how slow certain days might have felt overall their life so far has passed in a flash. Understanding the truthfulness of this verse strengthens one's certainty of faith and this inspires them to prepare for the hereafter before their time runs out.

The Holy Quran and the Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, are full of such examples. Therefore, one should strive to learn and act on these divine teachings so that they adopt certainty of faith. The one who achieves this will not be shaken by any difficulty they face and will remain steadfast on the path which leads to the gates of Paradise. Chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 53:

“We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth...”

Parable 39

Chapter 62 – Al Jumu'ah, Verse 5

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ حُمِّلُوا التَّوْرَةَ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَحْمِلُوهَا كَمَثَلِ
الْحِمَارِ يَحْمِلُ أَسْفَارًا بِئْسَ مَثَلُ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا
بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٥﴾

“The example of those who were entrusted with the Torah and then did not take it on is like that of a donkey who carries volumes [of books]. Wretched is the example of the people who deny the signs of Allah. And Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people.”

“The example of those who were entrusted with the Torah and then did not take it on is like that of a donkey who carries volumes [of books]. Wretched is the example of the people who deny the signs of Allah...”

They failed to fulfil the rights of the Torah. Muslims must avoid following in their footsteps and instead fulfil the rights of the Holy Quran.

In a Hadith found in Imam Munzari's, Awareness and Apprehension, number 30, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that the Holy Quran will intercede on Judgment Day. Those who follow it during their lives on Earth will be led to Paradise on Judgment Day. But those who neglect it during their lives on Earth will find that it pushes them into Hell on Judgment Day.

The Holy Quran is a book of guidance. It is not merely a book of recitation. Muslims must therefore strive to fulfill all aspects of the Holy Quran to ensure that it guides them to success in both worlds. The first aspect is reciting it correctly and regularly. The second aspect is to understand it. And the final aspect is to act on its teachings according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Those who behave in such a manner are the ones who are given glad tidings of right guidance through every difficulty in this world and its intercession on the Day of Judgment. But as warned by this Hadith the Holy Quran is only guidance and a mercy for those who correctly act on its aspects according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. But those who misinterpret it and instead act according to their

desires in order to gain worldly things, such as fame, will be deprived of this right guidance and its intercession on Judgment Day. In fact, their complete loss in both worlds will only increase until they sincerely repent. Chapter 17 Al Isra, verse 82:

“And We send down of the Quran that which is healing and mercy for the believers, but it does not increase the wrongdoers except in loss.”

Finally, it is important to understand that even though the Holy Quran is a cure for worldly problems a muslim should not only use it for this purpose. Meaning, they should not only recite it in order to fix their worldly problems thereby, treating the Holy Quran like a tool which is removed during a difficulty and then placed back in a toolbox. The main function of the Holy Quran is to guide one to the hereafter safely. Neglecting this main function and only using it to fix one's worldly problems is not correct as it contradicts the behaviour of a true muslim. It is like the one who purchases a car with many different accessories yet, it possesses no engine. There is no doubt that this person is simply foolish.

“The example of those who were entrusted with the Torah and then did not take it on is like that of a donkey who carries volumes [of books]. Wretched is the example of the people who deny the signs of Allah...”

They failed to fulfil the rights of the Torah. Muslims must avoid following in their footsteps and instead fulfil the rights of the Holy Quran. Failing to behave in this manner is a branch of denying the Holy Quran.

Disbelief can be a literal rejecting of Islam or through actions, which involves disobeying Allah, the Exalted, even though one believes in Him. This can be clearly understood by an example. If an unaware person is warned by another of an approaching lion and the unaware person takes practical steps to obtain safety they will be considered someone who believed in the warning given to them as they adapted their behaviour based on the warning. Whereas, if the unaware person does not practically change their behaviour after being warned, people will suspect that they do not believe in the warning given to them even if the unaware person verbally claims belief in the warning given to them.

Some people claim that their belief and obedience to their God is in their hearts and they therefore do not need to demonstrate it practically. Unfortunately, this foolish mentality has infected many Muslims who believe they possess a pure faithful heart even though they fail to fulfil the obligatory duties of Islam. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has clearly declared in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3984, that when one's heart is pure the body becomes pure

which means their actions become correct. But if one's heart is corrupt the body becomes corrupt which means their actions will be corrupt and incorrect. Therefore, the one who does not obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling their duties practically can never have a pure heart.

In addition, demonstrating one's faith in Allah, the Exalted, practically is their proof and evidence which is required on Judgment Day in order to be granted Paradise. Not having this practical evidence is as silly as a student who hands back a blank exam paper to their teacher claiming their knowledge is in their mind so they therefore do not need to write it down by answering the exam questions. The same way this student would undoubtedly fail so will a person who reaches Judgment Day without the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in the form of fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience, even if they possess faith in their heart.

“The example of those who were entrusted with the Torah and then did not take it on is like that of a donkey who carries volumes [of books]. Wretched is the example of the people who deny the signs of Allah...”

Another aspect of this is when one intentionally misinterprets and conceals divine knowledge for the sake of worldly gain.

In a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 253, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that the one who obtains religious knowledge in order to show off to scholars, argue with others or attract attention to themselves will go to Hell.

Even though, the foundation of all good in both worldly and religious matters is knowledge muslims must understand that knowledge will only benefit them when they firstly correct their intention. Meaning, they strive to obtain and act on knowledge in order to please Allah, the Exalted. All other reasons will only lead to a loss of reward and even punishment if a muslim fails to sincerely repent.

In reality, knowledge is like rain water which falls on different types of trees. Some trees grow by this water in order to benefit others such as a fruit tree. Whereas, other trees grow by this water and become a nuisance to others such as a thorny tree. Even though, the rain water is the same in both

cases but the outcome is very different. Similarly, religious knowledge is the same for people but if one adopts the incorrect intention then it will become a means of their destruction. Conversely, if one adopts the correct intention it will become a means of their salvation.

Muslims should therefore correct their intention in all matters as they will be judged on this. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1. And they should remember that one of the first people to enter Hell will be a scholar who only obtained knowledge in order to show off to others. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 4923.

To conclude, only obtaining and acting on useful knowledge with the correct intention is true beneficial knowledge.

Whoever conceals knowledge without a valid reason will be bridled with fire on Judgment Day. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2649. Therefore, muslims must share the useful knowledge their gain with others. It is simply foolish not to as this is one of the righteous deeds which will benefit a muslim even after they die. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 241. Those who hoarded knowledge were forgotten by history but those who shared it with others became known as the scholars and teachers of mankind.

“The example of those who were entrusted with the Torah and then did not take it on is like that of a donkey who carries volumes [of books]. Wretched is the example of the people who deny the signs of Allah...”

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 3267, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that the one who contradicts their own advice when commanding good and forbidding evil will be punished in Hell.

Instead of following in the footsteps of the righteous predecessors by advising only for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, many people advise for other reasons, such as to gain popularity and worldly things. For example, some scholars often strive to be in the spotlight of gatherings and events and are not pleased with a seat which is to one side as they desire a central seat. When their intention became like this Allah, the Exalted, removed the positive effect of their advice and thus they now have little positive influence over their listeners. They should have shown a practical example instead of saying one thing and doing another. This caused their advice to become ineffective.

Muslims should strive to always act on their own advice before commanding others to do so as behaving in this manner is hated by Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 61 As Saf, verse 3:

“Greatly hateful in the sight of Allah is that you say what you do not do.”

This does not mean one must become perfect before advising others as this is not possible. Instead, they should correct their intention and prove this through their actions by striving to act on their own advice before advising others. Only with this attitude will they avoid the punishment mentioned in this Hadith. The failure in acting on this principle has caused the advice of muslims to become ineffective even though the number of advisers has dramatically increased over the years.

“The example of those who were entrusted with the Torah and then did not take it on is like that of a donkey who carries volumes [of books]. Wretched is the example of the people who deny the signs of Allah. And Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people.”

This also means that they failed to accept the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and the Holy Quran, which the Torah commanded them to do.

The scholars from the people of the Book (Jews and Christians) living in Medina were fully aware of the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, as they had been described in their divine scriptures. Chapter 6 Al An'am, verse 20:

“Those to whom We have given the Scripture recognize it [the Holy Quran] as they recognize their [own] sons...”

And chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 146:

“Those to whom We gave the Scripture know him [Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him] as they know their own sons...”

It is important to note, that all the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, came with the same religion, Islam – submission to Allah, the Exalted. The only thing they differed in were smaller issues but their core and fundamental teachings were one in the same. As the Holy Quran was in harmony with the unaltered teachings of the previous divine scriptures there was no good reason why the people of the book should have rejected the Holy Quran and the one to whom it was given namely, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. In fact, it was more appropriate for them to accept Islam as the scholars of the people of the book possessed knowledge which allowed them to recognize the truth easily.

In addition, the fact that the Holy Quran confirmed the unaltered teachings of the previous divine scriptures meant that when one rejected the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, they were in essence rejecting their previous divine scriptures and their Holy Prophets, such as the Holy Prophet Musa, peace be upon them, also.

After all these signs verifying the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, many of the scholars of the people of the book still concealed and misinterpreted their divine teachings out of envy and fear of losing the social status and wealth they had obtained as leaders of their societies.

For example, in the ninth year after the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, migrated to Medina a delegation visited the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This Christian delegation did not accept Islam but agreed to a peace treaty with the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. When the delegation left Medina two brothers, Abu Haritha and Kurz Bin Alqama, were riding near each other. The mule of Abu Haritha stumbled and Kurz in frustration rebuked the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, indirectly. Abu Haritha in response rebuked him. When Kurz asked about his response Abu Haritha told him that the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, was undoubtedly the final Holy Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, they had been waiting for and who had been described in their divine scriptures. When Kurz asked him why he rejected Islam even though he knew it was the truth Abu Haritha replied that he did so because of the honor, wealth and authority their people had given them and he was afraid he would lose it all if he accepted Islam. This has been discussed in Imam Ibn Kathir's, the Life of the Prophet, Volume 4, Pages 75-76.

It is therefore vital for Muslims to avoid the excess love for wealth and social status. In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2376, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that craving for wealth and status is more destructive to one's faith than the destruction caused by two hungry wolves which are set free on a herd of sheep.

This shows that hardly any of a Muslim's faith remains secure if they crave after wealth and fame in this world just as hardly any of the sheep will be

saved from two hungry wolves. So this great similitude contains a severe warning against the evil of craving after excess wealth and social status in the world.

The first type of craving for wealth is when one has extreme love for wealth and strives without fatigue to acquire it through lawful means. To behave in such a manner is not the sign of wise person as a Muslim should firmly believe their provision is guaranteed to them and this allotment can never change. In fact, the provision of the creation was allocated over fifty thousand years before the creation of the Heavens and the Earth. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6748. This person will undoubtedly neglect their duties as they are too preoccupied with obtaining wealth. A body which is too busy acquiring wealth will never prepare adequately for the hereafter. In fact, this person will dedicate so much effort to acquiring wealth that they may not even get a chance to enjoy it. Instead, they will depart this world and leave it behind for other people to enjoy even though they will be held accountable for it. This person may acquire wealth lawfully but they will still not find peace of mind as no matter how much they obtain they will only desire more. This person is needy and therefore, a real pauper even if they possess much wealth.

The only craving which is beneficial is craving for accumulating true wealth namely, righteous deeds in order to prepare for one's day of return.

The second type of craving for wealth is similar to the first type but in addition to it this type of person acquires wealth through unlawful means and fails to fulfil the rights of people, such as the obligatory charity. The

Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has warned against this in many Hadiths. For example, in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6576, he warned that this attitude destroyed the past nations as they made unlawful things lawful, withheld the rights of others and killed others for the sake of excess wealth. This person strives for the wealth they are not entitled to which leads to countless major sins. When one adopts this attitude they become intensely greedy. As warned by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1961, the greedy person is far from Allah, the Exalted, far from Paradise, far from people and close to Hell. In fact, a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 3114, warns that extreme greed and true faith will never combine in the heart of a true Muslim.

If a Muslim adopts this type of craving then the extreme danger of it is clear even to an uneducated Muslim. It will destroy their faith until nothing except a little remains just like the main Hadith under discussion warns that this destruction to one's faith is more severe than the destruction caused by two hungry wolves which are let loose on a herd of sheep. This Muslim risks losing the little faith they possess at the moment of their death, which is the greatest loss. A person's craving for fame and status is arguably more destructive to one's faith than craving for excess wealth. A person will often spend their beloved wealth on obtaining fame and prestige.

It is rare for someone to obtain status and fame and still remain firm on the correct path whereby they prioritise the hereafter over the material world. In fact, a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6723, warns that a person who seeks status in society, such as leadership, will be left to deal with it themselves but if someone receives it without asking for it they will be aided by Allah, the Exalted, in remaining obedient to Him. This is the reason the

Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, would not appoint a person who requested to be appointed in a position of authority or even showed desire for it. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6923. Another Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 7148, warns that people will be keen to obtain status and authority but it will be a great regret for them on the Day of Judgment. This is a dangerous craving as it forces one to strive intensely to obtain it and then strive further in order to hold on to it even if it encourages them to commit oppression and other sins.

The worse type of craving for status is when one obtains this through religion. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has warned in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2654, that this person will go to Hell.

Therefore, it is safer for a Muslim to avoid the craving for excess wealth and high social status as they are two things which can lead to the destruction of their faith by distracting them from preparing adequately for the hereafter.

“...Wretched is the example of the people who deny the signs of Allah...”

The two greatest signs of Allah, the Exalted, are the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. One must avoid this behaviour by sincerely obeying and following them.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim number 196, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that Islam is sincerity towards the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

Sincerity towards the Holy Quran includes having deep respect and love for the words of Allah, the Exalted. This sincerity is proven when one fulfils the three aspects of the Holy Quran. The first is to recite it correctly and regularly. The second is to understand its teachings through a reliable source and teacher. The final aspect is to act on the teachings of the Holy Quran with the aim of pleasing Allah, the Exalted. The sincere muslim gives priority to acting on its teachings over acting on their desires which contradict the Holy Quran. Modelling one's character on the Holy Quran is the sign of true sincerity towards the book of Allah, the Exalted. This is the tradition of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, which is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 1342.

The next thing mentioned in the main Hadith under discussion is sincerity towards the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This includes striving to acquire knowledge in order to act on his traditions. These traditions include the ones related to Allah, the Exalted, in the form of worship, and his blessed noble character towards the creation. Chapter 68 Al Qalam, verse 4:

"And indeed, you are of a great moral character."

It includes to accept his commands and prohibitions at all times. This has been made a duty by Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 59 Al Hashr, verse 7:

"...And whatever the Messenger has given you - take; and what he has forbidden you - refrain from..."

Sincerity includes to give priority to his traditions over the actions of anyone else as all paths to Allah, the Exalted, are closed except the path of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 31:

"Say, [O Muḥammad], "If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins..."

One must love all those who supported him during his life and after his passing, whether they are from his Family or his Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all. Supporting those who walk on his path and teach his traditions is a duty on those who desire to be sincere to him. Sincerity also includes loving those who love him and disliking those who criticise him irrespective, of one's relationship with these people. This is all summarised in a single Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 16. It advises that a person cannot have true faith until they love Allah, the Exalted, and the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, more than the entire creation. This love must be shown through actions not just words.

“...And Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people.”

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 2447, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that oppression will become a darkness on the Day of Judgment.

This is vital to avoid as those who find themselves plunged in darkness are unlikely to find their way to Paradise. Only those who will be provided a guiding light will be able to do this successfully.

Oppression can take many forms. The first type is when one fails to fulfill the commands of Allah, the Exalted, and refrain from His prohibitions. Even though this has no effect on the infinite status of Allah, the Exalted, it will cause the person to become submerged into darkness in both worlds. According to a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4244, whenever a person commits a sin a black spot is etched on their spiritual heart. The more they sin the more their heart will become encompassed by darkness. This will prevent them from accepting and following true guidance in this world which will ultimately lead to darkness in the next world. Chapter 83 Al Mutaffifin, verse 14:

“No! Rather, the stain has covered their hearts of that which they were earning.”

The next type of oppression is when one oppresses themselves by not fulfilling the trust they have been granted by Allah, the Exalted, in the form of their body and other worldly blessings they possess. The greatest of which is one's faith. This must be protected and strengthened through gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge.

The final type of oppression is when one mistreats others. Allah, the Exalted, will not forgive these sins until the oppressor's victim forgives them first. As people are not so merciful this is unlikely to happen. Then justice will be established on Judgment Day where the oppressor's righteous deeds will be given to their victim and if necessary the victim's sins will be given to the oppressor. This may lead to the oppressor being hurled into Hell. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6579. One should therefore treat others how they wish to be treated by people. A muslim should avoid all forms of oppression if they desire a guiding light in this world and in the next.

“...And Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people.”

Allah, the Exalted, guides those who sincerely try to obey Him. But those who persistently disobey Him are left to wander blindly in misguidance. Therefore, it is vital for Muslims to sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, as persistent disobedience leads to corruption of the spiritual heart and one's actions.

This is similar to a person who is warned by a judge not to behave in an unlawful way but after the person persists on this behaviour the judge gives the order for them to be locked up in prison. Therefore, Allah, the Exalted, has not wronged them they have only wronged themselves.

But it is important to note that as being abandoned in misguidance is a spiritual thing and therefore hidden to mankind, it is important for Muslims not to assume certain people have reached this point. Instead they should think positively about all people and therefore sincerely practically aid them in reforming their belief and behaviour.

Allah, the Exalted, has created human beings with the best possible capabilities. He gave them knowledge and power to differentiate between good and evil and even placed in them an innate inclination to like what is good and to dislike and avoid what is evil. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2389. Allah, the Exalted, has also

granted mankind free will to choose between good and evil. This choice plays a role in enhancing or diminishing a person's natural faculties of reason. Chapter 91 Ash Shams, verses 9-10:

“He has succeeded who purifies it [the spiritual heart – the greatest faculty of reason]. And he has failed who instills it [with corruption].”

When a person chooses a path of goodness their natural potential develops and Allah, the Exalted, grants them further support in their efforts. Chapter 29 Al Ankabut, verse 69:

“And those who strive for Us - We will surely guide them to Our ways...”

But if one follows their evil desires and chooses the evil path gradually their spiritual hearts will become engrossed with darkness and no good will remain therein. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3334. If a person fails to repent then the main verse under discussion comes into effect. This person becomes so engrossed in evil that they find joy in their evil mentality and actions. They absolutely hate anything good.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 52, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that if one's spiritual heart is sound the whole body will become sound but if their spiritual heart is corrupt then the whole body will become corrupt.

First of all, this Hadith refutes the foolish belief where one claims to have a purified heart even though their speech and actions are bad. This is because what is inside will eventually manifest outwardly.

The purification of the spiritual heart is only possible when one eliminates evil characteristics from themselves and replaces them with good characteristics discussed in Islamic teachings. This is only possible when one learns and acts on Islamic teachings so that they can sincerely fulfill the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refrain from His prohibitions and face destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Behaving in this manner will lead to a purified spiritual heart. This purification will then reflect in the outward limbs of the body, such as one's tongue and eyes. Meaning, they will only use their organs in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. This is in fact a sign showing the love Allah, the Exalted, has for His righteous servant according to a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6502.

It is important to note, that this purification will guide one through all worldly difficulties successfully so that they achieve both worldly and religious success.

Parable 40

Chapter 66 – At Tahrim, Verse 10

ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا امْرَأَتَ نُوحٍ وَامْرَأَتَ
لُوطٍ كَانَتَا تَحْتَ عَبْدَيْنِ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا صَالِحَيْنِ
فَخَانَتَاهُمَا فَلَمْ يَغْنِيَا عَنْهُمَا مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا وَقِيلَ
ادْخُلَا النَّارَ مَعَ الدَّاخِلِينَ ﴿١٠﴾

“Allah presents an example of those who disbelieved: the wife of Noah and the wife of Lot. They were under two of Our righteous servants but betrayed them [in faith], so they [those prophets] did not avail them from Allah at all, and it was said, "Enter the Fire with those who enter."”

“Allah presents an example...”

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2645, that when Allah, the Exalted, desires to give someone good He provides them with Islamic knowledge.

There is no doubt that every muslim irrespective of the strength of their faith desires good in both worlds. Even though many muslims incorrectly believe that this good which they desire lies in fame, wealth, authority, companionship and their career this Hadith makes it crystal clear that true lasting good lies in gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge. It is important to note a branch of religious knowledge is useful worldly knowledge whereby one earns lawful provision in order to fulfil their necessities and the necessities of their dependents. Even though the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has pointed out where good lies yet it is a shame how many muslims do not place much value in this. They in most cases only strive to obtain the bare minimum of Islamic knowledge in order to fulfil their obligatory duties and fail to acquire and act on more such as the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Instead they dedicate their efforts on worldly things believing true good is found there. Many muslims fail to appreciate that the righteous predecessors had to journey for weeks on end just to learn a single verse or Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, whereas today one can study Islamic teachings without leaving their home. Yet, many fail to make use of this blessing given to the modern day muslims. Out of His infinite mercy Allah, the Exalted, through his Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has not only pointed out where true good lies but He has also

placed this good at one's finger tips. Allah, the Exalted, has informed mankind of where an eternal buried treasure is located which can solve all the problems they may encounter in both worlds. But muslims will only obtain this good once they struggle to acquire and act on it.

“Allah presents an example of those who disbelieved: the wife of Noah and the wife of Lot. They were under two of Our righteous servants but betrayed them [in faith], so they [those Prophets] did not avail them from Allah at all, and it was said, "Enter the Fire with those who enter."”

This verse indicates that a pious relationship will only benefit someone when they sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted.

In a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 5116, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, clearly warned that nobility does not lie in one's lineage as all people are the descendants of the Holy Prophet Adam, peace be upon him, and he was made of dust. Therefore, people should give up boasting about their relatives and lineage.

It is important to understand that even though some ignorant muslims have adopted the attitude of other nations by creating castes and sects thereby believing some people are superior to others based on these groups Islam declared a simple criterion for superiority namely, piety. Meaning, the more a muslim fulfills the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refrains from His prohibitions and faces destiny with patience the greater they are in rank in the sight of Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 49 Al Hujurat, verse 13:

“...Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you...”

This verse destroys all other standards which have been created by ignorant people such as one's race, ethnicity, wealth, gender or social status.

In addition, if a muslim is proud of a pious person in their lineage they should correctly demonstrate this belief by praising Allah, the Exalted, and following in their footsteps. Boasting about others without following in their footsteps will not help someone in either this world or the next. This has been made clear in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2945.

Finally, the one who is proud of others but fails to follow in their footsteps is indirectly dishonoring them as the outside world will observe their bad character and assume their righteous ancestor behaved in the same manner. These people should therefore strive harder in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, because of this reason. These are like those people who adopt the outward traditions and advice of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, such as growing a beard or wearing a scarf yet, fail to adopt his inner character. The outside world will only think negatively about the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, when they observe the bad character of these muslims.

“Allah presents an example of those who disbelieved: the wife of Noah and the wife of Lot. They were under two of Our righteous servants but betrayed them [in faith], so they [those Prophets] did not avail them from Allah at all, and it was said, "Enter the Fire with those who enter."”

This verse also indicates the importance of equality in Islam. No person is given preferential treatment over another.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6543, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that Allah, the Exalted, does not judge people based on their outward appearance or their wealth instead He observes and judges people's inward intention and their physical actions.

The first thing to note is that a muslim should always correct their intention when performing any deed as Allah, the Exalted, will only reward them when they perform righteous deeds for His sake. Those who perform deeds for the sake of other people and things will be told to gain their reward from those who they acted for on Judgment Day, which will not be possible. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3154.

In addition, this Hadith indicates the importance of equality in Islam. A person is not superior to others by worldly things such as their ethnicity or

wealth. Even though, many muslims have erected these barriers such as social castes and sects thereby believing some are better than others Islam has clearly rejected this concept and declared that in this respect all people are equal in the sight of Islam. The only thing which makes one muslim superior to another is their piety meaning, how much they fulfill the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refrain from His prohibitions and face destiny with patience. Chapter 49 Al Hujurat, verse 13:

“...Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you...”

A muslim should therefore busy themselves in obeying Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His rights and the rights of people and not believe that something they possess or belong to will somehow save them from punishment. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has made it clear in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6853, that the muslim who lacks in righteous deeds meaning, the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, will not be increased in rank because of their lineage. In reality, this applies to all worldly things such as wealth, ethnicity, gender or social brotherhoods and castes.

“Allah presents an example of those who disbelieved: the wife of Noah and the wife of Lot. They were under two of Our righteous servants but betrayed them [in faith], so they [those Prophets] did not avail them from Allah at all, and it was said, "Enter the Fire with those who enter."”

As they failed to show sincerity to their Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, they were doomed in both worlds. Muslims must avoid this attitude at all costs.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim number 196, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that Islam is sincerity towards the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This includes striving to acquire knowledge in order to act on his traditions. These traditions include the ones related to Allah, the Exalted, in the form of worship, and his blessed noble character towards the creation. Chapter 68 Al Qalam, verse 4:

"And indeed, you are of a great moral character."

It includes to accept his commands and prohibitions at all times. This has been made a duty by Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 59 Al Hashr, verse 7:

"...And whatever the Messenger has given you - take; and what he has forbidden you - refrain from..."

Sincerity includes to give priority to his traditions over the actions of anyone else as all paths to Allah, the Exalted, are closed except the path of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 31:

"Say, [O Muḥammad], "If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins..."

One must love all those who supported him during his life and after his passing, whether they are from his Family or his Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all. Supporting those who walk on his path and teach his traditions is a duty on those who desire to be sincere to him. Sincerity also includes loving those who love him and disliking those who criticise him irrespective, of one's relationship with these people. This is all summarised in a single Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 16. It advises that a person cannot have true faith until they love Allah, the Exalted, and the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, more than the entire creation. This love must be shown through actions not just words.

“Allah presents an example of those who disbelieved: the wife of Noah and the wife of Lot. They were under two of Our righteous servants but betrayed them [in faith], so they [those Prophets] did not avail them from Allah at all, and it was said, "Enter the Fire with those who enter."”

The thing to remember is that in reality each person who will end up in Hell takes the fire, which they will encounter in Hell, with them from this world in the form of their sins. When a muslim engraves this reality into their mind they will observe each sin, major or minor, as a piece of unbearable fire. The same way a person avoids fire in this world they should avoid sins as in reality sins are like hidden fire which will be shown to them in the hereafter.

In addition, a muslim should not live in heedlessness and believe they can simply claim love for Allah, the Exalted, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, without supporting this verbal declaration with actions. If this was true then the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, would not have strived so hard in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, and they undoubtedly understood Islam and Judgment Day better than the people after them. Simply put, a declaration of love without actions will not save one from Hell. In fact, it has been made clear that some muslims will enter Hell on Judgment Day. The muslim who abandons acting on Islamic teachings should understand that their attitude may cause them to lose their faith before their death so that they enter Judgment Day as a non-muslim, which is the greatest loss.

The same way one would not enter a battle without armour and a shield a muslim should not enter Judgment Day without the armour and shield of righteous deeds. Otherwise, the same way the soldier who has no protection will most likely be harmed so will a muslim who reaches Judgment Day without the protection provided by the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, which involves fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience. A muslim should remember that the luxuries and pleasures of the material world they enjoyed will not make them feel better if they end up in Hell. In fact, it will only make them feel worse.

“...They were under two of Our righteous servants...”

Righteousness cannot be achieved without gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge so that one can fulfill the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refrain from His prohibitions and face destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 35 Fatir, verse 28:

“...Only those fear Allah, from among His servants, who have knowledge...”

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2451, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon, advised that a muslim cannot become righteous until they avoid something which is not harmful to their religion out of caution that it will lead to something which is harmful. Therefore, an aspect of righteousness is to avoid things which are doubtful not just unlawful. This is because doubtful things takes a muslim one step closer to the unlawful and the closer one is to the unlawful the easier it is to fall into it. It is why a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1205, advises that the one who avoids unlawful and doubtful things will protect their religion and honor. If one observes those who have become misguided in society, in most cases, this occurred gradually not in one sudden step. Meaning, the person first indulged in doubtful things before falling into the unlawful. This is the reason why Islam stresses the need to avoid unnecessary and vain things in one's life as they can lead them to the unlawful. For example, vain and useless speech which is not classified sinful by Islam often leads to evil speech, such as backbiting, lying and

slander. If a person avoids the first step by not indulging in vain speech they will undoubtedly avoid evil speech. This process can be applied to all things which are vain, unnecessary and especially, doubtful.

“...They were under two [Prophets] of Our righteous servants...”

This verse also indicates the highest rank a person can reach namely, a sincere servant of Allah, the Exalted. If there was a greater rank than this Allah, the Exalted, would have referred to these two Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, with it. This has been supported by many Hadiths, such as the one found in Sahih Muslim, number 851, where the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, referred to himself as the servant of Allah, the Exalted, before declaring his Messengership. This is a clear lesson to all muslims that if they desire ultimate success and the highest ranks in both worlds they must become true servants of Allah, the Exalted. This is only achieved by following in the footsteps of the greatest servant of Allah, the Exalted, namely, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Servanthood is not possible to achieve any other way. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 31:

“Say, [O Muhammad], “If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins. And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.”

Parable 41

Chapter 66 – At Tahrim, Verse 11

وَضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا امْرَأَتَ فِرْعَوْنَ
إِذْ قَالَتْ رَبِّ ابْنِ لِي عِنْدَكَ بَيْتًا فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَنَجِّنِي مِنَ
فِرْعَوْنَ وَعَمَلِهِ وَنَجِّنِي مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١١﴾

“And Allah presents an example of those who believed: the wife of Pharaoh, when she said, “My Lord, build for me near You a house in Paradise and save me from Pharaoh and his deeds and save me from the wrongdoing people.””

“And Allah presents an example...”

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2645, that when Allah, the Exalted, desires to give someone good He provides them with Islamic knowledge.

There is no doubt that every muslim irrespective of the strength of their faith desires good in both worlds. Even though many muslims incorrectly believe that this good which they desire lies in fame, wealth, authority, companionship and their career this Hadith makes it crystal clear that true lasting good lies in gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge. It is important to note a branch of religious knowledge is useful worldly knowledge whereby one earns lawful provision in order to fulfil their necessities and the necessities of their dependents. Even though the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has pointed out where good lies yet it is a shame how many muslims do not place much value in this. They in most cases only strive to obtain the bare minimum of Islamic knowledge in order to fulfil their obligatory duties and fail to acquire and act on more such as the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Instead they dedicate their efforts on worldly things believing true good is found there. Many muslims fail to appreciate that the righteous predecessors had to journey for weeks on end just to learn a single verse or Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, whereas today one can study Islamic teachings without leaving their home. Yet, many fail to make use of this blessing given to the modern day muslims. Out of His infinite mercy Allah, the Exalted, through his Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has not only pointed out where true good lies but He has also

placed this good at one's finger tips. Allah, the Exalted, has informed mankind of where an eternal buried treasure is located which can solve all the problems they may encounter in both worlds. But muslims will only obtain this good once they struggle to acquire and act on it.

“And Allah presents an example of those who believed: the wife of Pharaoh...”

Even though she was married to one of the greatest disbelievers in history yet this did not negatively affect her as she remained sincerely obedient to Allah, the Exalted.

True belief involves sincerity. In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim number 196, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that Islam is sincerity towards Allah, the Exalted.

Sincerity towards Allah, the Exalted, includes fulfilling all the duties given by Him in the form of commands and prohibitions, solely for His pleasure. As confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1, all will be judged by their intention. So if one is not sincere towards Allah, the Exalted, when performing good deeds they will gain no reward in this world or in the next. In fact, according to a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3154, those who performed insincere deeds will be told on Judgement Day to seek their reward from those who they acted for, which will not be possible. Chapter 98 Al Bayyinah, verse 5.

"And they were not commanded except to worship Allah, [being] sincere to Him in religion....."

If one is lax in fulfilling their duties towards Allah, the Exalted, it proves a lack of sincerity. Therefore, they should sincerely repent and struggle to fulfil them all. It is important to bear in mind Allah, the Exalted, never burdens one with duties they cannot perform or handle. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 286.

"Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity...."

Being sincere towards Allah, the Exalted, means that one should always choose His pleasure over the pleasure of themselves and others. A Muslim should always give priority to those actions which are for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, over all else. One should love others and dislike their sins for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, and not for the sake of their own desires. When they help others or refuse to take part in sins it should be for the sake of Allah, the Exalted. The one who adopts this mentality has perfected their faith. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4681.

“And Allah presents an example of those who believed: the wife of Pharaoh...”

Even though she was married to one of the greatest disbelievers in history yet this did not negatively affect her as she remained sincerely obedient to Allah, the Exalted.

In a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 4998, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised the signs of a true muslim and a true believer. A true muslim is the one who keeps their verbal and physical harm away from others. This in fact, includes all people irrespective of their faith. It includes all types of verbal and physical sins which can cause harm or distress to another. This can include failing to give the best advice to others as this contradicts sincerity towards others which has been commanded in a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 4204. It includes advising others to disobey Allah, the Exalted, thereby, inviting them towards sins. A muslim should avoid this behavior as they will be taken account for every person who acts on their bad advice. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 2351.

Physical harm includes causing problems for other people's livelihood, committing fraud, conning others and physical abuse. All of these characteristics contradict Islamic teachings and must be avoided.

A true believer, according to the main Hadith under discussion, is the one who keeps their harm away from the lives and property of others. Again, this applies to all people irrespective of their faith. This includes stealing, misusing or damaging the property and belongings of others. Whenever one is entrusted with someone else's property they must ensure they only use it with the owner's permission and in a way which is pleasing and agreeable to the owner. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has warned in a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 5421, that whoever illegally takes someone else's property, through a false oath, even if it is as small as a twig of a tree will go to Hell.

To conclude a muslim must support their verbal declaration of belief with actions as they are the physical proof of one's belief which will be needed in order to obtain success on the Day of Judgment. In addition, a muslim should fulfill the characteristics of true belief in respect to Allah, the Exalted, and people. An excellent way of achieving this in respect to people is to simply treat others how they wish to be treated by people, which is with respect and peace.

“And Allah presents an example of those who believed: the wife of Pharaoh...”

Even though she was married to one of the greatest disbelievers in history yet this did not negatively affect her as she remained sincerely obedient to Allah, the Exalted.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 159, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, gave a short but far reaching piece of advice. He advised people to sincerely declare their belief in Allah, the Exalted, and then remain steadfast on it.

Remaining steadfast on one's faith means that they must strive in the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in all aspects of their life. It consists of fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, which relate to Him, such as the obligatory fasts and those which relate to people, such as treating others kindly. It includes refraining from all the prohibitions of Islam which are between a person and Allah, the Exalted, and those involving others. A muslim must also face destiny with patience truly believing Allah, the Exalted, chooses what is best for His servants. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

Steadfastness can include refraining from both types of polytheism. The major type is when one worships something other than Allah, the Exalted. The minor type is when one shows off their good deeds to others. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3989. Therefore, an aspect of steadfastness is to always act for the sake of Allah, the Exalted.

It includes obeying Allah, the Exalted, at all times instead of obeying and pleasing oneself or others. If a Muslim disobeys Allah, the Exalted, by pleasing themselves or others they should know neither their desires nor people will protect them from Allah, the Exalted. On the other hand, the one who is sincerely obedient to Allah, the Exalted, will be protected from all things by Him even if this protection is not apparent to them.

Remaining steadfast on one's faith includes following the path set out by the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and not adopting a path which deviates from this. The one who strives to adopt this path will not need anything else as this is enough to keep them steadfast on their faith.

As people are not perfect they will undoubtedly make mistakes and commit sins. So being steadfast in matters of faith does not mean one has to be perfect but it means they must strive to adhere strictly to the obedience of

Allah, the Exalted, as outlined earlier, and to sincerely repent if they commit a sin. This has been indicated in chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 6:

“...so take a straight course to Him and seek His forgiveness...”

This is further supported by a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1987, which advises to fear Allah, the Exalted, and to erase a (minor) sin which has occurred by performing a righteous deed. In another Hadith found in Imam Malik's Muwatta, book 2, Hadith number 37, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised muslims to try their best to remain steadfast on the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, even though they will not be able to do it perfectly. Therefore, a muslim's duty is to fulfil the potential they have been given through their intention and physical actions in the steadfast obedience of Allah, the Exalted. They have not been commanded to achieve perfection as this is not possible.

It is important to note, that one cannot remain steadfast in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, through their physical actions without purifying their heart first. As indicated in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3984, the limbs of the body will only act in a pure way if the spiritual heart is pure. Purity of heart is only achieved by gaining and acting on the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

Steadfast obedience requires one to control their tongue as it expresses the heart. Without controlling the tongue steadfast obedience to Allah, the Exalted, is not possible. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2407.

Finally, if any deficiency in the steadfast obedience of Allah, the Exalted, occurs one must make sincere repentance to Allah, the Exalted, and seek the forgiveness of people if it involves their rights. Chapter 46 Al Ahqaf, verse 13:

“Indeed, those who have said, “Our Lord is Allah,” and then remained on a right course - there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve.”

“And Allah presents an example of those who believed: the wife of Pharaoh...”

Even though she was married to one of the greatest disbelievers in history yet this did not negatively affect her as she remained sincerely obedient to Allah, the Exalted.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6543, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that Allah, the Exalted, does not judge people based on their outward appearance or their wealth instead He observes and judges people's inward intention and their physical actions.

The first thing to note is that a muslim should always correct their intention when performing any deed as Allah, the Exalted, will only reward them when they perform righteous deeds for His sake. Those who perform deeds for the sake of other people and things will be told to gain their reward from those who they acted for on Judgment Day, which will not be possible. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3154.

In addition, this Hadith indicates the importance of equality in Islam. A person is not superior to others by worldly things such as their ethnicity or wealth. Even though, many muslims have erected these barriers such as social castes and sects thereby believing some are better than others Islam

has clearly rejected this concept and declared that in this respect all people are equal in the sight of Islam. The only thing which makes one muslim superior to another is their piety meaning, how much they fulfill the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refrain from His prohibitions and face destiny with patience. Chapter 49 Al Hujurat, verse 13:

“...Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you...”

A muslim should therefore busy themselves in obeying Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His rights and the rights of people and not believe that something they possess or belong to will somehow save them from punishment. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has made it clear in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6853, that the muslim who lacks in righteous deeds meaning, the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, will not be increased in rank because of their lineage. In reality, this applies to all worldly things such as wealth, ethnicity, gender or social brotherhoods and castes.

“And Allāh presents an example of those who believed: the wife of Pharaoh, when she said, "My Lord, build for me near You a house in Paradise...””

Her supplication indicates her great sincerity to Allah, the Exalted, as she desired His closeness over all other things, including Paradise.

It is important for muslims to understand a key concept in Islam. Namely, there is nothing wrong with desiring lawful worldly things from Allah, the Exalted, but it is best to avoid worshipping and obeying Allah, the Exalted, in order to obtain them. This is because these types of muslims often only worship Allah, the Exalted, and inhabit the Mosques when they desire worldly things. But if they do not receive them they become impatient and fed up which causes them to stop obeying Allah, the Exalted. Or if they obtain them then the joy of them often makes them turn away from the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, as they believe they achieved what they desired therefore there is no need to obey Allah, the Exalted, anymore. These muslims worship Allah, the Exalted, meaning, they obey Allah, the Exalted, only when it suits their desires. And because of this attitude they are in danger of becoming misguided. Chapter 22 Al Hajj, verse 11:

“And of the people is he who worships Allah on an edge. If he is touched by good, he is reassured by it; but if he is struck by trial, he turns on his face [to unbelief]. He has lost [this] world and the Hereafter. That is what is the manifest loss.”

These muslims may claim that they are worshipping Allah, the Exalted, but in reality, they are only worshipping their own desires and the gifts and blessings they receive.

It is praiseworthy to worship Allah, the Exalted, in order to obtain religious blessings, such as Paradise, as this has been recommended by Islamic teachings. But it is far superior to worship Allah, the Exalted, as He is the only One worthy of it and because the creation are His servants.

If a muslim must desire gifts and blessings then it is best to aim for religious blessings as aiming for worldly blessings can shift a person's intention so that they end up worshipping the gift instead of the Giver.

“And Allāh presents an example of those who believed: the wife of Pharaoh, when she said, "My Lord, build for me near You a house in Paradise...””

It is important to note, that one will only enter Paradise through the mercy of Allah, the Exalted. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 5673. This is because every righteous deed is only possible through the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, in the form of knowledge, inspiration, strength and opportunity to do the deed. This understanding prevents one from adopting pride which is vital to avoid as only an atom's worth of pride is needed to take a person to Hell. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 267.

In addition, a muslim must understand that this mercy of Allah, the Exalted, in the form of righteous deeds is in reality a light which one must gather in this world if they desire to obtain a guiding light in the hereafter. If a muslim lives in heedlessness and refrains from gathering this light in the world by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience then how can they expect to receive this guiding light in the hereafter?

All muslims desire to inhabit Paradise with the greatest servants of Allah, the Exalted, such as the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. But it is important to understand that simply wishing for this without action will not make it come true otherwise the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, would have done this. Simply put, the more one strives in learning and acting on the traditions of the Holy Prophet

Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, the closer they will be to him in the hereafter.

The greatest blessing of Paradise is physically observing Allah, the Exalted, which is discussed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 7436. If a muslim desires to obtain this unimaginable blessing they must practically strive to achieve the level of excellence mentioned in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 99. This is when one performs actions, such as the prayer, as if they can observe Allah, the Exalted, overlooking them. This attitude ensures one's persistent and sincere obedience to Allah, the Exalted. It is hoped that the one who strives for this level of faith will receive the blessing of physically observing Allah, the Exalted, in the hereafter.

“And Allāh presents an example of those who believed: the wife of Pharaoh, when she said, "My Lord, build for me near You a house in Paradise and save me from Pharaoh and his deeds and save me from the wrongdoing people.””

Her life teaches muslims that whenever they encounter a difficult situation they should remain firm on the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, trusting that He will provide them a way out of it even if this seems impossible at the time. She was granted martyrdom and was saved from Pharaoh’s evil. This has been discussed in Tafsir Ibn Kathir, Volume 10, Pages 74-75. Chapter 65 At Talaq, verse 2:

“...And whoever fears Allah - He will make for him a way out.”

A muslim should understand that Allah, the Exalted, chooses the best for His servants even if the wisdoms behind the difficulty are not obvious. It is a person's reaction which either leads to blessings or the anger of Allah, the Exalted. One only needs to reflect on the countless examples in their own life where they believed something was bad only to change their mind later on and vice versa. This is just like when a person takes a bitter medicine prescribed to them by a doctor. Even though the medicine is bitter they still take it believing it will benefit them. It is strange how a muslim can trust a doctor whose knowledge is limited and who is not absolutely certain the bitter medicine will benefit them and fail to trust Allah, the Exalted, whose knowledge is infinite and when He only decrees the best for His servants.

A muslim should understand the difference between wishful thinking and trust in Allah, the Exalted. The person who does not obey Allah, the Exalted, and then expects Him to help them in difficulties is a wishful thinker. The one who will gain the help of Allah, the Exalted, which is indicated in this great event, is the one who sincerely strives in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, which involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience and then trusts His judgment without complaining or questioning His choice.

“And Allāh presents an example of those who believed: the wife of Pharaoh, when she said, "My Lord, build for me near You a house in Paradise and save me from Pharaoh and his deeds and save me from the wrongdoing people.””

Allah, the Exalted, safeguards and preserves the creation and takes care of them with special care. He protects the obedient from the plots and traps of the Devil and He safeguards the disobedient from His immediate punishment in order to give them an opportunity to sincerely repent.

A muslim should act on this divine name by using the means provided to them by Allah, the Exalted, but always trust in His divine care and choices in every situation and outcome they face even if they do not observe the wisdom behind some choices. This inspires patience and even contentment with the choice of Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 65 At Talaq, verse 3:

“...And whoever relies upon Allah - then He is sufficient for him...”

A muslim should also understand that they will only be protected from misguidance and punishment by the Guardian namely, Allah, the Exalted. This removes any signs of pride and ensures they seek His protection through sincere obedience to Him. A muslim must act on this divine name by safeguarding every trust they possess such as their blessings by using

them according to the teachings of Islam. They should safeguard their actions and speech from the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted. This will ensure they receive more blessings from Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 14 Ibrahim, verse 7:

“And [remember] when your Lord proclaimed, 'If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favor]...”

“And Allāh presents an example of those who believed: the wife of Pharaoh, when she said, "My Lord, build for me near You a house in Paradise and save me from Pharaoh and his deeds and save me from the wrongdoing people.””

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 2447, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that oppression will become a darkness on the Day of Judgment.

This is vital to avoid as those who find themselves plunged in darkness are unlikely to find their way to Paradise. Only those who will be provided a guiding light will be able to do this successfully.

Oppression can take many forms. The first type is when one fails to fulfill the commands of Allah, the Exalted, and refrain from His prohibitions. Even though this has no effect on the infinite status of Allah, the Exalted, it will cause the person to become submerged into darkness in both worlds. According to a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4244, whenever a person commits a sin a black spot is etched on their spiritual heart. The more they sin the more their heart will become encompassed by darkness. This will prevent them from accepting and following true guidance in this world which will ultimately lead to darkness in the next world. Chapter 83 Al Mutaffifin, verse 14:

“No! Rather, the stain has covered their hearts of that which they were earning.”

The next type of oppression is when one oppresses themselves by not fulfilling the trust they have been granted by Allah, the Exalted, in the form of their body and other worldly blessings they possess. The greatest of which is one's faith. This must be protected and strengthened through gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge.

The final type of oppression is when one mistreats others. Allah, the Exalted, will not forgive these sins until the oppressor's victim forgives them first. As people are not so merciful this is unlikely to happen. Then justice will be established on Judgment Day where the oppressor's righteous deeds will be given to their victim and if necessary the victim's sins will be given to the oppressor. This may lead to the oppressor being hurled into Hell. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6579. One should therefore treat others how they wish to be treated by people. A muslim should avoid all forms of oppression if they desire a guiding light in this world and in the next.

Parable 42

Chapter 66 – At Tahrim, Verse 12

وَمَرْيَمَ ابْنَتَ عِمْرَانَ الَّتِي أَحْصَنَتْ فَرْجَهَا فَنفَخْنَا فِيهِ
مِنْ رُوحِنَا وَصَدَّقَتْ بِكَلِمَاتِ رَبِّهَا وَكُتِبَ عَلَيْهَا
مِنَ الْقَانِنِينَ



“And [the example of] Mary, the daughter of ‘Imrān, who guarded her chastity, so We blew into [her garment] through Our angel [i.e., Gabriel], and she believed in the words of her Lord and His scriptures and was of the devoutly obedient.”

“And [the example of] Mary, the daughter of ‘Imrān, who guarded her chastity...”

In a long Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6806, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, mentioned seven groups of people who will be granted shade on the Day of Judgment by Allah, the Exalted.

This shade will protect them from the horrors of the Day of Judgment which includes the unbearable heat caused by the Sun being brought within two miles of the creation. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2421.

One of these groups includes a person who is invited towards fornication but rejects it out of the fear of Allah, the Exalted. Controlling one's desire especially when no one except Allah, the Exalted, will know about it is a great deed. Muslims should strive to avoid situations where they might be invited to sins by firstly avoiding places where sins are more common, such as a nightclub. This is extremely important as a person's environment often has a deep impact on their attitude and behaviour. Just like a student is more likely to study in a quiet library compared to a busy and loud house a muslim is less likely to be attracted to sins when they avoid places where sins occur regularly and openly. The other important thing is to avoid people who openly commit sins and invite others to them. A person will adopt the characteristics of their companions whether good or bad. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4833. Muslims should not only ensure they accompany good people but also

encourage their dependents, such as their children, to do the same. If muslims truly concentrated on this it will dramatically reduce the amount of youth who become involved in gangs and crime. Chapter 43 Az Zukhruf, verse 67:

“Close friends, that Day, will be enemies to each other, except for the righteous.”

“And [the example of] Mary, the daughter of ‘Imrān, who guarded her chastity...”

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6474, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, guaranteed Paradise to the person who safeguards their mouth and chastity.

The first thing mentioned indicates safeguarding one's speech. Meaning, a muslim must avoid all types of evil speech such as backbiting as it only takes a single evil word to cause someone to plunge into Hell on Judgment Day. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2314.

In addition, a muslim should avoid all vain and useless speech as this only wastes one's precious time which will be a great regret for them on Judgment Day. In addition, vain speech is often the first step before sinful speech therefore, it is best to avoid it. One should either speak good or remain silent. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 176.

The main Hadith under discussion also advises to safeguard oneself from consuming the unlawful. This will lead to all of one's righteous deeds being rejected irrespective of their intention. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 2342.

The second aspect of the main Hadith under discussion advises muslims to safeguard their chastity meaning, avoid unlawful relationships. A muslim has been given a way to achieving this namely, marriage. If a muslim is not in the right position to get married, such as financially, then they should fast often as this reduces carnal desires. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1905.

Finally, as these two aspects combined lead to Paradise it is therefore the reason why getting married has been labeled completing half of one's faith in a Hadith found in Al Mu'jam Al Awsat, number 992.

“And [the example of] Mary, the daughter of ‘Imrān, who guarded her chastity...”

Muslims should take precautions in order to avoid being tempted into illegal relationships. Firstly, they should learn to lower their gaze. This does not mean one should always stare at their shoes but it means they should avoid looking around unnecessarily especially in public places. They should avoid staring at others and maintain respect for the opposite gender. Just like a muslim would not like someone staring at their sister or daughter they should not stare at other people's sisters and daughters. Chapter 24 An Nur, verse 30:

“Tell the believing men to reduce [some] of their vision¹ and guard their private parts. That is purer for them...”

Whenever possible a muslim should avoid spending time alone with the opposite gender unless they are related in a way which prohibits marriage. This has been advised by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1862.

Muslims should dress and behave with modesty. Dressing modestly avoids attracting the glances of strangers and behaving modestly prevents one from taking the initial steps which could lead to an illegal relationship such as talking unnecessarily to the opposite gender.

Understanding the blessings of avoiding illegal relationships is another way to protect oneself from them. For example, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has guaranteed Paradise to the one who safeguards their tongue and chastity. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2408.

Fearing the punishment of being involved in illegal relationships will also aid a muslim to avoid them. For example, faith will depart from the person who is committing fornication. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4690.

In reality, a muslim does not need illegal relationships as Islam prescribes marriage. Those who cannot afford to marry should fast often as this also helps to control one's desires and actions. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 3398.

“And [the example of] Mary, the daughter of ‘Imrān, who guarded her chastity, so We blew into [her garment] through Our angel...”

As a result she became pregnant and gave birth to the Holy Prophet Eesa, peace be upon him.

Generally speaking, the main reasons for the spread of the false beliefs regarding the Holy Prophet Eesa, were his miraculous birth, the miracles which he performed and his ascension into Heaven while alive. The Holy Quran confirms the miraculous birth of the Holy Prophet Eesa, peace be upon him, and proves that his fatherless birth was a sign of the infinite power of Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 47:

“She [Maryam, may Allah be pleased with her] said, “My Lord, how will I have a child when no man has touched me?” [The angel] said, “Such is Allāh; He creates what He wills. When He decrees a matter, He only says to it, ‘Be,’ and it is.”

This miraculous birth does not prove that the Holy Prophet Eesa, peace be upon him, was divine. It only indicates the infinite power of Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 59:

“Indeed, the example of Jesus to Allah is like that of Adam. He created him from dust; then He said to him, “Be,” and he was.”

This verse indicates a simple but profound lesson namely, some wrongfully believe that the Holy Prophet Eesa, peace be upon him, is the son of God as he has no human father. But if this was the criterion for linking him to Allah, the Exalted, then the Holy Prophet Adam, peace be upon him, is more fitting for this claim as he has no human father or mother. Reflecting on this verse alone is enough to understand the truth namely, the Holy Prophet Eesa, peace be upon him, is a righteous servant, Messenger and Holy Prophet of Allah, the Exalted.

The miracles of the Holy Prophet Eesa, peace be upon him, are also verified by the Holy Quran. It however makes it clear that the Holy Prophet Eesa, peace be upon him, performed these miracles with the will, permission and command of Allah, the Exalted. If the Holy Prophet Eesa, peace be upon him, was divine he would not need the will or permission of Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 49:

“And [make the Prophet Eesa, peace be upon him] a messenger to the Children of Israel, [who will say], ‘Indeed I have come to you with a sign from your Lord in that I design for you from clay [that which is] like the form of a bird, then I breathe into it and it becomes a bird by permission of Allāh. And I cure the blind [from birth] and the leper, and I give life to the dead - by permission of Allāh. And I inform you of what you eat and what you store in your houses...”

The ascension of the Holy Prophet Eesa, peace be upon him, to the Heavens while alive further indicates the power of Allah, the Exalted, as He took the Holy Prophet Eesa, peace be upon him, on this journey. If the Holy Prophet Eesa, peace be upon him, was divine he could have undertaken this journey with his own innate power. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 55:

“[Mention] when Allāh said, "O Jesus, indeed I will take you and raise you to Myself and purify [i.e., free] you from those who disbelieve...””

The Holy Quran tells the Christians that the Holy Prophet Eesa, peace be upon him, contrary to their belief, was not crucified. The one whose image was seen on the cross was not the Holy Prophet Eesa, peace be upon him, but someone who was made to look like him. Allah, the Exalted, had already raised the Holy Prophet Eesa, peace be upon him, towards Heaven by this time. Chapter 4 An Nisa, verses 156-158:

“And for their disbelief and their saying against Mary a great slander. And [for] their saying, "Indeed, we have killed the Messiah, Jesus the son of Mary, the messenger of Allāh." And they did not kill him, nor did they crucify him; but [another] was made to resemble him to them...Rather, Allāh raised him to Himself.”

The incorrect Christian belief of the Holy Prophet Eesa, peace be upon him, being crucified meaning, killed, is strange in itself as a real divine being is far beyond experiencing death. So in reality, their incorrect belief in his death by crucifixion negates their incorrect belief in his divinity by itself.

Finally, a divine being by nature is something which is self-sustaining meaning, they do not need someone else to sustain them. If a being is sustained by another then they cannot be divine. Both the Holy Prophet Eesa, peace be upon him, and his mother, Maryam, may Allah be pleased with her, were not divine beings as they required nourishment from Allah, the Exalted, meaning, they were not self-sustaining beings. In addition, no one can claim that as the Angels do not eat they can be considered Gods. In reality, they are also sustained by Allah, the Exalted, in a different way so they too are not self-sustaining. The fact that they have been created and will experience death, just like the rest of creation, is enough to negate divinity.

“And [the example of] Mary, the daughter of ‘Imrān, who guarded her chastity...and she believed in the words of her Lord and His scriptures...”

One must follow in her footsteps by fulfilling the rights of the Holy Quran.

In a Hadith found in Imam Munzari's, Awareness and Apprehension, number 30, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that the Holy Quran will intercede on Judgment Day. Those who follow it during their lives on Earth will be led to Paradise on Judgment Day. But those who neglect it during their lives on Earth will find that it pushes them into Hell on Judgment Day.

The Holy Quran is a book of guidance. It is not merely a book of recitation. Muslims must therefore strive to fulfill all aspects of the Holy Quran to ensure that it guides them to success in both worlds. The first aspect is reciting it correctly and regularly. The second aspect is to understand it. And the final aspect is to act on its teachings according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Those who behave in such a manner are the ones who are given glad tidings of right guidance through every difficulty in this world and its intercession on the Day of Judgment. But as warned by this Hadith the Holy Quran is only guidance and a mercy for those who correctly act on its aspects according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. But those who misinterpret it and instead act according to their desires in order to gain worldly things, such as fame, will be deprived of this right guidance and its intercession on Judgment Day. In fact, their complete

loss in both worlds will only increase until they sincerely repent. Chapter 17
Al Isra, verse 82:

“And We send down of the Quran that which is healing and mercy for the believers, but it does not increase the wrongdoers except in loss.”

Finally, it is important to understand that even though the Holy Quran is a cure for worldly problems a muslim should not only use it for this purpose. Meaning, they should not only recite it in order to fix their worldly problems thereby, treating the Holy Quran like a tool which is removed during a difficulty and then placed back in a toolbox. The main function of the Holy Quran is to guide one to the hereafter safely. Neglecting this main function and only using it to fix one's worldly problems is not correct as it contradicts the behaviour of a true muslim. It is like the one who purchases a car with many different accessories yet, it possesses no engine. There is no doubt that this person is simply foolish.

“And [the example of] Mary, the daughter of ‘Imrān, who guarded her chastity...and was of the devoutly obedient.”

True obedience involves sincerity.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim number 196, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that Islam is sincerity towards Allah, the Exalted.

Sincerity towards Allah, the Exalted, includes fulfilling all the duties given by Him in the form of commands and prohibitions, solely for His pleasure. As confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1, all will be judged by their intention. So if one is not sincere towards Allah, the Exalted, when performing good deeds they will gain no reward in this world or in the next. In fact, according to a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3154, those who performed insincere deeds will be told on Judgement Day to seek their reward from those who they acted for, which will not be possible. Chapter 98 Al Bayyinah, verse 5.

"And they were not commanded except to worship Allah, [being] sincere to Him in religion....."

If one is lax in fulfilling their duties towards Allah, the Exalted, it proves a lack of sincerity. Therefore, they should sincerely repent and struggle to fulfil them all. It is important to bear in mind Allah, the Exalted, never burdens one with duties they cannot perform or handle. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 286.

"Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity...."

Being sincere towards Allah, the Exalted, means that one should always choose His pleasure over the pleasure of themselves and others. A Muslim should always give priority to those actions which are for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, over all else. One should love others and dislike their sins for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, and not for the sake of their own desires. When they help others or refuse to take part in sins it should be for the sake of Allah, the Exalted. The one who adopts this mentality has perfected their faith. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4681.

“And [the example of] Mary, the daughter of ‘Imrān, who guarded her chastity...and was of the devoutly obedient.”

It is important to note that the masculine plural has been used for the word obedient instead of the singular feminine. This indicates that she was one of the most obedient servants of Allah, the Exalted, in respect to women and men. In addition, this indicates the standards women and men should live up to. Chapter 49 Al Hujurat, verse 13:

“...Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you...”

Piety is achieved when one strives to fulfil the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refrain from His prohibitions and faces destiny with patience. Unfortunately, the Devil has tricked many women into debating the status of women compared to men. Even though, Islam has granted women such honour as no other institution or faith ever has such as placing Paradise, which is the ultimate bliss, beneath the feet of a woman namely, one's mother. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 3106. In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3895, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that the best man is the one who treats his wife the best. There are countless other examples. But the point to note is that women should not be bothered about comparing themselves to men as this is not what Allah, the Exalted, desires. Instead, women should strive to adopt piety and if they achieve it than they will become superior to every man or woman who possesses less piety than them. This is the benchmark which separates who is superior to

whom. And it is clear from this verse that it is not based on one's gender. If one turns the pages of history they will observe great female muslims who concentrated on this important task instead of arguing and debating about the differences between men and women and as a result they became better than the vast majority of men and women. In reality, if muslim women were granted all the rights they dreamed of even then it would not make them superior to others until they adopted piety. This is quite evident when one observes the media and those who behave as they please. And this fact will be made crystal clear in the next world. Therefore, if a muslim desires to be superior to others they should seek it in piety not in arguing and debates.

Parable 43

Chapter 68 – Al Qalam, Verses 17-33

إِنَّا بَلَوْنَهُمْ كَمَا بَلَوْنَا أَصْحَابَ الْجَنَّةِ إِذْ أَقْسَمُوا لَيَصْرِمُنَّهَا مُصْبِحِينَ ﴿١٧﴾

وَلَا يَسْتَنُونَ ﴿١٨﴾

فَطَافَ عَلَيْهَا طَآئِفٌ مِّن رَّبِّكَ وَهُمْ نَائِبُونَ ﴿١٩﴾

فَأَصْبَحَتْ كَالصَّرِيمِ ﴿٢٠﴾

فَنَادَوْا مُصْبِحِينَ ﴿٢١﴾

أَنْ أَعْدُوا عَلَيَّ حَرْثِكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَرِيمِينَ ﴿٢٢﴾

فَانطَلَقُوا وَهُمْ يَخْفَوْنَ ﴿٢٣﴾

أَنْ لَا يَدْخُلْنَهَا الْيَوْمَ عَلَيْكُمْ مَسْكِينٌ ﴿٢٤﴾

وَعَدُوا عَلَىٰ حَرٍِّ قَدِيرِينَ ﴿٢٥﴾

فَلَمَّا رَأَوْهَا قَالُوا إِنَّا لَضَالُّونَ ﴿٢٦﴾

بَلْ نَحْنُ مُحْرَمُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾

قَالَ أَوْسَطُهُمْ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَكُمْ لَوْلَا تُسَبِّحُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾

قَالُوا سُبْحَانَ رَبِّنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا ظَالِمِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾

فَأَقْبَلَ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ يَتَلَاَمُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

قَالُوا يَوَيْلَنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا طٰغِيْنَ ﴿٣١﴾

عَسَىٰ رَبُّنَا أَن يُبَدِّلَنَا خَيْرًا مِّنْهَا إِنَّا إِلَىٰ رَبِّنَا رٰغِبُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾

كَذٰلِكَ الْعَذَابُ ۗ وَالْعَذَابُ الْآخِرَةُ أَكْبَرُ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾

"Indeed, We have tried them as We tried the companions of the garden, when they swore to cut its fruit in the [early] morning.

Without making exception.

So there came upon it [the garden] an affliction from your Lord while they were asleep.

And it became as though reaped.

And they called one another at morning.

[Saying], "Go early to your crop [to prevent giving it to the poor] if you would cut the fruit."

So they set out, while lowering their voices.

[Saying], "There will surely not enter it [the garden] today upon you [any] poor person."

And they went early in determination, [assuming themselves] able [to fulfill their evil plan].

But when they saw it [the destroyed garden], they said, "Indeed, we are lost."

Rather, we have been deprived.

The most moderate of them said, "Did I not say to you, "Why do you not exalt [Allah]?""

They said, "Exalted is our Lord! Indeed, we were wrongdoers."

Then they approached one another, blaming each other.

They said, "O woe to us; indeed we were transgressors."

Perhaps our Lord will substitute for us [one] better than it [the destroyed garden]. Indeed, we are toward our Lord desirous.

Such is the punishment [of this world]. And the punishment of the Hereafter is greater, if they only knew."

“Indeed, We have tried them as We tried the companions of the garden...”

The test of all blessings is whether one will use them in the correct way or not meaning, in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted.

In reality, in most cases nothing in this material world in itself is good or bad, such as wealth. What makes a thing good or bad is the way it is used. It is important to understand that the very purpose of everything which was created by Allah, the Exalted, was for it to be used correctly according to the teachings of Islam. When something is not used correctly it in reality becomes useless. For example, wealth is useful in both worlds when it is used correctly such as being spent on the necessities of a person and their dependents. But it can become useless and even a curse for its bearer if it is not used correctly, such as being hoarded or spent on sinful things. Simply hoarding wealth causes wealth to lose value. How can paper and metal coins one tucks away be useful? In this respect, there is no difference between a blank piece of paper and a note of money. It is only useful when it is used correctly.

So if a Muslim desires all their worldly possessions to become a blessing for them in both worlds all they have to do is use them correctly according to the teachings found in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. But if they use them incorrectly then the same blessing will become a burden and curse for them in both worlds. It is as simple as that.

“Indeed, We have tried them as We tried the companions of the garden...”

The test of all blessings is whether one will use them in the correct way or not meaning, in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. One can adopt the correct attitude when they understand the purpose of these blessings.

Every worldly blessing a Muslim possesses is only a means which should aid them in reaching the hereafter safely. It is not an end in itself. For example, wealth is a means one should use in order to obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, fulfilling their necessities and the necessities of their dependents. It is not an end or an ultimate goal in itself.

This not only aids a Muslim in maintaining their focus on the hereafter but it also aids them whenever they lose worldly blessings. When a Muslim treats each worldly blessing, such as a child, as a means to please Allah, the Exalted, and reach the hereafter safely then losing it will not have such a detrimental impact on them. They may become sad, which is an acceptable emotion, but they will not become grieved which leads to impatience and other mental problems, such as depression. This is because they firmly believe the worldly blessing they possessed was only a means so losing it does not cause a loss in the ultimate goal namely, Paradise, the loss of which is disastrous. Therefore, still possessing and concentrating on the ultimate goal will prevent them from becoming grieved.

In addition, they will understand that just like the thing they lost was only a means they firmly believe they will be provided with another means to reach and fulfil their ultimate goal by Allah, the Exalted. This will also prevent them from grieving. Whereas, the one who believes their worldly blessing is the end instead of a means will experience severe grief when losing it as their whole purpose and objective has been lost. This grief will lead to depression and other mental issues.

To conclude, Muslims should treat each blessing they possess as a means to reach the hereafter safely not as an end in itself. This is how one can possess things without being possessed by them. This is how they can keep worldly things in their hands and not in their hearts.

“Indeed, We have tried them as We tried the companions of the garden, when they swore to cut [and harvest] its fruit in the [early] morning. Without making exception...So they set out, while lowering their voices. [Saying], "There will surely not enter it today upon you [any] poor person.””

The exception could mean they desired to harvest the fruits for themselves without giving any to the needy.

An aspect of hypocrisy is greed. Their extreme greed places them far from Allah, the Exalted, far from the people and close to Hell. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1961. They dislike when others donate charity as their greed becomes manifest to others. They also put people off from donating charity as they dislike society labelling others as generous. So they always try to put people off from donating charity with poor reasons such as labelling charities as con artists. These people should be ignored as Allah, the Exalted, judges people on their intention which is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1. So even if their donated wealth does not reach the poor as long as a person donates through a trustworthy well known charity they will receive their reward according to their intention. Chapter 9 At Tawbah, verse 67:

“The hypocrite men and hypocrite women are of one another. They enjoy what is wrong and forbid what is right and close their hands...”

“Indeed, We have tried them as We tried the companions of the garden, when they swore to cut [and harvest] its fruit in the [early] morning. Without making exception...So they set out, while lowering their voices. [Saying], "There will surely not enter it today upon you [any] poor person.””

The exception could mean they desired to harvest the fruits for themselves without giving any to the needy.

In a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 2511, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned against greed. This can lead one to withholding the obligatory charity which only leads to destruction in both worlds. For example, a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1403, warns that the person who does not donate their obligatory charity will encounter a large poisonous snake which will continuously bite them on the Day of Judgement. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 180:

“And let not those who [greedily] withhold what Allah has given them of His bounty ever think that it is better for them. Rather, it is worse for them. Their necks will be encircled by what they withheld on the Day of Resurrection...”

If one’s greed prevents them from donating voluntary charity it may not be unlawful but it is highly undesirable as this contradicts the characteristic of

a true believer. Put simply, the stingy person is far from Allah, the Exalted, far from Paradise, far from people and close to Hell. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1961.

“Indeed, We have tried them as We tried the companions of the garden, when they swore to cut [and harvest] its fruit in the [early] morning. Without making exception...So they set out, while lowering their voices. [Saying], "There will surely not enter it today upon you [any] poor person.””

The exception good also mean acknowledging that they would only do so if Allah, the Exalted, willed. Chapter 18 Al Kahf, verses 23-24:

“And never say of anything, "Indeed, I will do that tomorrow.” Except [when adding], "If Allāh wills." And remember your Lord when you forget [it]...”

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, indicated the infinite and absolute power and authority of Allah, the Exalted, in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2516. This Hadith advises that the entire creation cannot benefit a person if Allah, the Exalted, did not desire them to do so. Similarly, the entire creation together could not harm someone if Allah, the Exalted, did not desire them to. This means only what Allah, the Exalted, decides happens within the universe. It is important to note, that this advice does not indicate one should abandon using means, such as medicine, but it means that one can use the means as they have been created by none other than Allah, the Exalted, but they must understand that Allah, the Exalted, is the only One who decides the outcome of all things. For example, they are many sick people who take medicine and recover from their illness. But they are others who take medicine and do not recover. This indicates that another factor decides the

end result namely, the will of Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 9 At Tawbah, verse 51:

“Say, “Never will we be struck except by what Allah has decreed for us...”

The one who understands this knows that anything that affected them could not have been avoided. And those things which missed them could never have been obtained.

It is important to note, that whatever the end result even if it is against a person's desire they should remain patient and truly believe Allah, the Exalted, has chosen the best for them even if they do not observe the wisdom behind the outcome. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

When one truly understands this truth they stop relying on the creation knowing they cannot innately harm or benefit them. Instead, they turn to Allah, the Exalted, seeking His support and protection through sincere obedience by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience. This leads a muslim to trusting in Allah, the

Exalted. It also encourages one to only fear Allah, the Exalted, as they know the creation cannot harm them without the will of Allah, the Exalted.

Recognising that all things which occur within one's life and the universe originate from Allah, the Exalted, is a part of understanding the Oneness of Allah, the Exalted. This is a topic which has no end and goes beyond only superficially believing that there is none worthy of worship except Allah, the Exalted. When this is fixed in one's heart then they only hope in Allah, the Exalted, knowing He is the only One who can help them. They will only submit and obey Allah, the Exalted, in all aspects of their life. In reality, a person only obeys another in order to receive protection from harm or gain some benefit. Only Allah, the Exalted, can grant this therefore only He deserves to be obeyed and worshipped. If anyone chooses the obedience of another over the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, this shows they believe that this other can bring them some sort of benefit or protect them from harm. This is a sign of the weakness of their faith. The source of all things which occur is Allah, the Exalted, so muslims should only obey Him. Chapter 35 Fatir, verse 2:

“Whatever Allah grants to people of mercy - none can withhold it; and whatever He withholds - none can release it thereafter...”

It is important to note, that obeying a person which encourages the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in reality is obeying Allah, the Exalted. For example, obeying the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 80:

“He who obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah...”

Even though it is a fact nothing occurs without the will of Allah, the Exalted, none the less, this common interpretation is less likely to be the correct one as Allah, the Exalted, knew their evil plan to withhold the fruits of the farm from the needy. Adding “if Allah, the Exalted, wills” to an evil plan is not going to protect it. It is clear when studying the rest of the verses that they were punished for their greediness and not for failing to utter some words.

“Indeed, We have tried them as We tried the companions of the garden, when they swore to cut its fruit in the [early] morning. Without making exception. So there came upon it [the garden] an affliction from your Lord while they were asleep. And it became as though reaped. And they called one another at morning. [Saying], "Go early to your crop if you would cut the fruit." So they set out, while lowering their voices. [Saying], "There will surely not enter it today upon you [any] poor person.””

These verses warn against bad companionship.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 5534, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, described the difference between a good and bad companion. The good companion is like a person who sells perfume. Their companion will either obtain some perfume or at least be affected by the pleasant smell. Whereas, a bad companion is like a blacksmith, if their companion does not burn their clothes they will certainly be affected by the smoke.

Muslims must understand that the people they accompany will have an effect on them whether this affect is positive or negative, obvious or subtle. It is not possible to accompany someone and not be affected by it. A Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4833, confirms that a person is on their companion’s religion. Meaning, a person adopts the characteristics of their companion. It is therefore important for muslims to always accompany the righteous as they will undoubtedly affect them in a positive way meaning, they will inspire them to obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His

commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience. Whereas, bad companions will either inspire one to disobey Allah, the Exalted, or they will encourage a muslim to concentrate on the material world over preparing for the hereafter. This attitude will become a great regret for them on Judgment Day even if the things they strive for are lawful but beyond their needs.

Finally, as a person will end up with those they love in the hereafter according to the Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 3688, a muslim must practically show they love for the righteous by accompanying them in this world. But if they accompany bad or heedless people then it proves and indicates they love for them and their ultimate destination in the hereafter. Chapter 43 Az Zukhruf, verse 67:

“Close friends, that Day, will be enemies to each other, except for the righteous.”

“Indeed, We have tried them as We tried the companions of the garden, when they swore to cut its fruit in the [early] morning. Without making exception. So there came upon it [the garden] an affliction from your Lord while they were asleep. And it became as though reaped. And they called one another at morning. [Saying], “Go early to your crop if you would cut the fruit.” So they set out, while lowering their voices. [Saying], “There will surely not enter it today upon you [any] poor person.””

Since the passing of the righteous predecessors the strength of the muslim nation has weakened dramatically. It is logical that the greater the number of people in a group the stronger the group will become yet muslims have somehow defied this logic. The strength of the muslim nation has only decreased as the number of muslims have increased. One of the main reasons this has occurred is connected to chapter 5 Al Ma'idah, verse 2 of the Holy Quran:

“...And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression...”

Allah, the Exalted, clearly commands muslims to aid each other in any matter which is good and not support each other in any matter which is bad. This is what the righteous predecessors acted on but many muslims have failed to follow in their footsteps. Many muslims now observe who is doing an action instead of observing what they are doing. If the person is linked to them for example, a relative, they support them even if the thing is not good. Similarly, if the person has no relationship with them they turn

away from supporting them even if the thing is good. This attitude completely contradicts the traditions of the righteous predecessors. They would support others in good irrespective of who was doing it. In fact, they went so far on acting on this verse of the Holy Quran that they would even support those they did not get on with as long as it was a good thing.

The other thing connected to this is that many muslims fail to support each other in good as they believe the person they are supporting will gain more prominence than them. This condition has even affected scholars and Islamic educational institutes. They make lame excuses not to aid others in good as they do not have a relationship with them and they fear their own institution will be forgotten and those they help will gain further respect in society. But this is completely wrong as one only needs to turn the pages of history to observe the truth. As long as one's intention is to please Allah, the Exalted, supporting others in good will increase their respect within society. Allah, the Exalted, will cause the hearts of the people to turn to them even if their support is for another organisation, institution or person. For example, when the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, departed this world Umar Bin Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him, could have easily challenged for the Caliphate and would have found plenty of support in his favour. But he knew the right thing to do was to nominate Abu Bakkar Siddique, may Allah be pleased with him, as the first Caliph of Islam. Umar Bin Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him, did not worry about being forgotten by society if he supported another person. He instead obeyed the command in the verse mentioned earlier and supported what was right. This is confirmed in the Hadiths found in Sahih Bukhari numbers 3667 and 3668. The honour and respect of Umar Bin Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him, within society only increased by this action. This is obvious to those who are aware of Islamic history.

Muslims must reflect on this deeply, change their mentality and strive to aid others in good irrespective of who is doing it and not hold back fearing their support will cause them to be forgotten within society. Those who obey Allah, the Exalted, will never be forgotten in both this world and the next. In fact, their respect and honour will only grow in both worlds.

“Indeed, We have tried them as We tried the companions of the garden, when they swore to cut its fruit in the [early] morning. Without making exception. So there came upon it [the garden] an affliction from your Lord while they were asleep. And it became as though reaped. And they called one another at morning. [Saying], "Go early to your crop if you would cut the fruit." So they set out, while lowering their voices. [Saying], "There will surely not enter it today upon you [any] poor person.””

These verses are connected to chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 114:

“No good is there in much of their private conversation, except for those who enjoin charity or that which is right or conciliation between people. And whoever does that seeking means to the approval of Allah - then We are going to give him a great reward.”

In this verse Allah, the exalted, explains how people should conduct themselves when conversing with others so that they derive benefit for themselves and others. The first is that when muslims gather they should discuss how to benefit others which encompasses charity in the form of wealth and physical aid. If a muslim is not in a position to help a needy person then this is an excellent way of gaining reward equal to actually helping them. A Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6800, advises that the one who inspires someone else towards good will be rewarded as if they performed the good action themselves. If one cannot aid someone in difficulty or inspire another to fulfill this task they can at least encourage others to supplicate for the one in need. Supplication for an absent person

causes the Angels to pray for the supplicator. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 1534. This mentality can inspire the group to visit the needy person which provides them with emotional support. This has a powerful psychological impact and provides them with a new mode of strength when dealing with their hardship. The important thing to note is that when one mentions the situation of a needy person their intention must be to aid them in their hour of need. It should never be for the sake of passing time and making them a target of ridicule.

The second way to gain blessings is when one converses about anything lawful that will provide benefit to someone in this world or the next. This aspect includes advising others to do good and refrain from evil in every aspect of their life.

The third aspect mentioned in this verse involves conversing with others with a constructive mindset which brings people together in a positive way instead of possessing a destructive mindset which causes divisions within society. If a person cannot bring people together in a loving way then the minimum they can do is not cause divisions amongst them. Even this is recorded as a good deed when done for the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 2518.

In fact, a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4919, advises that reconciling between two opposing muslims for the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted, is superior to voluntary prayer and fasting. Every good thing found within society was the outcome of this pious attitude such as the construction of schools, hospitals and Mosques.

But it is important to note, that a muslim will only obtain the great reward mentioned in this verse when they perform the righteous deeds for the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted. Each person will be rewarded based on their intention not just their physical action. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1. The insincere muslim will find that on Judgment Day they will be told to gain their reward from those who they acted for which will not be possible. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3154.

“Indeed, We have tried them as We tried the companions of the garden, when they swore to cut its fruit in the [early] morning. Without making exception. So there came upon it [the garden] an affliction from your Lord while they were asleep. And it became as though reaped. And they called one another at morning. [Saying], "Go early to your crop if you would cut the fruit." So they set out, while lowering their voices. [Saying], "There will surely not enter it today upon you [any] poor person." And they went early in determination, [assuming themselves] able. But when they saw it, they said, "Indeed, we are lost. Rather, we have been deprived."...Such is the punishment [of this world]. And the punishment of the Hereafter is greater, if they only knew.”

It is important for muslims to understand a simple yet profound lesson namely, they will never succeed in this world or the next in worldly or religious matters through the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted. Since the dawn of time to this age and till the end of time no person has ever achieved true success nor will they ever through the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted. This is quite obvious when one turns the pages of history. Therefore, when a muslim is in a situation which they desire to achieve a positive and successful outcome from they should never choose to disobey Allah, the Exalted, irrespective of how tempting or easy it may seem to be. Even if one is advised by their close friends and relatives to do so as there is no obedience to the creation if it means disobedience to the Creator. And in truth they will never be able to protect them from Allah, the Exalted, and His punishment in either this world or the next. The same way Allah, the Exalted, grants success to those who obey Him He removes a successful outcome from those who disobey Him even if this removal takes time to witness. A muslim should not be fooled as this will occur sooner or later. The Holy Quran has made it extremely clear that an evil plan or action only encompasses the doer even if this punishment is delayed. Chapter 35 Fatir, verse 43:

“...but the evil plot does not encompass except its own people...”

Therefore, no matter how difficult the situation and choice muslims should always choose the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in both worldly and religious matters as this alone will lead to true success in both worlds even if this success is not obvious immediately.

“Indeed, We have tried them as We tried the companions of the garden, when they swore to cut its fruit in the [early] morning. Without making exception. So there came upon it [the garden] an affliction from your Lord while they were asleep. And it became as though reaped. And they called one another at morning. [Saying], "Go early to your crop if you would cut the fruit." So they set out, while lowering their voices. [Saying], "There will surely not enter it today upon you [any] poor person." And they went early in determination, [assuming themselves] able. But when they saw it, they said, "Indeed, we are lost. Rather, we have been deprived."...Such is the punishment [of this world]. And the punishment of the Hereafter is greater, if they only knew.”

Islam teaches muslims that they should never compromise on their faith in order to gain something from the material world. Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 135:

“O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives...”

As the material world is temporary whatever one gains from it will eventually fade away and they will be held accountable for their actions and attitude in the hereafter. On the other hand, faith is the precious jewel which guides a muslim through all difficulties in this world and in the hereafter safely. Therefore, it is plain foolishness to compromise the thing which is more beneficial and lasting for the sake of a temporary thing.

Many people especially women, will encounter moments in their lives where they will have to choose whether to compromise on their faith. For example, in some cases a muslim woman may believe that if she removed her scarf and dressed a certain way she would be more respected at work and may even climb the corporate ladder more quickly. Similarly, in the corporate world it is considered important to mingle with colleagues after work hours. So a muslim might find themselves being invited to a pub or club after work.

In times like this it is important to remember that ultimate victory and success will only be granted to those who remain steadfast on the teachings of Islam. Those who act in this way will be granted worldly and religious success. But more importantly their worldly success will not become a burden for them. In fact, it will become a means for Allah, the Exalted, to increase their rank and remembrance amongst mankind. Examples of this are the rightly guided Caliphs of Islam. They did not compromise on their faith and instead remained steadfast throughout their lives and in return Allah, the Exalted, granted them a worldly and religious empire.

All other forms of success are very temporal and sooner or later they become a difficulty for its bearer. One only needs to observe the many celebrities who compromised on their ideals and belief in order to obtain fame and fortune only for these things to become a cause of their sadness, anxiety, depression, substance abuse and even suicide.

Reflect on these two paths for a moment and then decide which one should be preferred and chosen.

“Indeed, We have tried them as We tried the companions of the garden, when they swore to cut its fruit in the [early] morning. Without making exception. So there came upon it [the garden] an affliction from your Lord while they were asleep. And it became as though reaped. And they called one another at morning. [Saying], "Go early to your crop if you would cut the fruit." So they set out, while lowering their voices. [Saying], "There will surely not enter it today upon you [any] poor person." And they went early in determination, [assuming themselves] able. But when they saw it, they said, "Indeed, we are lost. Rather, we have been deprived."...Such is the punishment [of this world]. And the punishment of the Hereafter is greater, if they only knew.”

It is important to learn that no matter how much physical or social strength a person has a day will certainly come when they face the consequences of their actions. In most cases, this occurs during their life where the actions of a person leads them to trouble, such as prison and eventually they will face the consequences of their actions in the hereafter as well. This applies to all people not just leaders.

A muslim should therefore never mistreat others, such as their relatives. They should learn a lesson from the tyrannical leaders of history who were greater in strength than them yet, a day certainly came when their strength did not benefit them and they faced the consequences of their evil deeds. Social influence and strength are fickle things as they quickly pass from person to person thereby, never remaining with anyone for long. Therefore, a muslim who possesses such strength should use it in a way which is pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, by benefiting themselves and others. But if they

abuse their authority then they will eventually face a punishment which no one can protect them from.

In addition, it is important not to abuse one's authority as it may cause them to be hurled into Hell on Judgment Day. Every oppressor will have to give their righteous deeds to their victims and if necessary take the sins of their victims until justice is established. This will cause many oppressors to be thrown into Hell. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6579.

To conclude, a muslim should never forget to hold themselves accountable for their deeds. Those who do will avoid disobeying Allah, the Exalted, and harming others. But those who do not judge themselves will continue disobeying Allah, the Exalted, and harming others heedlessly not knowing that in actual fact they are only harming themselves. But when they realize this fact it will be too late for them to escape punishment.

“Indeed, We have tried them as We tried the companions of the garden, when they swore to cut its fruit in the [early] morning. Without making exception. So there came upon it [the garden] an affliction from your Lord while they were asleep. And it became as though reaped. And they called one another at morning. [Saying], "Go early to your crop if you would cut the fruit." So they set out, while lowering their voices. [Saying], "There will surely not enter it today upon you [any] poor person." And they went early in determination, [assuming themselves] able. But when they saw it, they said, "Indeed, we are lost. Rather, we have been deprived."...Such is the punishment [of this world]. And the punishment of the Hereafter is greater, if they only knew.”

Generally speaking, these verses indicate that the one who fails to sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, will suffer stress and trouble in both worlds.

It is important for muslims to strive in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience as Allah, the Exalted, has guaranteed a good life in both worlds for the one who behaves in this manner. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

“Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do.”

This good life will protect a muslim from severe grief, depression and other extreme moods and mental disorders which can destroy a person's life. Even though, muslims will face difficulties which will sadden them but if they obey Allah, the Exalted, this sadness will never become extreme and effect their entire life on a long term basis. This is because a muslim who strives in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, has an excellent reason to continue moving forward through their difficulty without giving up and turning to depression and even suicide. For example, they look forward to the countless reward which will be granted to the patient. Chapter 39 Az Zumar, verse 10:

“...Indeed, the patient will be given their reward without account [i.e., limit].”

Whereas, the muslim who does not strive in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, and only claims the title of being a muslim with their tongue will not be granted this attitude and a good life. And whenever they face difficulties it will drive them to extreme moods and mental disorders which will destroy their entire life.

“Indeed, We have tried them as We tried the companions of the garden, when they swore to cut its fruit in the [early] morning. Without making exception. So there came upon it [the garden] an affliction from your Lord while they were asleep. And it became as though reaped. And they called one another at morning. [Saying], "Go early to your crop if you would cut the fruit." So they set out, while lowering their voices. [Saying], "There will surely not enter it today upon you [any] poor person." And they went early in determination, [assuming themselves] able. But when they saw it, they said, "Indeed, we are lost. Rather, we have been deprived."...Such is the punishment [of this world]. And the punishment of the Hereafter is greater, if they only knew.”

Generally speaking, these verses indicate that the one who fails to sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, will suffer stress and trouble in both worlds.

It is a universal aim and goal for all people, irrespective of their faith or social class, to achieve peace of mind in this world. It is the ultimate reason why people strive in this material world, work long hours and dedicate the majority of their efforts to this world. People desire to obtain such a life whereby they have no stresses or worries such as financial difficulties. But it is strange how people, especially muslims, look for peace of mind in the wrong place. Just like a person who desires to watch a football game yet, goes to a cricket match. Allah, the Exalted, has made it clear that true peace of mind only lies in His obedience which involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and being patient with destiny. Chapter 13 Ar Ra'd, verse 28:

“...Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah hearts are assured.”

Whenever a person seeks peace of mind in the material world it will only lead them further away from their goal. Whenever a person sets a target in respect to this material world that target will only lead onto more targets. This continues until the person departs this world without obtaining what they were looking for. It is obvious that the rich do not obtain true peace of mind as they stress more than normal people and whatever they obtain of the world ends up becoming a burden for them. It is why the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2465, that the one who focuses on the hereafter will be blessed with a rich heart and Allah, the Exalted, will organize their affairs meaning, they will obtain peace of mind. But the one who focuses on the material world will only see their poverty and their affairs will become scattered meaning, they will not achieve peace of mind. The one who obeys Allah, the Exalted, will find peace of mind even if they possess little of this world. But the one who is lost in the material world will go from one worldly door to another but will never find true peace as it has not been placed there. If a person wants to watch a football game they should not go to a cricket match and if a muslim desires peace of mind they should not search for it in the material world as it lies only in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted. It is important to note, that those who adhere to the teachings of Islam will encounter difficulties throughout their lives as this is guaranteed but through their obedience Allah, the Exalted, will remove fear and grief from them so that they remain firm and steadfast on the correct path. This is similar to the one who only feels slight discomfort from a medical procedure as they have been anaesthetised.

“Indeed, We have tried them as We tried the companions of the garden, when they swore to cut its fruit in the [early] morning. Without making exception. So there came upon it [the garden] an affliction from your Lord while they were asleep. And it became as though reaped. And they called one another at morning. [Saying], "Go early to your crop if you would cut the fruit." So they set out, while lowering their voices. [Saying], "There will surely not enter it today upon you [any] poor person." And they went early in determination, [assuming themselves] able. But when they saw it, they said, "Indeed, we are lost. Rather, we have been deprived."...Such is the punishment [of this world]. And the punishment of the Hereafter is greater, if they only knew.”

Generally speaking, these verses indicate that the one who fails to sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, will suffer stress and trouble in both worlds.

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2465, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that whoever prioritises the hereafter over this material world will be granted contentment, their affairs will be corrected for them and they will receive their destined provision in an easy way.

This half of the Hadith means that whoever correctly fulfils their duties in respect to Allah, the Exalted, and to the creation, such as providing for their family in a lawful manner while avoiding the excess of this material world will be granted contentment. This is when one is pleased with what they

possess without being greedy and actively striving to obtain more worldly things. In reality, the one who is content with what they possess is a truly rich person even if they possess little wealth as they become independent of things. Independence of anything makes one rich in respect to it.

In addition, this attitude will allow one to comfortably deal with any worldly issues which may arise during their life. This is because the less one interacts with the material world and focuses on the hereafter the less worldly issues they will face. The less worldly issues a person faces the more comfortable their life will become. For example, the one who possesses one house will have fewer issues to deal with in respect to it, such as a broken cooker, than the one who possesses ten houses. Finally, this person will easily and pleasantly obtain their lawful provision. Not only this but Allah, the Exalted, will place such grace in their provision that it will cover all their responsibilities and necessities meaning, it will satisfy them and their dependents.

But as mentioned in the other half of this Hadith the one who prioritises the material world over the hereafter meaning, by neglecting their duties or striving for the unnecessary and excess of this material world will find that their need, meaning greed, for worldly things is never satisfied which by definition makes them poor even if they possess much wealth. These people will go from one worldly issue to another throughout the day failing to achieve contentment as they have opened too many worldly doors. And they will receive their destined provision with difficulty and it will not give them satisfaction and never seem enough to fill their greed. This may even push them towards the unlawful which only leads to a loss in both worlds.

“Indeed, We have tried them as We tried the companions of the garden, when they swore to cut its fruit in the [early] morning. Without making exception. So there came upon it [the garden] an affliction from your Lord while they were asleep. And it became as though reaped. And they called one another at morning. [Saying], "Go early to your crop if you would cut the fruit." So they set out, while lowering their voices. [Saying], "There will surely not enter it today upon you [any] poor person." And they went early in determination, [assuming themselves] able. But when they saw it, they said, "Indeed, we are lost. Rather, we have been deprived."...Such is the punishment [of this world]. And the punishment of the Hereafter is greater, if they only knew.”

Generally speaking, these verses indicate that the one who fails to sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, will suffer stress and trouble in both worlds.

Those who disbelieve or avoid acting on their faith in Islam do so out of love for the material world and the things within it. They believe that believing or acting on their faith will prevent them from enjoying worldly blessings meaning, for them faith is something that restricts their desires and therefore they turn away from it either literally or practically. Instead they turn towards the material world and strive to fulfill their desires without restrictions believing that true peace lies in this. They look down at those who accept and actualize their faith by controlling their actions and using their worldly blessings in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. They believe that these pious Muslims are lowly slaves who been restricted from enjoying themselves whereas they, the disbelievers and the misguided, are free. But in actual fact this could not be further from the truth as the real

slaves are those who fail to accept and submit to Allah, the Exalted, and the superior ones are those who have done this as they become free of slavery to the world. This can be understood by an example. A good parent will restrict the type of food their child eats meaning, they will only let them eat junk and unhealthy food once in a while and instead force them to follow a healthy diet. This child therefore believes that their parent has placed undesirable restrictions on them and that they have become slaves to their parent and their healthy diet. On the other hand another child has been given permission from their parent to eat whatever they desire, whenever they desire and how much they desire. So this child believes that they are completely free of all restrictions. When these children come together the child who has been given complete freedom criticizes and looks down on the child who has been restricted by their parent. The latter child will also feel sorry for themselves when they observe the other child has been given free reign to behave however they wish. Outwardly it appears the child who has been granted freedom has obtained happiness whereas the other child is too tied up with restrictions to enjoy life. But years down the line the truth will become manifest. The child who had no restrictions grows up to become extremely unhealthy e.g. obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, etc. As a result of this they even become mentally unhealthy as they lose confidence in their body and the way they look. Because of this they become a slave of medications, diseases, mental and social problems. All these things restrict their happiness and life. Whereas, the child who was restricted by their parent grows up healthy in mind and body. As a result they become confident in their body and ability, which aids them to succeed in life. They become free of any slavery to medications, diseases, mental and social problems as they grew up with the correct balance and guidance. So the child who had no restrictions grew up becoming a slave to many things, whereas the child who had restrictions grew up independent of all restrictions.

To conclude, the real slave is the one who becomes a slave to all other things except Allah, the Exalted, such as social media, society, fashion and culture, and this leads to mental, physical and social problems, whereas the real free person is the one who submits only to Allah, the Exalted, thereby achieving peace of mind and body.

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Generally speaking, these verses indicate that the one who fails to sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, will suffer stress and trouble in both worlds.

First of all, it is important to understand, that the major thing which separates a human from an animal is the fact that people live by a higher moral code. If people abandoned this and simply acted on their desires then there would be no difference between them and animals. In fact, people would be worse as they possess the higher level of thinking yet, still choose to live like animals.

Secondly, whether people want to admit it or not in reality, every person is a servant of something or someone. Some are servants of others, such as Hollywood executives and do whatever they command them to do even if it

challenges modesty and shame. Others are servants of their relatives and friends and do whatever it takes to please them. Others are the worse by being servants of their own desires as this is the attitude of animals who generally act to please themselves. The best and highest form of servanthood is being a servant of Allah, the Exalted. This is quite evident if one turns the pages of history which clearly shows that those who were the servants of Allah, the Exalted, such as the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, were granted the highest honour and respect in this world and will be granted this in the next. Centuries and millennia have passed yet their names are remembered as the pillars and beacons of history. Whereas those who became servants of others especially, their own desires were eventually disgraced in this world even if they achieved some worldly status and they became mere footnotes in history. The media barely remembers those who pass away for more than a few days before moving onto the next person to report on. During their lives these people eventually become sad, lonely, depressed and even suicidal as selling their souls and decency to their worldly masters did not grant them the contentment they were looking for. One does not need to be a scholar to understand this obvious truth. So if people must be servants they should be the servants of Allah, the Exalted, as lasting honour, greatness and true success lies only in this.

***“Indeed, We have tried them as We tried the companions of the garden, when they swore to cut its fruit in the [early] morning. Without making exception. So there came upon it [the garden] an affliction from your Lord while they were asleep. And it became as though reaped. And they called one another at morning. [Saying], “Go early to your crop if you would cut the fruit.” So they set out, while lowering their voices. [Saying], “There will surely not enter it today upon you [any] poor person.” And they went early in determination, [assuming themselves] able. But when they saw it, they said, “Indeed, we are lost. Rather, we have been deprived.” The most moderate of them said, “Did I not say to you, “Why do you not exalt [Allāh]?””*”**

The final part of these verses could mean that they should have shown gratitude to Allah, the Exalted, by using the blessings He granted them in ways pleasing to Him.

A muslim must ensure they fulfill all three aspects of gratitude so that they avoid becoming a denier of Allah, the Exalted, as the one who is ungrateful in reality, scorns the One who granted them the blessings. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 152:

“...And be grateful to Me and do not deny Me.”

The three aspects of gratitude are to internally acknowledge Allah, the Exalted, as the sole Creator and Provider of all blessings. An aspect of this is to correct one's intention so that they only perform actions to please Allah, the Exalted. The next aspect is to praise Allah, the Exalted, via the tongue. And the final and highest aspect is to practically show gratitude through one's actions by using each blessing as prescribed by Islam in order to please Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 14 Ibrahim, verse 7:

“And [remember] when your Lord proclaimed, 'If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favor]; but if you deny, indeed, My punishment is severe.'”

As true gratitude leads to an increase in blessings muslims should fear that showing ingratitude may cause the blessings they possess to either be taken away from them or for their blessings to be used against them by becoming a burden and a curse for them in both worlds. It is important to note, even if a muslim becomes truly grateful they will still face tests and difficulties as they are guaranteed. But if they behave in the correct way they will be guided through every situation so that they obtain peace of mind and body in this world and a great reward in the hereafter. This is similar to the patient who is operated on but feels no pain as they have been anesthetized.

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In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 2686, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that failing to fulfill the important duty of commanding good and forbidding evil can be understood with the example of a boat with two levels full of people. The people on the lower level keep disturbing the people on the upper level whenever they desire to access water. So they decide to drill a hole in the lower level so that they can access water directly. If the people on the upper level fail to stop them they will all surely drown.

It is important for muslims to never give up commanding good and forbidding evil according to their knowledge in a gentle way. A muslim should never believe that as long as they obey Allah, the Exalted, other misguided people will not be able to affect them in a negative way. A good apple will eventually get affected when placed with rotten apples. Similarly, the muslim who fails to command others to do good will eventually be effected by their negative behavior whether it is subtle or apparent. Even if the wider society has become heedless one should never give up advising

their dependents such as their family as not only will their negative behavior affect them more but this is a duty on all muslims according to a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 2928. Even if a muslim is ignored by others they should discharge their duty by persistently advising them in a gentle way which is supported by strong evidence and knowledge. Only in this way will they be protected from their negative effects and pardoned on the Day of Judgment. But if they only care about themselves and ignore the actions of others it is feared that the negative effects of others may well lead to their eventual misguidance.

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These verses are connected to chapter 14 Ibrahim, verse 22:

“And Satan will say when the matter has been concluded, "Indeed, Allah had promised you the promise of truth. And I promised you, but I betrayed you. But I had no authority over you except that I invited you, and you responded to me. So do not blame me; but blame yourselves...””

This is when people on Judgment Day will try to blame the Devil for their sins in order to shift their burden of punishment to him. But this verse makes it clear that this is a futile and foolish excuse as the Devil only inspires people to commit sins meaning, he cannot physically force someone to disobey Allah, the Exalted. Each person makes a choice to obey or disobey Allah, the Exalted, and will therefore face the

consequences of their choice. Unfortunately, some do not understand this important point. They often commit sins and either blame others by declaring they were convinced to act in this way or they declare as others are committing sins openly it somehow gives them a license to act in the same way. The same way a worldly judge in a court of law will never accept these excuses neither will Allah, the Exalted, on Judgment Day. It is important for muslims not to make culture or fashion the standards for their behaviour as this will misguide them and they will be left with no valid excuses on Judgment Day. Instead, they should adhere to the teachings of Islam which simply outlines how a person must behave in all situations. It is time muslims abandon childish excuses and sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, before they reach a day when their excuses will not be accepted by Allah, the Exalted. If Allah, the Exalted, will reject the excuses of those who blame the Devil when he is their open enemy and promised to misguide them how will Allah, the Exalted, accept any other excuse for disobeying Him?

“Indeed, We have tried them as We tried the companions of the garden, when they swore to cut its fruit in the [early] morning. Without making exception. So there came upon it [the garden] an affliction from your Lord while they were asleep. And it became as though reaped. And they called one another at morning. [Saying], "Go early to your crop if you would cut the fruit." So they set out, while lowering their voices. [Saying], "There will surely not enter it today upon you [any] poor person." And they went early in determination, [assuming themselves] able. But when they saw it, they said, "Indeed, we are lost. Rather, we have been deprived." The most moderate of them said, "Did I not say to you, "Why do you not exalt [Allāh]?"” They said, "Exalted is our Lord! Indeed, we were wrongdoers." Then they approached one another, blaming each other. They said, "O woe to us; indeed we were transgressors.””

In a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4251, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that people commit sins but the best person who commits sins is the one who sincerely repents.

As people are not Angels they are bound to commit sins. The thing that makes these people special is when they sincerely repent from their sins. Sincere repentance includes feeling remorse, seeking the forgiveness of Allah, the Exalted, and anyone who has been wronged, making a firm promise not to commit the sin or a similar sin again and making up for any rights which have been violated in respect to Allah, the Exalted, and people.

It is important to note, minor sins can be erased through righteous deeds which has been advised in many Hadiths, such as the one found in Sahih Muslim, number 550. It advises that the five daily obligatory prayers and two consecutive Friday congregational prayers erase the minor sins committed in between them as long as major sins are avoided.

Major sins are only erased through sincere repentance. Therefore, a muslim should strive to avoid all sins, minor and major, and if they happen to occur to immediately sincerely repent as the time of death is unknown. And they should continue obeying Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience.

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In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 2447, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that oppression will become a darkness on the Day of Judgment.

This is vital to avoid as those who find themselves plunged in darkness are unlikely to find their way to Paradise. Only those who will be provided a guiding light will be able to do this successfully.

Oppression can take many forms. The first type is when one fails to fulfill the commands of Allah, the Exalted, and refrain from His prohibitions. Even though this has no effect on the infinite status of Allah, the Exalted, it will cause the person to become submerged into darkness in both worlds.

According to a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4244, whenever a person commits a sin a black spot is etched on their spiritual heart. The more they sin the more their heart will become encompassed by darkness. This will prevent them from accepting and following true guidance in this world which will ultimately lead to darkness in the next world. Chapter 83 Al Mutaffifin, verse 14:

“No! Rather, the stain has covered their hearts of that which they were earning.”

The next type of oppression is when one oppresses themselves by not fulfilling the trust they have been granted by Allah, the Exalted, in the form of their body and other worldly blessings they possess. The greatest of which is one's faith. This must be protected and strengthened through gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge.

The final type of oppression is when one mistreats others. Allah, the Exalted, will not forgive these sins until the oppressor's victim forgives them first. As people are not so merciful this is unlikely to happen. Then justice will be established on Judgment Day where the oppressor's righteous deeds will be given to their victim and if necessary the victim's sins will be given to the oppressor. This may lead to the oppressor being hurled into Hell. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6579. One should therefore treat others how they wish to be treated by people. A muslim should avoid all forms of oppression if they desire a guiding light in this world and in the next.

“Indeed, We have tried them as We tried the companions of the garden, when they swore to cut its fruit in the [early] morning. Without making exception. So there came upon it [the garden] an affliction from your Lord while they were asleep. And it became as though reaped. And they called one another at morning. [Saying], "Go early to your crop if you would cut the fruit." So they set out, while lowering their voices. [Saying], "There will surely not enter it today upon you [any] poor person." And they went early in determination, [assuming themselves] able. But when they saw it, they said, "Indeed, we are lost. Rather, we have been deprived." The most moderate of them said, "Did I not say to you, "Why do you not exalt [Allāh]?"” They said, "Exalted is our Lord! Indeed, we were wrongdoers." Then they approached one another, blaming each other. They said, "O woe to us; indeed we were transgressors. Perhaps our Lord will substitute for us [one] better than it. Indeed, we are toward our Lord desirous.””

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2459, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, described the difference between true hope in the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, and wishful thinking. True hope is when one controls their soul by avoiding the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted, and actively struggles for preparing for the hereafter. Whereas, the foolish wishful thinker follows their desires and then expects Allah, the Exalted, to forgive them and fulfill their wishes.

It is important for muslims not to confuse these two attitudes so that they avoid living and dying as a wishful thinker as this person is highly unlikely to succeed in this world or the next. Wishful thinking is like a farmer who fails to prepare the land for planting, fails to plant seeds, fails to water the land and then expects to harvest a huge crop. This is plain foolishness and

this farmer is highly unlikely to succeed. Whereas, true hope is like a farmer who prepares the land, plants seeds, waters the land and then hopes Allah, the Exalted, will bless them with a huge harvest. The key difference is that the one who possesses true hope will actively strive to obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. And whenever they slip up they sincerely repent. Whereas, the wishful thinker will not actively strive in obeying Allah, the Exalted, and instead follow their desires and still expect Allah, the Exalted, to forgive them and fulfill their wishes.

Muslims must therefore learn the key difference so that they can abandon wishful thinking and instead adopt true hope in Allah, the Exalted, which always leads to nothing except good and success in both worlds. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 7405.

A specific type of wishful thinking which affected the past nations and even the muslim nation is when a person believes that they can ignore the commands and prohibitions of Allah, the Exalted, and somehow someone on the Day of Judgement will intercede for them and save them from Hell. Even though the intercession of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, is a fact and has been discussed in many Hadiths, such as the one found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4308, none the less even with his intercession some muslims whose punishment will be reduced by it will still enter Hell. Even a single moment in Hell is truly unbearable. So one should abandon wishful thinking and instead adopt true hope by practically striving in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted.

The Devil convinces those who do not believe in Judgement Day that even if it occurs they will make peace with Allah, the Exalted, on that day by claiming that they were not so bad as they avoided major crimes such as murder. They have convinced themselves that their pleas will be accepted and they will be sent to Paradise even though they disbelieved in Allah, the Exalted, during their lives on Earth. This is incredibly foolish as Allah, the Exalted, will not treat the person who believed in Him and tried to obey him like the one who disbelieved in Him. A single verse has erased this type of wishful thinking. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 85:

“And whoever desires other than Islām as religion - never will it be accepted from him, and he, in the Hereafter, will be among the losers.”

“...And the punishment of the Hereafter is greater, if they only knew.”

The trumpet blast will lead to the death of the creation. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 7381. The important thing to learn is that this is a call which no one can or will reject responding to. It will lead to the resurrection and final judgment. Therefore, muslims should respond to the call of Allah, the Exalted, through the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, through sincere obedience by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 8 An Anfal, verse 24:

“O you who have believed, respond to Allah and to the Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life...”

Whoever responds to this call in this world will find the final call easy to endure and respond to. Whereas, the one who lives heedless to the call of Allah, the Exalted, in this world will not find peace in it and they will be forced to answer the call of the trumpet which will be a great burden for them to endure and respond to. A person can only ignore the call of Allah, the Exalted, for so long as the final call will occur, sooner or later, and no one will be able to avoid or ignore it. If this is inevitable it makes sense that one respond to it now, today, instead of living in heedlessness. If one hears the trumpet blast while heedless no action or regret will benefit them and what comes after for this person will be even more terrifying.

“...And the punishment of the Hereafter is greater, if they only knew.”

The Sun will be brought within two miles of the creation on the Day of Judgment. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 2864.

This will cause people to sweat according to the deeds they performed during their lives on Earth. Some people's sweat will reach up to their ankles, some their knees and for others it will reach their mouths.

One only needs to ponder over the times they were subjected to intense summer weather and how the heat affected their attitude and behaviour. Through this one can imagine how difficult the situation on Judgment Day will be when the Sun is brought so close to them. This shows that those who strive hard and exert sincere efforts in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, will find relaxation on Judgment Day. But those who were lazy and relaxed during their lives on Earth will be subjected to great stress on Judgment Day. Simply put, the one who strives here will relax there but the one who relaxes here will strive there in difficulty.

The same way people strive hard in this material world so that they obtain a comfortable life and even a comfortable retirement, even though reaching this retirement age is not guaranteed, muslims should strive

even harder in this world by obeying Allah, the Exalted, in all aspects of their life so that they can obtain peace and comfort on a day that is guaranteed to occur. It is a sign of great ignorance to strive for a day one may never reach namely, the day of retirement, and not strive for a day they are guaranteed to reach and experience namely, Judgment Day.

“...And the punishment of the Hereafter is greater, if they only knew.”

People will be commanded to cross the Bridge which will be placed over Hell on the Day of Judgment. This has been discussed extensively in Islamic teachings, such as the Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6573. It warns that extremely large hooks will be on the Bridge which will affect people according to their deeds. Some will be flung into Hell by them, some will be subjected to great torture before they cross the Bridge, others will only face minimal injury from them and finally the righteous will not be harmed by them. Another Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 455, warns that the Bridge is narrower than a strand of hair and sharper than a sword.

The important thing to learn from this is that each person will cross the Bridge according to their deeds. So it is important for Muslims not to neglect any duties if they desire to cross the Bridge safely. They must fulfil the commands of Allah, the Exalted, and refrain from His prohibitions. These include duties in respect to Allah, the Exalted, and people. One should not neglect this and simply hope they will magically cross the Bridge unaffected.

In addition, the ease at which a person will cross this Bridge will be a mirror of how much they remained steadfast on the straight path of Islam in this world. This straight path is the path of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 31:

“Say, [O Muhammad], “If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins...”

Anyone who abandons this path will not successfully cross this Bridge. Simply put, the more one remains steadfast on the straight path in this world the easier they will cross the Bridge over Hell on Judgment Day. The straight path has been made clear in this world so muslims are left with no excuses from following it thereby ensuring they safely cross the Bridge on Judgment Day.

“...And the punishment of the Hereafter is greater, if they only knew.”

The thing to remember is that in reality each person who will end up in Hell takes the fire, which they will encounter in Hell, with them from this world in the form of their sins. When a muslim engraves this reality into their mind they will observe each sin, major or minor, as a piece of unbearable fire. The same way a person avoids fire in this world they should avoid sins as in reality sins are like hidden fire which will be shown to them in the hereafter.

In addition, a muslim should not live in heedlessness and believe they can simply claim love for Allah, the Exalted, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, without supporting this verbal declaration with actions. If this was true then the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, would not have strived so hard in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, and they undoubtedly understood Islam and Judgment Day better than the people after them. Simply put, a declaration of love without actions will not save one from Hell. In fact, it has been made clear that some muslims will enter Hell on Judgment Day. The muslim who abandons acting on Islamic teachings should understand that their attitude may cause them to lose their faith before their death so that they enter Judgment Day as a non-muslim, which is the greatest loss.

The same way one would not enter a battle without armour and a shield a muslim should not enter Judgment Day without the armour and shield of righteous deeds. Otherwise, the same way the soldier who has no

protection will most likely be harmed so will a muslim who reaches Judgment Day without the protection provided by the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, which involves fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience. A muslim should remember that the luxuries and pleasures of the material world they enjoyed will not make them feel better if they end up in Hell. In fact, it will only make them feel worse.

“...And the punishment of the Hereafter is greater, if they only knew.”

A great distraction which prevents one from submitting to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, is ignorance. It can be argued that it is the origin of every sin as the one who truly knows the consequences of sins would never commit them. This refers to true beneficial knowledge which is knowledge that is acted upon. In reality, all knowledge which is not acted on is not beneficial knowledge. The example of the one who behaves in this manner is described in the Holy Quran as a donkey which carries books of knowledge which do not benefit it. Chapter 62 Al Jumu'ah, verse 5:

“...and then did not take it on (did not act upon knowledge) is like that of a donkey who carries volumes [of books]...”

A person who acts on their knowledge rarely slips up and commits sins intentionally. In fact, when this occurs it is only caused by a moment of ignorance where a person forgets to act on their knowledge which results in them sinning.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, once highlighted the seriousness of ignorance in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2322. He declared that everything in the material world is cursed except for the remembrance of Allah, the Exalted, whatever is connected to this remembrance, the scholar and the student of knowledge. This means that all the blessings in the material world will

become a curse for the one who is ignorant as they will misuse them thereby committing sins.

In fact, ignorance can be considered a person's worse enemy as it prevents them from protecting themselves from harm and gaining benefit all of which can only be achieved through acting on knowledge. The ignorant commits sins without being aware of them. How can one avoid a sin if they do not know what is considered a sin? Ignorance causes one to neglect their obligatory duties. How can one fulfil their duties if they are unaware of what their duties are?

It is therefore a duty on all Muslims to gain enough knowledge to fulfil all their obligatory duties and avoid sins. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224.

“...And the punishment of the Hereafter is greater, if they only knew.”

Ignorance leads to weakness of faith.

A great obstacle to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, is weakness of faith. It is a blameworthy characteristic which gives rise to other negative characteristics, such as failing to act on one's knowledge, fearing others, placing the obedience of people above the obedience to Allah, the Exalted, having hope in forgiveness without striving for it and other undesired characteristics. The greatest affliction of weakness of faith is that it allows one to commit sins, such as neglecting the obligatory duties. The root cause of weakness of faith is ignorance of Islam.

One should strive to gain knowledge in order to strengthen their faith. With time they will eventually reach certainty of faith which is so strong that it safeguards a person through all tests and trials and ensures they fulfil their duties both religious and worldly. This knowledge is obtained when one studies the teachings of the Holy Quran and the Hadiths of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Specifically, those teachings which discuss the promises of reward for those who are obedient and the punishment for those who are disobedient to Allah, the Exalted. This creates fear of punishment and hope of reward in a muslim's heart which acts like a pull and push mechanism towards the obedience of Allah, the Exalted.

One can strengthen their faith by reflecting on the creations within the Heavens and the Earth. When done correctly this clearly indicates the Oneness of Allah, the Exalted, and His infinite power. Chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 53:

“We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth...”

For example, if a muslim ponders over the night and day and how perfectly in sync they are and the other things linked to them they will truly believe that this is not a random thing meaning, there is a force which ensures everything runs like clockwork. This is the infinite power of Allah, the Exalted. In addition, if one ponders over the perfect timing of the night and day they will realise it clearly indicates that there is only one God namely, Allah, the Exalted. If there were more than one God each god would desire the night and day to occur according to their own desires. This would lead to utter chaos as one God might desire the Sun to rise whereas the other God might desire the night to continue. The perfect uninterrupted system found within the universe proves there is only one God namely, Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 21 Al Anbiya, verse 22:

“Had there been within them [i.e., the heavens and earth] gods besides Allah, they both would have been ruined...”

Another thing which can strengthen one's faith is to persist in righteous deeds and abstain from all sins. As faith is belief supported by actions it

weakens when sins are committed and strengthens when good deeds are performed. For example, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, once warned in a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 5662, that a muslim is not a believer when they drink alcohol.

Parable 44

Chapter 74 – Al Muddaththir, Verses 49-51

﴿٤٩﴾ فَمَا لَهُمْ عَنِ التَّذْكَرَةِ مُعْرِضِينَ

﴿٥٠﴾ كَأَنَّهُمْ حُمُرٌ مُّسْتَنْفِرَةٌ

﴿٥١﴾ فَرَّتْ مِنْ قَسْوَرَةٍ

*“Then what is [the matter] with them that they are, from the reminder,
turning away.*

As if they were alarmed donkeys.

Fleeing from a lion?”

“Then what is [the matter] with them that they are, from the reminder, turning away. As if they were alarmed donkeys. Fleeing from a lion?”

One must avoid behaving in this manner towards the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. One should understand that sincerely obeying and following them leads to nothing except peace and success in both worlds.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim number 196, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that Islam is sincerity towards the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

Sincerity towards the Holy Quran includes having deep respect and love for the words of Allah, the Exalted. This sincerity is proven when one fulfils the three aspects of the Holy Quran. The first is to recite it correctly and regularly. The second is to understand its teachings through a reliable source and teacher. The final aspect is to act on the teachings of the Holy Quran with the aim of pleasing Allah, the Exalted. The sincere muslim gives priority to acting on its teachings over acting on their desires which contradict the Holy Quran. Modelling one’s character on the Holy Quran is the sign of true sincerity towards the book of Allah, the Exalted. This is the tradition of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, which is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 1342.

The next thing mentioned in the main Hadith under discussion is sincerity towards the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This includes striving to acquire knowledge in order to act on his traditions. These traditions include the ones related to Allah, the Exalted, in the form of worship, and his blessed noble character towards the creation. Chapter 68 Al Qalam, verse 4:

"And indeed, you are of a great moral character."

It includes to accept his commands and prohibitions at all times. This has been made a duty by Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 59 Al Hashr, verse 7:

"...And whatever the Messenger has given you - take; and what he has forbidden you - refrain from..."

Sincerity includes to give priority to his traditions over the actions of anyone else as all paths to Allah, the Exalted, are closed except the path of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 31:

"Say, [O Muḥammad], "If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins..."

One must love all those who supported him during his life and after his passing, whether they are from his Family or his Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all. Supporting those who walk on his path and teach his traditions is a duty on those who desire to be sincere to him. Sincerity also includes loving those who love him and disliking those who criticise him irrespective, of one's relationship with these people. This is all summarised in a single Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 16. It advises that a person cannot have true faith until they love Allah, the Exalted, and the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, more than the entire creation. This love must be shown through actions not just words.

“Then what is [the matter] with them that they are, from the reminder, turning away. As if they were alarmed donkeys. Fleeing from a lion?”

One must avoid behaving in this manner towards the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. One should understand that sincerely obeying and following them leads to nothing except peace and success in both worlds.

It is important for muslims to strive in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience as Allah, the Exalted, has guaranteed a good life in both worlds for the one who behaves in this manner. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

“Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do.”

This good life will protect a muslim from severe grief, depression and other extreme moods and mental disorders which can destroy a person's life. Even though, muslims will face difficulties which will sadden them but if they obey Allah, the Exalted, this sadness will never become extreme and effect their entire life on a long term basis. This is because a muslim who

strives in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, has an excellent reason to continue moving forward through their difficulty without giving up and turning to depression and even suicide. For example, they look forward to the countless reward which will be granted to the patient. Chapter 39 Az Zumar, verse 10:

“...Indeed, the patient will be given their reward without account [i.e., limit].”

Whereas, the muslim who does not strive in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, and only claims the title of being a muslim with their tongue will not be granted this attitude and a good life. And whenever they face difficulties it will drive them to extreme moods and mental disorders which will destroy their entire life.

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It is a universal aim and goal for all people, irrespective of their faith or social class, to achieve peace of mind in this world. It is the ultimate reason why people strive in this material world, work long hours and dedicate the majority of their efforts to this world. People desire to obtain such a life whereby they have no stresses or worries such as financial difficulties. But it is strange how people, especially muslims, look for peace of mind in the wrong place. Just like a person who desires to watch a football game yet, goes to a cricket match. Allah, the Exalted, has made it clear that true peace of mind only lies in His obedience which involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and being patient with destiny. Chapter 13 Ar Ra'd, verse 28:

“...Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah hearts are assured.”

Whenever a person seeks peace of mind in the material world it will only lead them further away from their goal. Whenever a person sets a target in

respect to this material world that target will only lead onto more targets. This continues until the person departs this world without obtaining what they were looking for. It is obvious that the rich do not obtain true peace of mind as they stress more than normal people and whatever they obtain of the world ends up becoming a burden for them. It is why the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2465, that the one who focuses on the hereafter will be blessed with a rich heart and Allah, the Exalted, will organize their affairs meaning, they will obtain peace of mind. But the one who focuses on the material world will only see their poverty and their affairs will become scattered meaning, they will not achieve peace of mind. The one who obeys Allah, the Exalted, will find peace of mind even if they possess little of this world. But the one who is lost in the material world will go from one worldly door to another but will never find true peace as it has not been placed there. If a person wants to watch a football game they should not go to a cricket match and if a muslim desires peace of mind they should not search for it in the material world as it lies only in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted. It is important to note, that those who adhere to the teachings of Islam will encounter difficulties throughout their lives as this is guaranteed but through their obedience Allah, the Exalted, will remove fear and grief from them so that they remain firm and steadfast on the correct path. This is similar to the one who only feels slight discomfort from a medical procedure as they have been anaesthetised.

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In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2465, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that whoever prioritises the hereafter over this material world will be granted contentment, their affairs will be corrected for them and they will receive their destined provision in an easy way.

This half of the Hadith means that whoever correctly fulfils their duties in respect to Allah, the Exalted, and to the creation, such as providing for their family in a lawful manner while avoiding the excess of this material world will be granted contentment. This is when one is pleased with what they possess without being greedy and actively striving to obtain more worldly things. In reality, the one who is content with what they possess is a truly rich person even if they possess little wealth as they become independent of things. Independence of anything makes one rich in respect to it.

In addition, this attitude will allow one to comfortably deal with any worldly issues which may arise during their life. This is because the less one interacts with the material world and focuses on the hereafter the less worldly issues they will face. The less worldly issues a person faces the more comfortable their life will become. For example, the one who possesses one house will have fewer issues to deal with in respect to it, such as a broken cooker, than the one who possesses ten houses. Finally, this person will easily and pleasantly obtain their lawful provision. Not only this but Allah, the Exalted, will place such grace in their provision that it will cover all their responsibilities and necessities meaning, it will satisfy them and their dependents.

But as mentioned in the other half of this Hadith the one who prioritises the material world over the hereafter meaning, by neglecting their duties or striving for the unnecessary and excess of this material world will find that their need, meaning greed, for worldly things is never satisfied which by definition makes them poor even if they possess much wealth. These people will go from one worldly issue to another throughout the day failing to achieve contentment as they have opened too many worldly doors. And they will receive their destined provision with difficulty and it will not give them satisfaction and never seem enough to fill their greed. This may even push them towards the unlawful which only leads to a loss in both worlds.

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Disbelief can be a literal rejecting of Islam or through actions, which involves disobeying Allah, the Exalted, even though one believes in Him. This can be clearly understood by an example. If an unaware person is warned by another of an approaching lion and the unaware person takes practical steps to obtain safety they will be considered someone who believed in the warning given to them as they adapted their behaviour based on the warning. Whereas, if the unaware person does not practically change their behaviour after being warned, people will suspect that they do not believe in the warning given to them even if the unaware person verbally claims belief in the warning given to them.

Some people claim that their belief and obedience to their God is in their hearts and they therefore do not need to demonstrate it practically. Unfortunately, this foolish mentality has infected many Muslims who believe they possess a pure faithful heart even though they fail to fulfil the obligatory duties of Islam. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has clearly declared in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3984, that when one's heart is pure the body becomes pure which means their actions become correct. But if one's heart is corrupt the

body becomes corrupt which means their actions will be corrupt and incorrect. Therefore, the one who does not obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling their duties practically can never have a pure heart.

In addition, demonstrating one's faith in Allah, the Exalted, practically is their proof and evidence which is required on Judgment Day in order to be granted Paradise. Not having this practical evidence is as silly as a student who hands back a blank exam paper to their teacher claiming their knowledge is in their mind so they therefore do not need to write it down by answering the exam questions. The same way this student would undoubtedly fail so will a person who reaches Judgment Day without the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in the form of fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience, even if they possess faith in their heart.

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First of all, it is important to understand, that the major thing which separates a human from an animal is the fact that people live by a higher moral code. If people abandoned this and simply acted on their desires then they would be no difference between them and animals. In fact, people would be worse as they possess the higher level of thinking yet, still choose to live like animals.

Secondly, whether people want to admit it or not in reality, every person is a servant of something or someone. Some are servants of others, such as Hollywood executives and do whatever they command them to do even if it challenges modesty and shame. Others are servants of their relatives and friends and do whatever it takes to please them. Others are the worse by being servants of their own desires as this is the attitude of animals who generally act to please themselves. The best and highest form of servanthood is being a servant of Allah, the Exalted. This is quite evident if one turns the pages of history which clearly shows that those who were the servants of Allah, the Exalted, such as the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, were granted the highest honour and respect in this world and will be granted this in the next. Centuries and millennia have passed yet their names are

remembered as the pillars and beacons of history. Whereas those who became servants of others especially, their own desires were eventually disgraced in this world even if they achieved some worldly status and they became mere footnotes in history. The media barely remembers those who pass away for more than a few days before moving onto the next person to report on. During their lives these people eventually become sad, lonely, depressed and even suicidal as selling their souls and decency to their worldly masters did not grant them the contentment they were looking for. One does not need to be a scholar to understand this obvious truth. So if people must be servants they should be the servants of Allah, the Exalted, as lasting honour, greatness and true success lies only in this.

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One must avoid behaving in this manner towards the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. One should understand that sincerely obeying and following them leads to nothing except peace and success in both worlds. Ignorance can cause one to behave in this manner.

A great distraction which prevents one from submitting to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, is ignorance. It can be argued that it is the origin of every sin as the one who truly knows the consequences of sins would never commit them. This refers to true beneficial knowledge which is knowledge that is acted upon. In reality, all knowledge which is not acted on is not beneficial knowledge. The example of the one who behaves in this manner is described in the Holy Quran as a donkey which carries books of knowledge which do not benefit it. Chapter 62 Al Jumu'ah, verse 5:

“...and then did not take it on (did not act upon knowledge) is like that of a donkey who carries volumes [of books]...”

A person who acts on their knowledge rarely slips up and commits sins intentionally. In fact, when this occurs it is only caused by a moment of

ignorance where a person forgets to act on their knowledge which results in them sinning.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, once highlighted the seriousness of ignorance in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2322. He declared that everything in the material world is cursed except for the remembrance of Allah, the Exalted, whatever is connected to this remembrance, the scholar and the student of knowledge. This means that all the blessings in the material world will become a curse for the one who is ignorant as they will misuse them thereby committing sins.

In fact, ignorance can be considered a person's worse enemy as it prevents them from protecting themselves from harm and gaining benefit all of which can only be achieved through acting on knowledge. The ignorant commits sins without being aware of them. How can one avoid a sin if they do not know what is considered a sin? Ignorance causes one to neglect their obligatory duties. How can one fulfil their duties if they are unaware of what their duties are?

It is therefore a duty on all Muslims to gain enough knowledge to fulfil all their obligatory duties and avoid sins. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224.

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