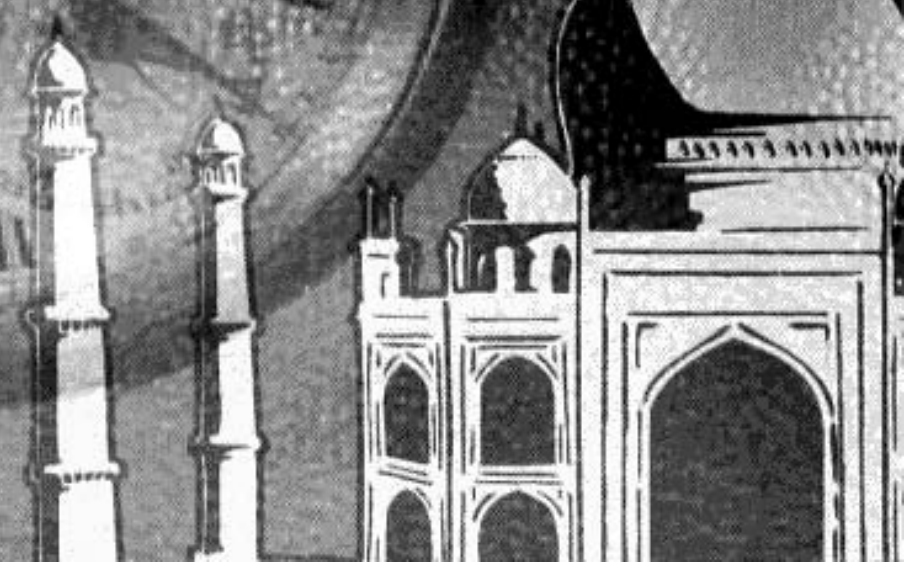
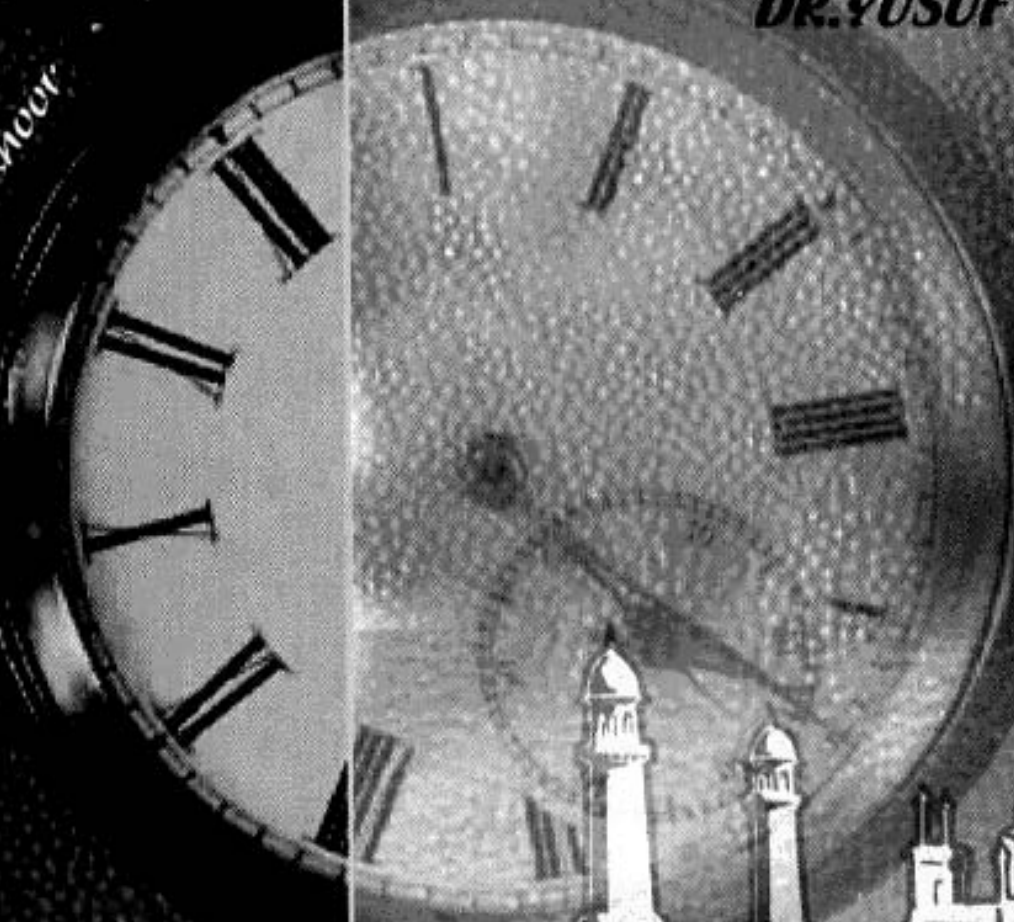


TIME IN THE LIFE OF THE MUSLIM

BY

DR. YUSUF AL-QARADAWI

Al-Ashoor



ISLAMIC INC.
Publishing & Distribution

Time **in** the Life of the Muslim

الوقت في حياة المسلم

Dr. Yusuf Al-Qaragani

Translated by:
Al-Falah

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Acknowledgements

"Time is money" is a common saying in our modern life. But, this saying gives a misleading impression as it merely relates time to a business and materialistic life. Time is much more than that. Time constitutes the moments and seconds of our life that we lose and cannot get back. This leads many to think only of enjoying themselves with the glitters of this world. In contrast, the true Muslim is aware that he has a message to fulfil in his lifetime. If he passes away without fulfilling it, he will be a great loser.

In this book, Dr. Yusuf Al-Qaradawi emphasizes the importance of time in the life of the Muslim. He provides evidence from the Glorious Qur'an as well as the sayings and the deeds of the Prophet (pbuh) and his Companions (may Allah be pleased with them) to support his argument and urges Muslims to follow suit. He remarks that there is a wide gap between the way Islam regards time and the way Muslims deal with it. While Islam appreciates time and holds Muslims responsible for it, Muslims hardly fail to find ways to squander it. Here lies the importance of this present work.

Finally, all praise and thanks are due to Allah, without Whose help and guidance nothing can be accomplished.

CONTENTS

I- The Qur'an and the <i>Sunnah's</i> Concern for Time	1
II-The Characteristics of Time	7
III- The Muslim's Duty towards Time	12
IV- Man's Time between Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow	41
V- How Can Man Prolong His Lifetime?	64

Foreword

I thank Allah, the Almighty, with Whose Help and guidance we could publish this edition of my book, *"Time in the Life of the Muslim"*.

The question of time is not just one question among many questions that the Muslim deals with in his life. Rather, time is the priority these questions. This is simply because time with its seconds, minutes, hours, and days is synonymous with human life itself.

Truthfully speaking, there is a wide gap between the way Islam regards time and the way Muslims deal with it. Islam appreciates time and holds Muslims responsible for every minute of their lives. But Muslims never fail to find ways to squander their time. They waste it in coffee shops, at the office, at spectator sports, or in any other useless pastime. And, unfortunately, recent reports state that, while the European man dedicates more than seven hours a day to work, the Muslim dedicates only half an hour.

How can this be the Muslims' way of life, when their religion is the same religion that says,

“And the book (of Deeds) will be placed (before you); and thou wilt see the sinful in great terror because of what is (recorded) therein; they will say, "Ah! Woe to us! What a book is this! It leaves out nothing small or great, but takes

account thereof!" They will find all that they did, placed before them: and not one will thy Lord treat with injustice. ﴿٤٩﴾

(Al-Kahf: 49)

Of course, this is not an acceptable way of life for Muslims. Such a state can no longer be appropriate in an era where major powers compete to utilize every second in the seas and in space.

This book deals with the case of "time" from all its aspects. Although this book meets all the requirements of a scientific study, we must admit that its first aim is to awaken Muslims from their deep slumber and urge them to re-evaluate their time, or in other words, their lives.

That is why it is a pleasure to offer this edition, in the hope that it accomplishes our purpose. May Allah support us.

Dr. Yusuf Al-Zaradawi

Preface

I thank Allah, with Whose blessing good deeds can be completed, and may His blessings and peace be upon His Messenger, his family, his Companions, and all those who followed him until the Day of Resurrection.

This book, concerning the merit of time, its value, and the Muslims' duty towards it, is the result of what I have learned of far-reaching interests of Islam on time, and what I perceive of the lives of the *Salaf* (righteous predecessors), with their deep concern for time that produced a firmly established, and fruitful civilization.

This book is also the result of what I have seen, and still see everyday in the Muslim world. Muslims, nowadays, are wasting their time and life in a way that has surpassed foolishness to idiocy. And after being accustomed to leading the world, they are now satisfied with lagging behind. Thus, Muslims neither work for the present like others, nor work for the after life as their religion stipulates. If they apprehend Islam correctly, they will work for this life as if they will live forever, and work for the afterlife as if they will die tomorrow. They will also take this verse to be their motto,

﴿ Our Lord! Give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter. And save us from the torment of the Fire! ﴾

(Al-Baqarah: 201)

Perhaps time will teach them. That is, of course, if they use their minds:

Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of Night and Day, there are indeed Signs for men of understanding, who remember Allah standing, sitting, and lying down on their sides, and contemplate the (wonders of) creation in the heavens and the earth, (with the saying): "Our Lord not for naught hast Thou created (all) this! Glory to Thee! Give us salvation from the Chastisement of the Fire. Our Lord! Any whom Thou dost admit to the Fire, truly Thou coverest with shame, and never will wrong-doers find any helpers! Our Lord! We have heard the call of one calling (us) to Faith, 'Believe ye in the Lord', and we have believed. Our Lord! Forgive us our sins, blot out from us our iniquities, and take to Thyself our souls in the company of the righteous. Our Lord! Grant us what Thou didst promise unto us through Thy Messengers, and save us from shame on the Day of Judgment: for Thou never breakest Thy promise. ﴿

(Al `Imran: 190-194)

I

The Qur'an and the Sunnah's Concern for Time

The Qur'an, and the *Sunnah* evaluate time in its various perspectives.

First, the Ever-Honorable Qur'an stresses the importance of time, and emphasizes the fact that time is a great blessing from Allah. This is clear in the verse that says,

﴿And He hath made subject to you the sun and the moon, both diligently pursuing their courses; and the Night and the Day hath He (also) made subject to you. And He giveth you of all that ye ask for. But if ye count the favours of Allah, never will ye be able to remember them.﴾

(Ibrahim: 34-33)

He, Most High, also says,

﴿And it is He Who made the Night and the Day to follow each other: for such as desire to be mindful or to show their gratitude.﴾

(Al-Furqan: 62)

This means that Allah causes the succession of Day and Night to give man a chance to catch up with what he has missed.

To show how time is important, Allah, the Almighty, swears by time at the beginning of many *surahs*, such as the day, the night, the dawn, and afternoon. We, for example, read,

﴿By the Night as it conceals (the light); by the Day as it appears in glory...﴾

(Al-Layl: 1-2)

﴿By the Dawn; by the ten Nights...﴾

(Al-Fajr: 1-2)

﴿By the Glorious Morning Light, and by the Night when it is still...﴾

(Ad-Duha: 1-2)

﴿By the time, verily man is in loss.﴾

(Al-`Asr: 1-2)

To swear by anything that He has created, means that He wants to draw our attention to its greatness and benefit.

On reading the *Sunnah* of the Prophet, we also find it acknowledging the value of time and confirming the responsibility of man towards it before Allah on the Day of Judgement. It is narrated on the authority of Mu`adh Ibn Jabal who said that the Prophet (pbuh) said,

"A servant of Allah will remain standing on the Day of Resurrection until he is asked about four things: his life and how he spent it, his youth and how he used it up, his property and how he acquired and spent it, and his knowledge and how he utilized it."⁽¹⁾

1. Narrated by Al-Birazi and At-Tabarani.

So, when the Hour comes, everyone will be asked about his life in general and his youth in particular. Thus youth, though part of life, has a special value because it is the age of vitality, determination, and the stage of strength between two weak stages, namely that of childhood and old age. Allah, the Almighty, says,

﴿It is Allah Who created you in a state of (helpless) weakness, then gave (you) strength after weakness, then, after strength, gave (you) weakness and a hoary head.﴾

(Ar-Rum: 54)

The Rituals and Ethics of Islam Confirm the Value of Time

The Islamic rituals and ethics acknowledge and confirm the value of time. They try to endure man to perceive the important role that time plays in the whole universe. Time is essential to the movement of the sun, planets, and in the succession of night and day. That is to say, it is an indispensable element in the life cycle of the universe.

Time also plays an essential role in the life of Muslims. It is through time that Muslims can identify the right times for performing the prayers. When the night retires and the first signs of dawn appear in the horizon, the herald of Allah fills the whole world with his voice to awaken Muslims to perform the *Fajr* prayer: "Come to Prayer, come to success", "Prayer is better than sleep". And those who respond to such call will disentangle all the knots of the devil.⁽¹⁾

1. This is a reference to the authentic *hadith* that reads, "When one of you sleeps, the devil knots three knots on the back of his head..." (Narrated by Muslim)

In the afternoon, when the sun is no longer at its zenith, and people are drowning in worldly affairs and daily hardships, the herald of Allah returns once more calling people to the *Zuhr* prayer. And here, people stand for another time, leaving behind their suffocative duties, their daily routine, and their struggle for money.

For the third time the herald of Allah returns to call to the *'Asr* prayer when the shadow of a thing is equal to its mass and when the sun starts to go down.

When the sun disappears from the horizon, it is the *Maghrib* prayer, followed then by the *'Isha'* prayer with which the Muslim ends his day.

So, the Muslim opens and seals his day with prayer. This means that, there is a regular contact between the Muslim and his God, between *Al-Fajr* and *Al-'Isha'*, and during the succession of day and night.

There is also a special contact between the Muslim and Allah that occurs once a week: every Friday. Here the herald of Allah calls to some new prayer, a collective prayer, which has a special place and special conditions. This is the Friday Prayer (*Al-Jumu'ah*).

In addition to these obligatory prayers, there is the voluntary night prayer performed before daybreak by servants of the All-Merciful who are anxious to attain Allah's satisfaction and forgiveness. Also, there is the (voluntary) *Duha* prayer and the voluntary prayers that are distributed over the twenty-four hours of the day.

At the beginning of every month, Muslims welcome the new crescent with happiness. They pray to Allah and appeal to Him to bless them and make the new moon a happy occasion. They ask for it be a reason for bestowing His mercy, safety, and faith upon them, and for helping them carry out His commands.

Every year, in the month of Ramadan, the doors of paradise are opened, the doors of Hell are locked, and the devils are shackled. It is in this sacred time that another herald of Allah (but this time from Heaven) calls upon those who seek goodness to come forth and those who seek wickedness to reconsider their intentions.

Therefore, the disobedient repent, the inattentive become alert, and the stray return to Allah; all begging for His content. They seek Allah's satisfaction through fasting and performing the night prayers, just as the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said,

"Whoever fasts (the month of) Ramadan out of belief and saving the reward with Allah, his previous sins will be forgiven. And whoever stands up (to perform prayer at night in the month of) Ramadan out of belief and seeking (the reward of Allah), his previous sins will be forgiven."⁽¹⁾

A few months after the spiritual tour of Ramadan, comes another tour that is both spiritual and materialistic: this is the pilgrimage (*Hajj*).

ﷻ For Hajj are the months well known. If any one undertakes that duty therein, let there be no obscenity, nor wickedness, nor wrangling in the Hajj. And whatever good ye do, (be sure) Allah knoweth it. And take a provision (with

1. Reported by Ahmad.

you) for the journey, but the best of provisions is right conduct. So fear Me, O ye that are wise. ﴿

(Al-Baqarah: 197)

All of these rituals have been aptly summed up by some of the *Salaf*. They regarded the five obligatory prayers as the scale of the day, Friday as the scale of the week, Ramadan as the scale of the year, and Pilgrimage as the scale of life. Hence, they meant to make the Muslim attentive by first winding up his day peacefully and then thinking how to guarantee the same peaceful end for his week, year, and life as a whole.

In addition to the previous rituals, there is also *Zakah*, which is one of the five pillars of Islam. It is obligatory every year and at every harvest⁽¹⁾, as Allah says,

﴿...but render the dues that are proper on the day that the harvest is gathered.﴾

(Al `Imran: 141)

Thus, the Muslim will have to keep himself aware of the course of time for the sake of giving all of these rituals their due in full.

1. This applies to those who have more than the minimum limit (*nisab*) for one lunar year. (Editor)

I I

The Characteristics of Time

Time has special characteristics of which we have to be fully aware in order to be able to deal with it properly. These characteristics are as follows.

1- Time Passes Quickly

Time passes as swiftly as the clouds, and runs as quickly as the wind. This is a fact about time, whether in days of happiness and pleasure, or in days of sorrow and depression. This does not, however, negate another phenomenon, that when one is happy he feels time to be moving fast, but in times of distress he feels it to be lingering heavily on his heart.

No matter how long man lives, his life will remain short, considering death as the end of all living beings.

When death arrives, all the years and ages that man has lived suddenly turn in his eyes into moments that have vanished in a flash of a second.

A relevant story has been narrated about Prophet Nuh (pbuh). When the Angel of death came to him to take his life after having lived for more than one thousand years, he asked him how he found life. Nuh's reply, though very short, was significant, for he said that he felt life as a house with two doors, and all that he had done was entering from one door and going out from the other.

This story indicates a definite reality - that life appears to be very short when death comes and at the time of the Hour. Allah, the Almighty, says,

﴿The Day they see it, (it will be) as if they had tarried but a single evening, or (at most till) the following morn!﴾

(An-Nazi`at: 46)

﴿And on the Day when He will gather them together: (it will be) as if they had tarried but an hour of a day: they will recognize each other.﴾

(Yunus: 45)

2- The Time That Passes Can Never Return, Nor Can It Be Compensated for

Time is irretrievable and this simply means that time cannot be compensated for. This was clearly expressed in the words of Al-Hasan Al-Basri, who said, "At the beginning of every day a herald calls, 'O son of Adam, I am a new creation and I am a witness of your deeds. So take a provision from me because when I pass I never come back until the Day of Resurrection."

That is why we see poets and men of letters, after reaching old age, longing for the resurgence of their youth once more. But, unfortunately, their wish can never be fulfilled.

3- Time Is the Most Precious Thing That Man Possesses

All the previous characteristics of time make it the most valuable and precious thing that man owns. Since time is the vessel that embraces whatever man does or produces, then it is his true capital in life.

Time is not only gold as the proverb says, for it is much more valuable than gold, pearls, diamonds, and all other precious metals and stones. Hasan Al-Banna said concerning time, "It is life! Man's life is nothing but the time he spends from the hour of birth to the hour of death."

Another saying is that of Al-Hasan Al-Basri who said that man is nothing but a group of days and whenever a day passes it takes away part of him with it.

The time will come when those who are negligent of its value will realize how precious and valuable it is. Unfortunately, it will be too late to do anything about it. In the Ever-Honorable Qur'an there are two situations mentioned when man will regret wasting his time.

The first situation: Man will realize how important time is when he is in the throes of death. At this critical moment, he will plead for another chance, and will wish his death to be delayed even if it is for a very short period. He will be desperately in need of a second opportunity to straighten up what he has corrupted, and to catch up with whatever good work he has missed.

In this context, the Glorious Qur'an says,

"O ye who believe! Let not your riches or your children divert you from the remembrance of Allah. If any act thus, surely they are the losers. And spend something (in charity) out of the substance which We have bestowed on you, before death should come to any of you and he should say, "O my Lord! Why didst Thou not give me respite for a little

while? I should then have given (largely) in charity, and I should have been one of the doers of good."

(Al-Munafiqun: 9-10)

However, the answer to this hollow wish is firm and final as Allah, the Almighty, says,

﴿ But to no soul will Allah grant respite when the time appointed (for it) has come; and Allah is well acquainted with (all) that ye do. ﴾

(Al-Munafiqun: 11)

The second situation: Man will also realize the importance of time in the afterlife when everybody is rewarded or penalized according to his deeds, when the good enter Paradise, and when the evil go to Hell-Fire. Only then will the inhabitants of Hell wish to go back once more to their past life in order to be righteous, and to achieve good things. But alas, this can never happen, for they have foolishly wasted their chance to be good, and now time has come for their punishment.

Allah, Most High, says,

﴿ But those who reject (Allah) for them will be the Fire of Hell: no term shall be determined for them, so they should die, nor shall its Chastisement be lighted for them. Thus do We reward every ungrateful one! Therein will they cry aloud (for assistance): "Our Lord! Bring us out: we shall work righteousness, not the (deeds) we used to do!" - "Did We not give you long enough life so that he that would should receive admonition? And (moreover) the warner

came to you. So taste ye (the fruits of your deeds): for the Wrong-doers there is no helper. ﴿

(Fatir: 36-37)

Their proof is cut off by this chiding question: ﴿*Did We not give you long enough life so that he that would should receive admonition, and (moreover) the warner came to you? ﴿*⁽¹⁾

Thus, Allah has left man no reason for any excuses by granting him enough time to carry out His orders and to keep away from his prohibitions. This is not to mention those who live to the age of sixty, for they have plenty of chances to be attentive, to find the right way, and to repent. The Prophet (pbuh) said,

"Allah leaves no excuse for the man whom He lets (to live) to the age of sixty."⁽²⁾

1. *Surat Fatir: 37.*

2. Narrated by Al-Bukhari.

III

The Muslim's Duty towards Time

If time, as we have previously discussed, is so important to the extent that it is considered to be life itself, then man has several duties towards his own time. He has to understand these duties, then transfer this understanding into belief and will, and this, in turn, must transpire into work and achievement.

The Keenness to Benefit from Time

The Muslim's first duty towards his time is to take care of it, just as he takes care of his property, and maybe even more. He has to make use of it in a way that is beneficial, both to himself and to his *Ummah*.

Because the *Salaf* (may Allah be pleased with them) knew best about the value of time, they were more cautious than anyone else in dealing with it. This is clear in the words of Al-Hasan Al-Basri who said that he had met people caring for their time much more than we now care for our wealth.

That is why such people were especially keen to occupy their time usefully and never waste it, as `Umar Ibn `Abd Ul-`Aziz said, "Verily, day and night work in you, so work in them."

They used to say that squandering time is a sign of abhorrence, and that time is like a sword: if you do not cut it, it will cut you. Such a conviction made them always eager to

improve themselves. They also believed: the one whose today is like his yesterday is aggrieved, but the one whose today is worse than his yesterday is cursed.

They were very careful not to let a day or even a fraction of a second pass without benefiting from it, either by acquiring useful knowledge, performing some good deeds, struggling against their desires, or being of good use to others. They always feared that time would slip away in vain without being aware of it. This is obvious in the words of Ibn Mas`ud who (may Allah be pleased with him) said that he had never lamented anything more than lamenting a day that passed without benefiting from it. And another said that his day was not blessed, if he did not make use of it by acquiring the kind of knowledge that brought him closer to Allah (Glorified and Exalted be He). Also, a wise man said that whoever lets a day of his life pass without taking advantage of it has gravely wronged himself.

The way we see Muslims squandering their time today, causes our hearts to ache with grief and sorrow. In fact, squandering time is much more dangerous than squandering property, because unlike property, time cannot be compensated.

One of the common phrases that we come to hear now everywhere is "killing time". We see people sitting for long hours, doing nothing but playing backgammon, chess, and cards. They hardly care whether their pastimes are right or wrong. They are totally diverted from their duties towards their religion and their main concern is to kill time. Such people are to be pitied, because they are unaware that by killing time, they are just killing their own selves. Thus, killing time is like committing suicide. It is a crime committed in front of all

people, yet those who commit it are not the least condemned. This is because people do not realize how grave this crime is, and maybe even worse, they do not actually think they are doing anything wrong.

Making Use of Free Time

Free time is a blessing that is overlooked, and not wholly appreciated by many people, just as the Prophet (pbuh) said,

"(There are) two of Allah's favors that are forgotten by many people: health and free time."⁽¹⁾

By 'free time' we mean being free from worldly affairs and impediments that hinder man from thinking about his afterlife. This does not contradict the Islamic stipulations that encourage man to work for his living. Man must work provided that nothing keeps him away from carrying out his duties towards Allah (Glorified and Exalted be He) and from sinking into the pleasures and requirements of life.

Therefore, it is a matter of achieving a balance between life and religion. Here is a similitude that expresses such a balance. The person entrusted with Allah's commands is compared to a merchant where health and free time are shown to be his capital, and his means to make profits and achieve success. Through this similitude it is clear that whoever makes a deal with Allah by submitting to His commands will gain profits, and whoever makes a deal with the devil by following him will definitely lose his capital.

1. Narrated by Al-Bukhari.

In another *Hadith*, the Prophet (pbuh) said,

"Take advantage of five things before another five things... - and he counted among these five things - your free time before your occupation."⁽¹⁾

This means that free time will not always remain free, for it has to be occupied with either good or bad deeds. The one who fills it with goodness and piety is blessed, and the one who fills it with wickedness and corruption is cursed.

Some of the righteous say that free time is a great blessing, which if man wastes it by letting his desires lead him, then Allah will deprive him of whatever purity or transparency he is in the habit of feeling in his heart.

A wise man said that it is a great disappointment to be free from any occupation, and still not flee to Allah (Glorified and Exalted be He).

As for the righteous predecessors, they used to detest seeing a man unoccupied because free time turns from a blessing to a curse. In this case, both men and women are equal because if free time leads man to inadvertence, it stimulates the woman's instincts. This is clear in the story of Prophet Yusuf. The wife of Yusuf's master was attracted to him, and she tried through many tricks to win his love, but failed. She was prompted to do this by the leisurely life she was living, and this leads one to the conclusion that free time becomes even more dangerous when one is youthful, having strong sexual desires, and having enough money to fulfill such desires.

1. Narrated by Al-Hakim.

Hastening to Good Deeds

It is necessary for good Muslims who appreciate the value of time to fill it with as many good deeds as possible. This should not be carried out in a negligent manner, nor delayed from day to day.

Some of the invocations that the Prophet (pbuh) has taught Muslims to recite every morning and evening show how hateful sluggishness and laziness are. For example, he (pbuh) said in one of them,

"O Allah! I seek refuge with You from distress and sorrow, and I seek refuge with You from disability and laziness!"

That is why the Ever-Honorable Qur'an commands Muslims to hasten to good deeds before being hindered by any occupation or impediment:

﴿To each is a goal to which Allah turns him; then strive together (as in a race) towards all that is good. Wheresoever ye are, Allah will bring you together.﴾

(Al-Baqarah: 148)

Allah, the Almighty, also says,

﴿If Allah had so willed, He would have made you a single People, but (His plan is) to test you in what He hath given you: so strive as in a race in all virtues. The goal of you all is to Allah.﴾

(Al-Ma'idah: 48)

On another occasion, Allah (Glorified and Exalted be He) raises the Muslims' interest in Paradise, saying,

﴿ But quick in the race for forgiveness from your Lord and for a Garden whose width is that (of the whole) of the heavens and of the earth, prepared for the righteous. ﴾

(Al `Imran: 133)

And in another verse, He says,

﴿ Be ye foremost (in seeking) forgiveness from your Lord, and a Garden (of Bliss), the width thereof is as the width of heaven and earth. ﴾

(Al-Hadid: 21)

Thus, Allah urges us in His book to hasten to His forgiveness and His Paradise. In other words, to hasten to belief, piety, and virtuous deeds, for they are our means to reach His mercy and forgiveness. Competition is something required and praiseworthy, for Allah, the Almighty, says,

﴿ ...and for this let those aspire, who have aspirations. ﴾

(Al-Mutaffifin: 26)

He, Most High, also praises some of his chosen Prophets, saying,

﴿ These (three) were quick in doing good works: they used to call on Us in yearning and awe, and humble themselves before Us. ﴾

(Al-Anbiya': 90)

Likewise, He, Most High, commends the righteous ones in another verse, saying,

﴿ They believe in Allah and the Last Day; they enjoin what is right, and forbid what is wrong; and they hasten (in emu-

lation) in (all) good works: they are in the ranks of the righteous. ﴿

(Al `Imran: 114)

But, on the other hand, Allah rejects the hypocrites, saying,

﴿ When they stand up to prayer, they stand without earnestness. ﴾

(An-Nisa': 142)

And in another verse, He, Most High, says about them,

﴿ ...that they come not to prayer save lazily and that they offer contributions unwillingly. ﴾

(At-Tawbah: 54)

Also, the Prophet (pbuh) used to urge people to take the initiative towards good deeds before any obstacles or ordeals emerge. He (pbuh) said,

"Do you only wait for richness that leads to oppression, poverty that leads to oblivion, destroying disease, old age that leads to foolishness, culminating death, the Anti-Christ: and he is an absent, expected evil, or the Hour (of judgment): and that Hour will be most grievous and most bitter."⁽¹⁾

Considering the Elapse of Time

The believer must take heed not to watch days and nights slip by. He should meditate on how these days and nights have the power to wear out whatever is new, bring close whatever is

1. Narrated by At-Tirmidhi.

far, put an end to life, turn the young into the elderly, and exhaust the old.

So, the passing of time and the succession of day and night should not pass by the Muslim so simply without contemplating it, and trying to derive lessons from it. Every hour, or every moment, uncountable events take place at various spots around the universe. Some events are understandable, while others are not. At every moment, people are subjected to an infinite number of states and modes, varying from poverty to richness, sickness to health, sadness to happiness, and adversity to prosperity. This is significant to those who are wise enough to stop and contemplate about the events in the universe, and who are consequently capable of learning something new as time goes by. Concerning those who are deprived of the ability to see through things, they will never be capable of learning something from time simply because, for them, the succession of day and night is meaningless. This is clear in the words of Allah, the Almighty, when He says,

﴿Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of Night and Day, there are indeed Signs for men of understanding.﴾

(Al `Imran: 190)

In another verse, Allah says,

﴿It is Allah Who alternates the Night and the Day: verily in these things is an instructive example for those who have vision!﴾

(An-Nur: 44)

Organizing Time

A Muslim must learn how to organize his time, and make a realistic plan for his worldly and religious duties, in the hope that his worldly duties do not surpass the boundaries of his religious duties. That is to say, he should know how to arrange his priorities: the most important and the most urgent comes first, and carried out according to schedule.

A part of what the Prophet (pbuh) narrated about the Books of Prophet Ibrahim, we read,

"A sane person - unless he is mindless - should have four hours: an hour to invoke to his Lord, an hour to count his own deeds, an hour to contemplate about the creation of Allah (Glorified and exalted be He), and an hour to satisfy his needs of food and drink."⁽¹⁾

As for those who are in dire need to organize their time, they have many occupations, and many responsibilities to worry about. Their life is overcrowded with burdens to the extent that it makes them feel that their duties need much more time than is actually available.

Organizing time also includes leaving a place for relaxation and entertainment, owing to the fact that the heart as well as the body, becomes bored from continuous seriousness.

That is why, from time to time, one should take a break; yet, this should be within the permitted limits. This was clearly expressed in the words of `Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) who said that the heart must take a break every now and then, lest it grow blind if it is restrained all the time.

1. Narrated by Ibn Hibban and al-Hakim.

So the Muslim must not wear himself out with work for fear of doing wrong to himself, his family, and his society, by overlooking his duties towards them. And this will remain the case, even if he exhausts himself in worshipping Allah, the Almighty.

That is why the Prophet (pbuh) said to his followers when he saw them gathering to pray behind him at night,

"Take out of works that which you can tolerate, for Allah will never be weary until you become weary; and the most preferable work to Allah is that is done most permanently even if it is little."⁽¹⁾

And in another situation, the Prophet (pbuh) said,

"Religion is very easy and whoever overburdens himself in his religion will not be able to continue in that way. So you should not be extremists, but try to be near perfection and receive the good tidings (that you will be rewarded)."⁽²⁾

He (pbuh) advised those who exaggerate in reading, praying at night, and fasting, to be moderate, saying,

"Surely your body has a right upon you, your wife has a right upon you, and your guest has a right upon you."⁽³⁾

He (pbuh) also said to those who exceeded the proper bounds in carrying out acts of worship and in asceticism,

"Surely I am the most apprehensive and conscious of Allah among you, but I stay up (at night for prayer) and so I sleep; I observe fasting and so I break it, and I marry wom-

1. Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim.

2. Narrated by Al-Bukhari and An-Nasa'i.

3. Narrated by Al-Bukhari.

en, so whoever has a distaste for my Sunnah does not belong to me."⁽¹⁾

Hence, this is the attitude of the Prophet, and those are his manners. They are all characterized by being moderate, and come mid-way between what one owes to Allah and what one owes to oneself.

It is for this reason that Islam allows man to dedicate part of his time to enjoy the merits of life so long as he does this within the permitted limits. That is why, when the Prophet (pbuh) heard Hanzalah, one of his Companions, accusing himself of hypocrisy because his attitude differed when he was with the Prophet and when he was with his family. He (pbuh) said the following,

"O Hanzalah! If you remain in the case you are when being with me, the angels will shake hands with you in the passages, but, O Hanzalah, an hour and an hour."⁽²⁾

What is meant in this *Hadith* is an hour for your Lord and an hour for your heart, as the common proverb says.

Al-Asma'i related that he saw a Bedouin woman holding a *misbahah* in her hand, while putting on her make-up. He said to her, "How can you do this with this?", meaning that he did not expect her to be one of those women who remember Allah and, at the same time, a woman of amusement and beautification. The woman's reply was so short and significant. She said, "Allah has a right upon me and I never neglect this right, and I have amusement and free time." Al-Asma'i said that he realized from

1. Narrated by Al-Bukhari.

2. Narrated by Muslim.

her reply that she was a righteous woman who had a husband for whom she beautified herself.

Every Time Has Its Own Task

A good Muslim must know which work suits time as regards the heart, the tongue, and every organ in his body. In other word, he must know the proper task for the proper time, because this will enable him to exert as much effort as possible in carrying out his task, and he will also be granted Allah's satisfaction.

This meaning occurred in Abu Bakr's advice to `Umar, when the latter was about to succeed the former in caliphate. Abu Bakr told `Umar to beware of the duties he owed Allah at daytime that would not be accepted if performed at night, and to beware of the duties he owed Him at night that would not be accepted if performed at daytime.

Thus, it is not a matter of doing anything at any time, but a matter of doing the proper thing at the proper time. That is why Allah has appointed certain times that should not be mistaken for performing the religious rituals. For example, concerning prayers, Allah, the Almighty, says,

﴿...for such prayers are enjoined on Believers at stated times.﴾

(An-Nisa': 103)

Concerning fasting, He, Most High, says,

﴿So every one of you who is present (at his home) during that month should spend it in fasting.﴾

(Al-Baqarah: 185)

Concerning pilgrimage, He, Most High, says,

﴿ *For Hajj are the months well known.* ﴾

(Al-Baqarah: 197)

And concerning *Zakah*, the Almighty says,

﴿ *...but render the dues that are proper on the day that the harvest is gathered.* ﴾

(Al-An`am: 141)

The work of the heart and the tongue should likewise be carried out at the proper time, and in the proper place.

A wise man said that every man must go through four kinds of experience, at four different times. He must go through the time of favors, the time of tribulation, the time of obedience, and the time of disobedience. In each of these experiences he will owe Allah some duty, simply because Allah is the Creator.

To clarify this, when one is in the state of obedience, he must be grateful to Allah Who has guided him to it. When he is in the state of being favored, he must also thank Allah with a cheerful heart. Yet, when one is in the state of disobedience, he must repent and ask Allah for forgiveness. And finally, when he is in the state of being afflicted, he must be patient.

These four occasions are mentioned in the Ever-Honorable Qur'an. For example, concerning the case of obedience we read,

﴿ *Say: "In the Bounty of Allah and in His Mercy, in that let them rejoice": that is better than the (wealth) they hoard.* ﴾

(Yunus: 58)

Concerning the case of being favored another verse says,

﴿Eat of the Sustenance (provided) by your Lord, and be grateful to Him: a territory fair and happy, and a Lord Oft-Forgiving.﴾

(Saba': 15)

Concerning the case of disobedience, Allah, the Almighty, says,

﴿Say: "O My Servants who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of the Mercy of Allah: for Allah forgives all sins.﴾

(Az-Zumar: 53)

And concerning the case of tribulation, He, Most High, says,

﴿Be sure We shall test you with something of fear and hunger, some loss in goods, lives and the fruits (of your toil), but give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere, who say, when afflicted with calamity: "To Allah we belong and to Him is our return.﴾

(Al-Baqarah: 155, 156)

Also, the Prophet (pbuh) said,

"The believer's affair is wondrous. The whole of his affair surely brings him good, and this never occurs but to a believer: If he is granted something pleasant, he shows gratitude, and this is good for him; and if he is afflicted with something harmful, he holds patience, and this is good for him."⁽¹⁾

1. Narrated by Muslim.

Seeking Virtuous Times

A good Muslim who is always careful to hasten to good deeds must seek the times upon which Allah has bestowed certain spiritual characteristics, as the Prophet (pbuh) said,

"Your Lord favors certain times, so seek them."⁽¹⁾

Just as Allah, the Almighty, has preferred some people, given advantage to some species, and favored certain places, then it is natural to favor particular times simply because He is the Great Creator of the whole universe. He, Most High, says,

﴿Thy Lord does create and choose as He pleases: no choice have they (in the matter).﴾

(Al-Qasas: 68)

Allah has favored the hours of *sahar* (the last third of the night). It is at this time that Allah reveals Himself to His servants by descending upon them in a manner that befits His glory, and calls upon them, saying,

"Is there anyone who is asking My forgiveness, so I can forgive him? Is there anyone who wants to repent, so I can accept his repentance? Is there anyone who has a request? Is there anyone who (wants to) invoke (Me)?" till the break of dawn.⁽²⁾

That is why in describing the pious and the righteous Allah says,

﴿As to the Righteous, they will be in the midst of Gardens and Springs, taking joy in the things which their Lord gives

1. Narrated by At-Tabarani.

2. Narrated by Ahmad and Muslim.

them, because, before then, they have done good deeds. They were in the habit of sleeping but little by night, and in the hours of early dawn, they (were found) praying for forgiveness. ﴿

(Adh-Dhariyat: 15-18)

The Prophet (pbuh) said,

"(The time when) Allah is closest to His servant (is) in the last third of the night, so if you can be one of those who remember Allah at this hour, then do so."⁽¹⁾

Allah's most preferred day of the week is Friday. It is the weekly feast of Muslims in which they perform the Friday prayer. And in this day there is an hour, where if the Muslim asks anything of Allah, he will surely be granted this thing.

The Prophet (pbuh) said,

"The one who goes out early within the first hour to the Friday prayer is like the one who presents a (sacrificial) camel and he who goes within the next hour is like the one who presents a cow, then like the one who presents a female sheep, then a chicken, and then an egg. But once the khatib mounts the minbar, the angels fold their sheets."

And as for Allah's most favorite days of the year, they are the ten days of Dhul-Hijjah, and the most favorite of them is the day of `Arafat. This was mentioned in the words of the Prophet (pbuh) who said,

"There are no other more beloved days to Allah than these days." (meaning the ten days). They said, 'O Messenger of

1. Narrated by At-Tirmidhi.

Allah! Nor jihad in the cause of Allah?' He said, 'Nor jihad in the cause of Allah, except when a man goes out with his soul and property viewing and returns with nothing of this.'⁽¹⁾

When it comes to Allah's best month, it is without doubt the month of Ramadan. This month occupies such a special position owing to the fact that it is the time when the Ever-Honorable Qur'an was revealed to Muhammad, and when Muslims were commanded to fast, perform prayer at night, and multiply their good deeds. Hence, Ramadan is the month of the righteous and the pious. That is why the righteous predecessors used to long for it in their eagerness to wash themselves from their defects, and to become purified from their sins.

On the authority of `Ubadah Ibnul-s-Samit who said that the Prophet (pbuh) said one day, when Ramadan had arrived,

"Ramadan has come to you as a month of blessing, and in it Allah covers you, so He sends down mercy, discharges sins, and responds to prayers. He looks to your competition in it (i.e. Ramadan), and boasts of you in front of His angels. Thus show righteousness to Allah, because wretched is the one deprived in it of the mercy of Allah, Glorified and Exalted be He."⁽²⁾

Although Ramadan as a whole is an important month, the most important part of it is the last ten days. Their importance can be found for two reasons:

First, these days mark the end of the blessed month, and deeds can only be evaluated when they have been performed. That is why one of the traditional invocations says,

1. Narrated by Al-Bukhari.

2. As-Suyuti mentioned it in Al-Jami` al-Kabir and contributed it to At-Tabarani.

"O Allah, let the best part of my lifetime be the last part, and let the best of my work be its last, and let the best of my days be the day I meet you."

Second, *Laylat al-Qadr* is in one of those times, and it is a night that is blessed as Allah, the Almighty, says,

﴿We have indeed revealed this (Message) in the Night of Power: and what will explain to thee what the Night of Power is? The Night of Power is better than a thousand months. Therein come down the angels and the Spirit by Allah's permission, on every errand: Peace!...This until the rise of Morn!﴾

(Al-Qadr: 1-5)

During these last ten days of Ramadan, the Prophet (pbuh) used to perform *qiyam al-Layl* ⁽¹⁾ and awaken members of his family to do the same.

After Ramadan in rank, come the inviolable months, which are Rajab, Dhul-Hijjah, Dhul-Qa'dah, and Al-Muharram. Allah, the Almighty, says,

﴿The number of months in the sight of Allah is twelve (in a year)- so ordained by Him the day He created the heavens and the earth; of them four are sacred: that is the religion so wrong not yourselves therein.﴾

(At-Tawbah: 36)

1. To stay awake for a part or all of the night in doing pure acts of worship.

Organizing the Muslim's Daily Life

In an endeavor to win the blessing of Allah, the Muslim must abide by the rules of Islam, when he organizes his daily life.

In complying with these rules, the Muslim should wake up early and sleep early. He should start his day at the early dawn, or at least before the sun rises, because such an early start will grant him a morning that is pure and not yet polluted by the breath of the disobedient who get up late. The Prophet (pbuh) said,

"O Allah, let the early mornings of my nation be blessed."⁽¹⁾

One of the most serious afflictions that Muslims have been plagued with is staying awake all night and getting up late after missing the morning prayer. One of the righteous predecessors said, "I wonder how one can perform the morning prayers after the sun rises, and still be granted the boon of Allah."

On the authority of Abu Hurayrah who said that the Prophet (pbuh) said,

"When one of you sleeps, the devil knots three knots on the back of his head. He (the devil) utters on every knot: before you is a long night, so sleep. If he (the man) wakes up and mentions Allah, one knot is unknotted; if he performs ablution, another knot is unknotted; and if he performs prayer, the three knots are unknotted, and he becomes active and good-hearted, otherwise he becomes bad-hearted and lazy."⁽²⁾

1. Narrated by Ahmad and others.

2. Narrated by Al-Bukhari.

What a great difference there is between the Muslim who manages successfully to unravel the knots of the devil, and the Muslim who remains under the devil's spell. As for the former, he starts his day actively, mentioning Allah and performing his prayers. Then he sets out in the battle of life feeling perfectly well, both spiritually and physically. But the latter remains asleep till late in the morning and when he wakes up he feels his body, as well as his soul, heavy. This feeling of laziness and sleepiness sticks to him all day long.

To sum up this point, the Muslim must wake up early, perform prayer, and then recite what he can recall from the morning invocations taught by the Prophet (pbuh). Some of these invocations are:

"We rose up in the morning and so does the domain of Allah's. Praise is due to Allah, He has no partner. There is no god but Him, unto Whom is the return."

"O Allah! Whatever favor I or any of Your creatures rose up with, is only from You, You have no partner, so praise and gratitude are due to You."

"O Allah! I rose up with favors, well-being, and shelter from You, so perfect Your favors, well-being, and shelter to me in the world and the Hereafter."

After that, the Muslim may read from the Ever-Honorable Qur'an according to his time and capacity with submission, apprehensiveness, and contemplation. Allah, the Almighty, says,

﴿(Here is) a Book which We have sent down unto thee, full of blessings, that they may meditate on its Signs, and that

men of understanding may receive admonition. ﴿

(Sadd: 29)

The Muslim then has his breakfast, and sets out to work seeking his living. Whether rich or poor, he will still have to find himself a job even if it is that of a supervisor on his own property. This means that the Muslim will have to work under any circumstances, whether it is to earn his living, or to watch over his possessions.

It is logic for Islam to forbid *riba* (accumulative interest), because it is a system that contradicts the teachings of Islam. Islam encourages man to work hard, earn his living, and lead a purposeful life. On the contrary, *riba* encourages man to lead a life of nothingness and to sit at home doing nothing and risking nothing, but still receiving a percentage of what he pays. So, it is man's mission to work and inhabit the earth as mentioned in the Ever-Honorable Qur'an,

﴿It is He Who hath produced you from the earth and settled you therein.﴾

(Hud: 61)

Thus man must learn to give in return for what he takes, and he has to produce to make up for what he consumes. He must not live idly, even if this is under the claim of devoting himself to worshipping Allah, because there is no monasticism in Islam.

`Abdullah Ibnul-z-Zubayr said that living idly is the worst thing in the world. Al-Manawi commented on this statement⁽¹⁾ saying that if man leads a meaningless life without doing anything to improve his religiosity, he will be an easy victim for

1. See *Fayd al-Qadir*.

the devil. And if man is of no use to people, he will thus be an additional burden upon their shoulders.

For this reason, whenever `Umar met a man of good appearance, he used to ask: Does he have a profession? If the answer was in the negative, the man went down in his estimation. In addition, a righteous person compared the Sufi who has no profession to an owl living in ruins and being of no use to anyone.

Owing to this theory, the Muslim has to understand that by carrying out his worldly tasks, he is striving and hence fulfilling part of his duty towards Allah. This is, of course, so long as he means well by what he does, and so long as nothing hinders him from remembering Allah.

Moreover, every Muslim has to seek perfection in carrying out tasks, because the Prophet (pbuh) said,

"Surely Allah has ordained that everything should be done well."⁽¹⁾

"Surely Allah likes that if one of you handles some work, he should do it perfectly."⁽²⁾

One of the daily duties that the Muslim should not forget or neglect is his duty towards society. This means that he has to help members of society in managing their affairs and fulfilling their needs. His reward for this will be equal to his reward for performing prayer or giving in charity.

The Prophet (pbuh) said,

"Every Muslim has to give a charity". They said, 'O Messenger of Allah! What if he finds nothing (to give)?' He said, 'He may work with his own hands, so he benefits himself

1. Narrated by Muslim.

2. Narrated by Al-Bayhaqi and others.

and (then) gives (out of this) in charity." They said, 'What if he is not able to work or does not do so?' The Prophet said, 'He may help a person in dire need.' They said, 'What if he does not do so?' He said, "So let him enjoin the right." They said, 'What if he does not do so?' He said, 'Then let him keep himself away from (doing) evil, for it is a charitable act.'"⁽¹⁾

So, this kind of charity or social duty, is a daily obligation on every Muslim and even more, thus an obligation on every part of his body. Hence, the Muslim will be an overflowing fountain of peace and goodness for all those who surround him, as the Prophet (pbuh) said,

"Every part of a man's body must give a charity every day the sun rises: to act justly between two people is a charity, to help a man on his mount, lifting him on to it or hoisting his belongings on to it is a charity, a good word is a charity, every step you take to prayers is a charity, and removing harm from the road is a charity."⁽²⁾

Since Allah has created man in perfect shape, man must show his gratitude by using every bone, joint, and organ of his body in Allah's service, and for the benefit of His servants.

When it is time for the *Zuhr* prayer, the Muslim hastens to answer Allah's call and hurries to perform the prayer in a group. Thus, performing prayer on time is a must as Allah the Almighty has commanded, and congregational prayer is essential. The Prophet (pbuh) was on the verge of burning the houses of a group of people because they neglected congregational prayer.

1. Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim.

2. Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim.

That is why Allah has favored those who perform prayer in congregation with twenty-seven degrees over those who perform it individually.

After this, the Muslim takes his lunch, eating moderately from whatever can keep him going and from whatever can enable him to carry out his duties, as Allah, the Almighty, says,

﴿ O Children of Adam! Wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer: eat and drink: but waste not by excess, for Allah loveth not the wasters. Say: Who hath forbidden the beautiful (gifts) of Allah, which He hath produced for His servants, and the things, clean and pure, (which He hath provided) for sustenance? ﴾

(Al-A`raf: 31, 32)

In hot countries, especially during summer, some people may need to take a nap during the afternoon so as to be able to perform the prayer at night and still be able to wake up early. This is indicated in the verse that says,

﴿ ...the while ye doff your clothes for the noonday heat. ﴾

(An-Nur: 58)

When the Muslim hears the call for the `Asr prayer, he has to wake up, or if he is at work, he has to leave it to perform prayer. In other words, he has to give up everything till he has performed his prayers. Such devoted attitude of the good Muslim is described in the following verse:

﴿ By men whom neither trade nor sale can divert from the remembrance of Allah, nor from regular prayer, nor from paying zakah. Their (only) fear is for the Day when hearts

and eyes will be turned about. ﴿

(An-Nur: 37)

It is not appropriate for the Muslim to delay this prayer till late just before the sun sets, because that is the way the hypocrites perform prayer. The Prophet (pbuh) said,

"That is the way the hypocrite performs prayer, that is the way the hypocrite performs prayer, that is the way the hypocrite performs prayer; he watches the outline of the sun until it has become between the two horns of a devil, (then) he (the hypocrite) stands up to perform it (the `Asr prayer) in four units (rak`at) so fast, holding Allah in remembrance only little."⁽¹⁾

And later when the sun sets, the Muslim rises to perform the *Maghrib* prayer on time, especially since its time is very short. When he is finished with the obligatory and supererogatory prayers, he recites some of the evening invocations like,

"O Allah! This is Your night approaching, Your day leaving, and Your servants invoking (You), so forgive me."

In addition, there are invocations like those mentioned above to be said in the morning, but one should only change the words referring to "the morning" to others referring to "the evening".

The Muslim then takes his dinner, and rises afterwards to perform the *`Isha'* prayer and its *sunan* (the voluntary prayers attached to it. Before going to sleep, he can carry out some of his duties towards his relatives, friends, and acquaintances by visiting them or by simply calling them.

Not only that, but the Muslim must also assign a regular

1. Narrated by Muslim.

period of time to reading. That is to say, he has to seek the kind of knowledge that can be of benefit to his life and religion. Allah commanded His Messenger:

﴿...but say, "O my Lord! Increase me in knowledge.﴾

(Taha: 114)

A wise man said, "Tell me what you read, and I will tell you who you are!"

There is no harm in the Muslim having fun from time to time within the permitted limits and under one condition: that this would not affect his efficiency in carrying out his message in life. Hence, he can have fun but without violating the right of Allah to be worshipped, the right of his body to have rest, the right of his family to be looked after, and the right of his work to be perfected. He must thus try to achieve balance between his rights and duties, as Allah, the Almighty, has commanded,

﴿In order that ye may not transgress (due) balance. So establish weight with justice and fall not short in the balance.﴾

(Ar-Rahman: 8, 9)

Everyday the Muslim must not forget, miss, or neglect the ten rights that Allah holds him responsible for. Allah says,

"Serve Allah, and join not any partners with Him; and do good- to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, neighbors who are of kin, neighbors who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer (ye meet), and what your right hands possess."

(An-Nisa': 36)

Hence, the first and most important right is that of Allah, the Great Creator, the Sole Commander, and the Life Giver:

﴿And ye have no good thing but is from Allah.﴾

(An-Nahl: 53)

Therefore, the Muslim should not neglect the rights of his Lord, Allah.

Allah's most obvious daily right is prayer. He has made humbling oneself in it as the first of the qualities of believers. Allah says,

﴿Those who humble themselves in their prayers.﴾

(Al-Mu'minun: 2)

He, Most High, has made guarding prayer strictly as the last of these qualities. Allah, the Almighty, says,

﴿And who (strictly) guard their prayers.﴾

(Al-Mu'minun: 9)

And as for those who miss the proper time for performing prayer, Allah threatens them, saying,

﴿So woe to the worshipers who are neglectful of their prayers.﴾

(Al-Ma'un: 4, 5)

The second right is that of the parents, because being kind and obedient to them directly succeeds *Tawhid* as the Ever-Honorable Qur'an states. The mother is given special attention for she needs much more care and attention than the father, and suffers more for her child's sake. The Ever-Honorable Qur'an states,

"In pain did his mother bear him, and in pain did she give him birth. The carrying of the (child) to his weaning is (a period of) thirty months."

(Al-Ahqaf: 15)

That is why Islam does not approve of dedicating only one day, which people call "the Mother's Day", in praise of the mother, as it wants everyday of the mother's life to be a day of celebration.

After this comes the rights of relatives like brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, cousins, and other relatives. Then comes the right of the orphans, the needy, the poor, the wayfarer, and the right of neighbors and friends.

Finally, there is the right of what the right hand possesses, which means that man owes rights to what he owns. For example, during the era of slavery, man owed his slave good treatment. Now, man is obliged to give good treatment to his animals, his machines, and all of his possessions. He has to look after them and never waste them, because Allah has entrusted him with such blessings for which he will be responsible for on the Day of Judgement.

At the end of the day, if the Muslim wants to go to sleep, it is preferred to perform the ritual ablution, then perform prayer, and after that he can go to bed, sleeping on his right side and reciting the words of the Prophet,

"In Your name, O my Lord, I have laid my side, and in Your name I shall raise it up. If You take away my soul (during sleep), forgive it, and if You sends it back (after sleep), protect it as You protect Your righteous servants."

Therefore, the Muslim must learn what acts and what sayings are required of him, at every part of the day. This information can be obtained from books written by Muslim scholars. Some of these books are *'Amal Al-Yawm wa A-Laylah* by An-Nasa'i, *Al-Adhkar* by An-Nawawi, *Al-Kalim At-Tayyib* by Ibn Taymiyah, *Al-Wabil As-Sayyib* by Ibn Ul-Qayyim, *Al-Hisn Al-Hasin* by Ibn Ul-Jazri, *Tuhfat Adh-Dhakirin* by Ash-Shawkani, and *Al-Adhkar* by Imam Hasan Al-Banna. ⁽¹⁾

1. To our knowledge, so far only *Al-Ma'thurat* and *Al-Adhkar* have been translated into English. (Editor)

I V

Man's Time between Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow

Man's time can be divided into three main parts: yesterday, today, and tomorrow - or the past, the present, and the future.

Concerning people in their relation with time, they can be classified into several groups usually standing between extravagance and negligence. There are people who adore the past, people who are infatuated by the present, and people who excessively advocate the future.

Nevertheless, there are still some moderate people who know how to deal with time in all its stages, and in a reasonable and balanced manner.

People Clinging to the Past

There are some people who hardly know anything about time except yesterday. They live only in the past not feeling or caring about anything else. Such people are either mad about their own past, and in that case they act like rambling romantics, or they are infatuated by the past of their nations and families, and here they are like fanatics living in the glory of ancient times. This kind of people has the following diverse images:

- a) The first image is that of people who are boastful and proud of their achievements. They are totally immersed in the past, and do not try to add what can act as a bridge between their present and their past. They commonly speak about what they used to be and what their predecessors used to do. They live on the history of others, and have no history of their own accomplishments and achievements to speak of.

Honoring the glories of the past and the remarkable achievements of the righteous predecessors is something praiseworthy, no doubt, as long as it prompts us to proceed with what they have started and imitate whatever good deeds they have accomplished. Nevertheless, when the whole thing turns to be merely singing the praises of the past, then we are facing a passive attitude that adds nothing to the progress of nations. It is just like saying that decayed bones are useful because they were once in a living body.

- b- The second image is that of people who call upon sanctifying the heritage, regardless of its right and wrong, and serious and farcical aspects. Such people consider the past better than the present in all cases because from their own point of view, the former has left the latter nothing to be proud of. In this case, it is essential at first to define the concept of heritage then rectify it.

Some people consider the Ever-Honorable Qur'an and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet to be part of the heritage. This is, of course, among Muslims who know they have no choice but to comply with it when it comes to this part of the heritage. Allah, the Almighty, says,

﴿It is not fitting for a Believer, man or woman, when a matter has been decided by Allah and His Messenger, to have any option about their decision.﴾

(Al-Ahzab: 36)

So, when it comes to the divine aspect of heritage, there should be no suspicions or hesitations. As for the human aspect, it should be very well filtered so as to distinguish between what is to be accepted, and what is to be rejected. For example, we may find something with local characteristics that cannot fit any other place, and we may also find another thing that reflects a certain age and can be of no use in any other age.

That is why in order to avoid this confusion, whatever is contemporary must go side by side that which represents antiquity.

- c- The third image is that of people who cling to the past with their might, imitating everything in it, and believing it to be infallible. Such people, who are obsessed about their predecessors unfortunately live their whole life as mere followers, and never try to be thinkers. In this situation, the Ever-Honorable Qur'an says,

﴿When it is said to them: "Follow what Allah hath revealed" they say: "Nay! We shall follow the ways of our fathers." What! Even though their fathers were void of wisdom and guidance?﴾

(Al-Baqarah: 170)

This kind of thinking stood as an obstacle in the way of Allah's Messengers. For example, there is the Qur'anic verse where the people of Hud told him,

﴿Comest thou to us, that we may worship Allah alone, and give up that which our fathers used to worship?﴾

(Al-A`raf: 70)

The People of Thamud said to Salih,

﴿O Salih! Thou hast been of us!- a centre of our hopes hitherto! Dost thou (now) forbid us the worship of what our fathers worshipped?﴾

(Hud: 62)

Ibrahim (pbuh) also said to his people,

﴿What are these images, to which ye are (so assiduously) devoted?﴾ They said, "We found our fathers worshipping them.﴾

(Al-Anbiya': 52, 53)

And there is the verse where the people of Shu`aib asked him,

﴿Does thy prayer command thee that we leave off the worship which our fathers practised?﴾

(Hud: 87)

Thus the Ever-Honorable Qur'an confirms this attitude:

﴿Just in the same way, whenever We sent a Warner before thee to any people, the wealthy ones among them said: "We found our fathers following a certain religion, and we will certainly follow in their footsteps.﴾

(Az-Zukhruf: 23)

The Ever-Honorable Qur'an disapproves of those who adopt such a stagnant way of thinking and blindly submit to what they have inherited, saying,

﴿What! Even though their fathers were void of wisdom and guidance?﴾

(Al-Baqarah: 170)

﴿What! Even though their fathers were void of knowledge and guidance?﴾

(Al-Ma'idah: 104)

﴿He said: What! Even if I brought you better guidance than that which ye found your fathers following?﴾

(Az-Zukhruf: 24)

- d- Finally there is the image of those who live in the past, lamenting what they have missed, repeating words of grief and sorrow, and making hollow-wishes all day long. This way of thinking and feeling overwhelms their lives with gloom and depression, and causes them to live in useless and unjustified, embittered anxiety. It also pushes them towards destructive passivity, and for that reason it has been said that being occupied with the past means wasting time.

It is no wonder that the Ever-Honorable Qur'an and the *Sunnah* have condemned such behavior. The Almighty says,

﴿O ye who believe! Be not like the Unbelievers, who say of their brethren, when they are travelling throughout the earth or engaged in fighting: "If they had stayed with us, they would not have died, or been slain." This that Allah may make it a cause of sighs and regrets in their hearts. It

is Allah that gives Life and Death, and Allah sees well all that ye do. ﴿﴾

(Al `Imran: 156)

The Prophet (pbuh) said,

"The believer who is strong is better and more loved by Allah than the believer who is weak, but both bear goodness. Do eagerly what benefits you, seek help from Allah, and do not show slackness. Do not say, 'If only I had done so-and-so, then such-and-such (a thing) would (not) have happened.' You should say, 'Allah destined it and did what He wanted', for (the word) "if" starts the work of Satan."⁽¹⁾

Thus, believing in the Divine Destiny grabs man from the negative illusions of "if" and "I wish", and acts as a positive and influential factor in pushing man forward towards building the future.

Excessive Advocates of the Future

Contrary to the previous kind of people who exaggerate in clinging to the past is another group of people who excessively advocate the future. Such people turn their backs totally on the past by relinquishing their own history, the history of their nations, and the history of humanity, and rejecting all the cultural and religious heritages. They do this without trying to examine or distinguish between aspects of the past that may be good and useful, or bad and harmful.

Those people believe it is useless to think about the righteous predecessors who died long ago, and for that reason they focus

1. Narrated by Muslim.

all their attention on youth, children, and even embryos who will be the future generation.

Paradoxically, they say that their eyes were created to look forward and not backwards. They consider looking to the past an obstacle that may hinder their progress towards their objectives. This may prove to be true when it comes to those who want people to be imprisoned in the past forever, without ever paying attention to their duties in the present or the future. But such a belief is false when it comes to those who want people to forget anything about the past, reject their heritage, and bury history under dust with all its speeches and lessons. In this context, Allah says,

﴿Do they not travel through the land, so that their hearts (and minds) may thus learn wisdom and their ears may thus learn to hear? Truly it is not the eyes that are blind, but the hearts which are in their breasts.﴾

(Al-Hajj: 46)

The Negative View of the Future: Despair and Pessimism

Some people look to the future through dark glasses, and think about it in a very pessimistic way. They are hopeless and desperate, for they have lost faith in tomorrow, and have given up all hope of winning. It has been deeply engraved in their souls that life is a long dark night that is never interrupted by daylight.

This is, of course, a destructive and devastating view for man himself and for the society around him. This is because if the

individual's life is devoid of any glimpse of hope, then it will be as narrow and suffocating as the eye of a needle. And if the society lives without hope, then its life will be dull, spiritless, and dead, for it is hope that urges individuals to build, cultivate, and push science forward.

Religion, history, and reality all teach us this same lesson and that: life is meaningless with despair, despair is meaningless with life, relief comes after distress, after night there must be dawn, and finally, nothing remains the same forever.

Allah, the Almighty, says,

﴿No one despairs of Allah's soothing Mercy, except those who have no faith.﴾

(Yusuf: 87)

In another verse, He, Most High, says,

﴿And who despairs of the mercy of his Lord, but such as go astray?﴾

(Al-Hijr: 56)

One of the manifestations of pessimism is seeing many people believing that the end of the world has arrived, and that signs of the Hour have appeared. They believe that goodness is turning its back on them, and evil is rapidly approaching. They are also convinced that religiousness is gradually fading, and disbelief will overwhelm the earth very soon. All these ideas make them lose any hope in treatment or reformation.

Such people try to prove their despairing theory with the Prophetic *ahadith* that tackle subjects like the time of ordeals and signs of the Hour. Yet the matter is totally different because

they depend on superficial and inadequate understandings. When we consider what has been mentioned in the religious stipulations about the proximity of the Hour and the appearance of its far signs, we must understand that closeness and remoteness are relative matters. Thus, we may be thousands of years away from this Day, but we may be very close to it. Allah says,

﴿...perchance the Hour is nigh!﴾

(Al-Ahzab: 63)

﴿...perhaps the Hour is close at hand.﴾

(Ash-Shura: 17)

﴿...all of a sudden will it come to you.﴾

(Al-A`raf: 187)

The mission of the Prophet (pbuh) himself is a sign of the Hour, for he (pbuh) said,

"I and the Hour were sent like these... and he joined his forefinger to his middle finger."⁽¹⁾

Thus, giving up work for the sake of reviving the Islamic *Shari`ah* and the Muslim *Ummah* in anticipation of the Day of Judgement is something that religion strongly disapproves of. This is because the Muslim is commanded to work and strive as long as he is alive, and until his repentance will not be accepted anymore - this will only be during the last days of the world. On these days the normal pattern of nature will be disturbed: for example the sun will rise from the west instead of the east. Allah says,

1. Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim.

﴿The day that certain Signs of the Lord do come, no good will it do to a soul to believe then, if it believed not before nor earned righteousness through its Faith.﴾

(Al-An`am: 158)

The Prophet (pbuh) also ordered Muslims to pursue their works, until life breathes its last. The Prophet (pbuh) said,

"If the Hour comes and one of you is handling a palm seedling, let him plant it, if possible."⁽¹⁾

Here, the Muslim is ordered not to leave the palm seedling without planting it even with observing the coming of the Hour, and even if this work will benefit no one. So he should not neglect work, especially when there may be ample time before the Hour comes.

Hence, work is required for itself even if it does not bear fruit instantly. It is an honor for man to try, work, strive, and carry out his duties. I will mention some of the Prophet's sayings that may clarify my point of view.

1- `Ali Ibn Abi Talib related that the Prophet (pbuh) said,

"After me, there will be trials like pieces of the dark night." I said, 'What is the way out from them, O Messenger of Allah?' He said, "Allah's book, where is the news of what happened before you, what will happen after you, and the judgment of (the differences) between you."⁽²⁾

2- He (pbuh) is related to have said,

"Hasten to good deeds, for there will be trials like pieces of the dark night, (when) a man who is a believer in the morn-

1. Narrated by Ahmad and Al-Bukhari.

2. Narrated by At-Tirmidhi.

﴿...but My Mercy extendeth to all things. That (Mercy) I shall ordain for those who do right, and pay Zakat and those who believe in Our Signs.﴾

(Al-A`raf: 156)

The Prophet (pbuh) also said,

"The courteous person is the one who admits his wrongdoing and works for the afterlife, and the impotent person is the one who lets his soul follow its desires and (still) wish to have Allah's favors."⁽¹⁾

This is the case for wishing, but as for hope, it is something praised by Allah who says,

﴿Those who believed and those who suffered exile and fought (and strove and struggled) in the path of Allah,- they have the hope of the Mercy of Allah: and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.﴾

(Al-Baqarah: 218)

A righteous man said that asking for paradise without working for it is a sin in itself, and asking for Allah's mercy without refraining from sins is a sign of stupidity and ignorance. Al-Hasan also said that some had built illusionary hopes on Allah's forgiveness, and had thus died without one good deed in their account. Then he recited the Qur'anic verse that reads,

﴿But this thought of yours which ye did entertain concerning your Lord, hath brought you to destruction, and (now) have ye become of those utterly lost!﴾

(Fussilat: 23)

1. Narrated by At-Tirmidhi and others.

﴿And they say: "None shall enter Paradise unless he be a Jew or a Christian" those are their (vain) desires. Say: "Produce your proof if ye are truthful." Nay,-whoever submits his whole self to Allah and is a doer of good,- he will get his reward with his Lord; on such shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.﴾

(Al-Baqarah: 111, 112)

Not only that, Allah also criticizes the Muslims who follow the same example wrongly believing that by being Muslim in namesake only they will guarantee paradise. He, Most High, says,

﴿Not your desires, nor those of the People of the Book (can prevail): whoever works evil, will be requited accordingly. Nor will he find, besides Allah, any protector or helper. If any do deeds of righteousness,- be they male or female- and have faith, they will enter Heaven, and not the least injustice will be done to them.﴾

(An-Nisa': 123, 124)

Depending on wishes is a hateful thing, but when hope is reinforced with hard work, it is no more a wish.

That is why leaving oneself to be led by one's desires, and relying on Allah's pardon, forgiveness and mercy is a kind of weakness and foolishness. Allah, the Almighty, says,

﴿...for the Mercy of Allah is (always) near to those who do good.﴾

(Al-A`raf: 56)

deny (them).’ I said, ‘So after this goodness, will there be any evil?’ He said, ‘Yes, callers at the gates to Hell: whoever answers their call for it they will throw him into it.’ I said, ‘O Messenger of Allah! Describe them for us.’ He said, ‘They will be from us and speak our language.’”⁽¹⁾

Such wise words of the Prophet (pbuh) sought to warn Muslims against evil, and make them desirous of goodness, strengthen them on what is right, urge them to cling to Allah's Book, encourage patience in carrying out His orders, and finally, resist those who want to call people to Hell-fire.

Encountering the Future with Wishes and Dreams

Another passive way of regarding the future is represented in those who confront the future with mere wishes and hollow dreams, instead of facing it with science, work, and good planning. This is because what is built only on wishes and hopes cannot be fulfilled.

Once a man said to Ibn Sirin, "I dreamed that I was swimming but not in water and flying but not with wings. How can this dream be explained?" The wise man replied, "Your dream only indicates that you are a man who lives on wishes and dreams."

Also, `Ali Ibn Abi Talib once advised his son not to depend even on wishes, because wishes are the resort of fools only.

It is no wonder that Allah criticizes Christians and Jews who cling to wishes so as to enter paradise, without hard work and faith. Allah, the Almighty, says,

1. Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim.

ing will become a disbeliever in the evening, and (a man who is) a believer in the evening will be a disbeliever in the morning, and (when) he will sell his religion for a perishable good of worldly life."⁽¹⁾

3- Abu Tha`labah Al-Khashni related that the Prophet (pbuh) said,

"After you, are the days of patience. Holding patience in them will be like holding a live coal. Whoever works (good) during them will have the reward of fifty men doing like him." I said, 'O Messenger of Allah! The reward of fifty of them?' He said, 'The reward of fifty of you.'"⁽²⁾

In some other versions of this *Hadith* there is a justification of this multiplication:

"You find people who support you to work good, but they will not find people who support them to work good."

4- On the authority of Hudhayfah Ibn Ul-Yaman who said,

"People used to ask the Messenger of Allah about goodness and I used to ask him about evil, for fear that it may catch me." He said, 'I said, 'O Messenger of Allah! We used to live in ignorance and evil, then Allah bestowed this goodness upon us, so will there be any evil after this?' He said, 'Yes.' I said, 'And after this evil, will there be any goodness?' He said, 'Yes, but in it there will be a blemish' I said, 'What is its blemish?' He said, 'People following a Sunnah other than mine and guiding with a guidance other than mine. You will (be able to) distinguish their (deeds) and

1. Narrated by Muslim.

2. Narrated by Abu Dawud and others.

Lovers of the Present Moment

Some people do not look to the past nor yearn for the future. They live their life day by day believing that what is past has passed and is dead, and therefore there is no use in being occupied with it, or thinking about it. As for the future, they believe it to be supernatural; therefore unknown, and a realistic person must never cling to something unknown, because this will be as useless as building on the sand, or writing in the air.

Hence, their preoccupation with the present distracts them from looking forward to the future, or looking backwards to the past with the intent to benefit from it.

They are only the people of today, neither caring about the afterlife because it is the future, nor about history nor heritage because they belong to the past, and the past is dead. So, they only think and care about the present moment. They squeeze it, then sip it, and enjoy every bit of it without spoiling the pleasure by recalling yesterday or thinking of tomorrow. They are used to repeating the phrase: what has gone is over, what is coming is unknown, and the hour that you are living is yours.

Such words may be suitable for the righteous believers, as well as for the pleasure-seeking materialists, because, if man has no time but the present moment, why should he waste it? Why should he not make use of it in obeying Allah, supporting the right, doing good deeds, and spreading kindness?

After close examination of the present, it has been found that the present is nothing but an illusionary line between the past and the future.

The Correct Attitude

The correct attitude towards time is a way that has room for the past, the present, and the future all together.

The Necessity of Looking at the Past: One must have a look at the past to learn from it and to take example from the fates of its nations, because the past is a vessel for events and a store of advice. Here, Allah says,

﴿There have been examples that have passed away before you: travel through the earth, and see what was the end of those who rejected Truth.﴾

(Al `Imran: 137)

﴿If a wound hath touched you, be sure a similar wound hath touched the others. Such days (of varying fortunes) We give to men and men by turns.﴾

(Al `Imran: 140)

﴿How many of the Prophets fought (in Allah's way), and with them (fought) large bands of godly men? But they never lost heart if they met with disaster in Allah's way, nor did they weaken (in will) nor give in. and Allah loves those who are firm and steadfast.﴾

(Al `Imran: 146)

﴿Do they not travel through the land, so that their hearts (and minds) may thus learn wisdom and their ears may thus learn to hear? Truly it is not the eyes that are blind, but the hearts which are in their breasts.﴾

(Al-Hajj: 46)

It is also essential to try to benefit from the heritage of the righteous predecessors and to take what befits our age. The Prophet (pbuh) said,

"The wise word is the believer's objective, so wherever he finds it, he is the most worthy of it."⁽¹⁾

Hence, it is not correct to leave an old thing just because it is old, for sometimes being old is considered to be a merit just like the Ever-Honorable Qur'an - it contains Allah's words and will never be worn out. The same is true for the *Ka`bah* that was, is, and will forever be, the House of Allah and the destination of pilgrims.

Thus, the supporters of innovation exaggerated when they clapped their hands to all that is new. They were mocked by an Arab Islamic man of letters, Mustafa Ar-Rafi`i, who said that they want to innovate religion, language, the sun, and the moon!

Nevertheless, modernity and antiquity are relative, for perhaps an old thing can be considered new by one, and perhaps a new thing can be old to others. In addition to that, nothing new will remain forever new because what is old today was new yesterday, and what is new today will be old tomorrow.

At the end of every day, man must stop and call himself to account. He must see what he has done and why he has done it, and what he has not done and why has not done it. This is preferable before going to sleep.

This moment of evaluating oneself marks the human progress, for in this moment man is deprived of his mind to judge his desires, and of his conscience to judge his pleasures.

1. Narrated by At-Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah.

He makes his belief a policeman who watches his behavior, an inspector who inspects his intentions and deeds, and a judge to whom he must submit. In this way man progresses from the state of leading himself to evil, to the state of blaming himself if he approaches what is prohibited or neglects what is a must. In a *Hadith* mentioned before: "A sane person should have four hours..." and one of these hours is: an hour to count his own deeds.⁽¹⁾

`Umar Ibn Al-Khattab said that a man should count and weigh his own deeds before Allah does so. And as for `Umar, he used to beat his feet every night and ask himself what he had done.

Maymun Ibn Mahran said that the pious person is harsher on himself than a tyrannical sultan, or a miserly partner.

Al-Hasan also said that On the Day of Judgement, some people would not be punished severely because they were already very harsh and severe on themselves, whereas some people would be strongly punished because they took everything lightly without ever stopping to judge their deeds. Al-Hasan explained further that being harsh on oneself means finding something that one wants and needs, but still not laying a hand on it because it is prohibited. It also means that after doing something wrong, one blames his own self, repents, and promises Allah that he will never return to such a thing.

Such an attitude must be adopted everyday, every few days, or even once a week, so that man can get a whole picture of his deeds. Then, this picture must grow larger to be more wholesome at the end of every month and at the end of every

1. A part of *hadith* narrated by Ibn Hibban and Al-Hakim.

year, because it is only through that way man can learn from what has passed and reform what is coming.

One of the strange innovations that originated from Westerners, and unfortunately imitated by some Muslims, is holding birthday parties, celebrating the passing of a year in one's life by laughing, eating, and drinking. Not only this, but also by lighting candles equal to the number of one's passed years, and taking and giving congratulations and gifts.

It is more worthy of the reasonable Muslim - instead of blindly imitating something meaningless and useless - to seize the opportunity of watching a year of his life go by, and contemplate it. By doing this, he will be like the cautious merchant who goes through his records and debts at the beginning of every new year to estimate his profits and losses, and asks Allah to make today better than yesterday, and to make tomorrow better than today.

It is more appropriate for him to go through his records during the whole year because some day he will be asked about this year in front of Allah. In any case, a year is not of short duration as it is twelve months long - a month is thirty days, a day is made up of twenty four hours, an hour contains sixty minutes, a minute is sixty seconds, and each second is a favor from Allah. Man will be held responsible for it all.

Hence, it is more appropriate for man to feel sorry for himself, and his life that passed that will never come back. May the mercy of Allah be upon Al-Hasan Al-Basri who said, "O son of Adam, you are nothing but a group of days, and every time a day goes by, it takes part of you with it."

This is what the reasonable Muslim should do, but, unfortunately, being reasonable nowadays is something rare.

A Look to the Future: Man, by nature, aspires to the future and cannot overlook it or throw it behind his back. Just as he has been given a memory to bind him to the past, he has also been given an imagination to draw him a picture of the future.

One of the characteristics of the future is its being part of the unseen and unknown. That is to say, one can never know what secrets it hides and what good or evil it conceals.

﴿Nor does any one know what it is that he will earn in the morrow.﴾

(Luqman: 34)

Another quality of the future is that it is always nearby, no matter how far man believes it to be. That is why it is true to say that with today comes tomorrow, and tomorrow is not far from the one who expects it. Allah says,

﴿And the matter of the Hour (of Judgment) is as the twinkling of an eye, or even quicker.﴾

(An-Nahl: 77)

The reasonable person is the one who gets ready and prepares for the future, as Allah says,

﴿O ye who believe! Fear Allah, and let every soul look to what (provision) he has sent forth for the morrow.﴾

(Al-Hashr: 18)

Those who think that religion ties man to the past must have misunderstood its essence and true nature. This is because the most important function of religion is to prepare man for

eternity, that is to say, for the future, and a life much better and more lasting than this present life.

The Prophet (pbuh) said,

"Verily the servant is between two (objects of) fear: between time that has passed, and he does not know what Allah will do with it, and time that remains, and he does not know what Allah will ordain in it. So let the servant take the benefit of himself for himself, the benefit of his life for his after-life, and of youth before old age, for by Allah in Whose hand is my soul, after death no one will (be allowed to) beg for pardon and after life there will be no home except paradise or the fire."

However, this does not mean that a religious person should care only about his afterlife, throwing his worldly future behind his back. Islam teaches man to be cautious and prepared for tomorrow whether in religious or worldly matters. The Prophet (pbuh) is the supreme model for all Muslims. He thought of the future when he signed the pledge of allegiance, with the tribes of Al-Aws and Al-Khazraj. He also thought about the *Hijrah*, seeking a solid base for establishing the Islamic law and the Muslim society.

Thus, signing the first and second pledge of Al-`Aqabah, and preparing for the emigration to Yathrib were the result of hard work and perfect planning for the future.

Also, coming to the worldly matters, we find the Prophet (pbuh) thinking about the future, and saving his family foodstuff enough for a year. He did not perceive it to be in contradiction with his trust in Allah.

Caring for the Present: As previously mentioned, man has to learn from the past and to prepare for the future.

﴿...and let every soul look to what (provision) he has sent forth for the morrow.﴾

(Al-Hashr: 18)

In addition to this, he will have to benefit from the present and to make use of the hour he is living before it passes away.

Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali said that there are only three hours: the hour that passed (therefore man can do nothing about it, whether he had spent it in hardship or in luxury); the hour that will come (here man does not know whether he will live to see it or not); and finally, the present hour (here man must resist himself and be cautious in his behavior because Allah is watching). In this case, if he dies, he will not lament missing his present hour, and if he lives, he will have to do the same thing in the coming hour. Thus, man must behave as if he is breathing his last, which means that he must beware of everything he does.⁽¹⁾

In this regard, the Prophet (pbuh) said,

"A sane person - unless he is mindless - should have four hours: an hour to whisper to his Lord, an hour to count his own deeds, an hour to contemplate about the creation of Allah (Glorified and exalted be He), and an hour to satisfy his needs of food and drink."⁽²⁾

This hour will be a help to him in the other hours, and even the hour in which his organs are occupied with eating and

1. See, Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' `Ulum Ad-Din*.

2. A part of *hadith* narrated by Ibn Hibban and Al-Hakim.

drinking, if he contemplates about the wonders in food, it will be much more better than lots of things done by the organs.

On this occasion, we must remember the great *Hadith* of the Prophet (pbuh) that we mentioned before,

"If the Hour comes and one of you is handling a palm seedling, let him plant it, if possible."

We must stop and wonder why the Prophet (pbuh) gave this command of planting the palm seedling.

Surely this man will not live to reap the fruits of what he will have planted, for we are not speaking here about the normal cycle of planting today and reaping tomorrow.

Certainly he will not plant it for the benefit of posterity, like the story of the very old man who was asked why he was planting an olive tree when he was on the verge of dying. The old man replied that he was planting it for the benefit of posterity, just as his ancestors had done before.

However, this is not the case in the situation mentioned in the *Hadith*, because the Prophet (pbuh) here is speaking about the time when the Hour arrives when there is no hope in living. So, why should there be any kind of planting at this moment?

The obvious purpose for this command is to honor work for the sake of work, no matter if one benefits from it or not, and to indicate to the Muslim that he must never give up constructing on the earth, or planting life. In other words, he must not stop working and giving as long as there is still life, even if the trumpeter announces the end of life.

V

How Can Man Prolong His Lifetime?

There is no doubt that man by nature loves life, likes to live long, and if he can, live eternally. This instinct of loving eternity was the entrance that paved the way for Satan to lure Adam, the father of humanity, into sinning. Allah says,

﴿But Satan whispered evil to him: he said, "O Adam! Shall I lead thee to the Tree of Eternity and to a kingdom that never decays?﴾

(Taha: 12)

Religion itself believes long life to be a blessing when this long life is used in supporting the right, and doing what is best for humanity. The Prophet (pbuh) was once asked about the best of people, and he (pbuh) said,

"The one who lives long, and does well."⁽¹⁾

It is also a fact that death spoils life for people. It may surprise a young man in the heyday of his youth, or a bride on the first days of her marriage. It may grab a lonely pampered son from his parents, a luxurious rich man from his luxury, or even a feared ruler from his guards and retinue. That it is why death has been called "the vanquisher of pleasures" and "a thing that separates groups."

1. Narrated by At-Tirmidhi.

If death is the final stage and the end of life, then man's lifetime is very short no matter how long he lives. So man is nothing but a few days and a few breaths that can be interrupted by death at any moment, and without any previous notion. The Prophet (pbuh) said,

"Live as (much as) you want, for you will be dead. Love whoever you want, for you will leave him. Do whatever you want, for you will be rewarded according to it and asked about it."⁽¹⁾

Despite the great progress of science and medicine, it is not capable of preventing old age, or making an old person youthful again. The Prophet (pbuh) said,

"Surely Allah has never created a malady but with a remedy for it, except old age."⁽²⁾

Incidentally, true age is not measured by the number of years he spends from birth to death. It is by what Allah writes in his favor because of his good deeds. So, no wonder one finds man living more than one hundred years and still find his account of piety is zero, or even below zero. That is to say, he is in debit. Whereas you may find a man dying young, but leaving his account loaded and filled with great achievements.

In this respect, a wise man said that one may live long but find little, whereas another one may not live long but still find much. Thus, the one whose age is blessed is the one upon whom Allah bestows His countless gifts in a very short time.

So man can prolong his lifetime by intensifying his efforts to please Allah, Most High, because the more his kindness,

1. Narrated by At-Tabarani and Ash-Shirazi.

2. Narrated by al-Bukhari.

sincerity and devotion are, the higher his credit and the better his reward will be.

This means that the value and degree of man's work depends on how useful and effective they are on the life of others. For example, a man may lead people to the right way, rescue them from evil, relieve them from agony, release them from oppression, defend them against enemies, or he may do anything else that extends to be of benefit for individuals, groups, or even nations.

That is why work occupies a very special place in Islam, and striving for Allah's sake comes on top of all kinds of work. The Prophet (pbuh) said,

"He who calls to (an action of) Guidance will be rewarded with the likeness of the rewards received by those who follow him, and this will decrease nothing from their rewards."⁽¹⁾

Also, he (pbuh) said,

"In Paradise there are a hundred degrees that Allah has prepared for those who strive for Allah's cause. The distance between (each) two degrees is like (the distance) between Heaven and earth."⁽²⁾

Likewise, the justice of rulers and leaders occupies a very eminent position in Islam. This is because of the goodness it renders to groups and nations, strength required in struggling with oneself and resisting the yearnings of one's desires and the causes of favoritism and oppression. That is why the Prophet (pbuh) said,

1. Narrated by Muslim.

2. Narrated by al-Bukhari.

"One day from (the life of) a just ruler is better than sixty years of worshipping."⁽¹⁾

Once one of the Companions of the Prophet (pbuh) passed by a ravine that had a small well of fresh water in it. He liked the place, and thought of secluding himself from people and settling down there (i.e. for the sake of worshipping), but he decided to take the Prophet's permission first. The Prophet (pbuh) said,

"Do not do so, for the staying of one of you in the cause of Allah is better than his performing prayer in his home for seventy years. Do you not want that Allah forgives you and enters you into Paradise? (If yes, then) invade in the cause of Allah: whoever fights in the cause of Allah for (even a period equal to) the period between two times of milking a she-camel, will definitely enter paradise."⁽²⁾

Deeds are influenced by various factors, and the happy one is the one who cares to do the best. Allah, the Almighty,

﴿...So announce the good news to My Servants, those who listen to the Word, and follow the best of it.﴾

(Az-Zumar: 17, 18)

There are so many who have succeeded in achieving great and miraculous things in very short periods. This has not been the result of mere human abilities, but it is Allah's blessing that has guided them to do so.

It is sufficient for us to remember how the Prophet (pbuh) managed to bring people out from darkness into light, and changed the face of human history in only twenty-three years.

1. Narrated by At-Tabarani.

2. Narrated by At-Tirmidhi and Al-Hakim.

He, thus, established a new religion, raised upon it a unique generation, founded a perfect *Ummah* and an international country in a short period of time. This was despite all the hardships and impediments that stood in his way from the very first day of his mission.

Do not say that it is ridiculous to compare ourselves to the Prophet (pbuh) because he was supported by miracles. The Prophet's life during his mission and strife was a very ordinary one. His real miracle was the Ever-Honorable Qur'an and not any other supernatural, cosmic phenomenon. Yes, Allah supported him with miracles, but that was only when he had exerted the best of his efforts. For example, during the *Hijrah*, Allah bestowed peacefulness and tranquility upon his heart, and backed him with invisible soldiers. Also in the Battle of Badr, Allah provided him with one thousand angels fighting from behind, as the Almighty says,

﴿Allah made it but a message of hope, and an assurance to your hearts.﴾

(Al-Anfal: 10)

If we look also to the Rightly-Guided Caliphs, the Companions of the Prophet (pbuh), and those who followed them, we will then realize that it was not a miracle when we examine how they conquered the world, spread Islam, and brought nations out of their benighted religions and traditions in a few decades. Historians stand mesmerized in front of this religious, spiritual, intellectual, social, and political revolution that Islam created in less than a century.

If we also consider someone like `Umar Ibn `Abd Ul-`Aziz, we realize how he, in less than two and a half years filled the earth with justice and equity because he was determined from the very beginning to amend the Caliphate, and restore all the rights and charges to the victims of injustice. He did so fearing no one but Allah.

So the more one suffers in challenging the impediments and obstacles standing in his way, and the lesser help and support he finds, the greater and the worthier his reward from Allah will be.

That is why the Companions of the Prophet (pbuh) are favored more than those who came after them because they believed in Allah when people disbelieved, and they believed in the Prophet (pbuh) when everybody else accused him of lying. The same is true for the first emigrants and helpers who are favored more than those who came to Islam after the Conquest of Makkah, and after the emergence of the dominance of Islam. Allah, the Almighty, says,

﴿Not equal among you are those who spent (freely) and fought, before the Victory, (with those who did so later). Those are higher in rank than those who spent (freely) and fought afterwards. But to all has Allah promised a goodly (reward).﴾

(Al-Hadid: 10)

Therefore, when societies are corrupt, and disorder prevails, righteous deeds are more appreciated. This is because goodness is very rare and difficult to achieve when rulers practice tyranny, the rich are spoilt, the strong are pumped up with arrogance,

1. Narrated by Muslim.

scientists adopt flattery, adultery becomes widespread, and maleficence rises as beneficence is buried. It is the time described by our old scholars as the era of trials and corruption, and it is defined in our age as the modern pre-Islamic age. Thus people in such a time who apply Allah's religion and strive for its sake are like new Companions of the Prophet (pbuh). He (pbuh) said,

"(Adhering to) worship during (a time of) turmoil and difference equals an emigration to me."⁽¹⁾

On the authority of Abu Umayyah Ash-Sha`bani who said that he went to Abu Tha`labah Al-Khashni, asking him about the meaning of the verse that says, *﴿O ye who believe! Guard your own souls: if ye follow (right) guidance, no hurt can come to you from those who stray.﴾*⁽²⁾. The man told him that he himself had asked the Prophet (pbuh) about it before, and he said,

"Take mutual counsel according to what is just and reasonable and forbid one another the iniquities (that you commit) until you see (people) obeying covetousness, following lower desires, giving preference to the world (over the Hereafter), and everyone (of them) admiring (only) his own view, and see a matter that you have nothing to do with, then guard your own soul. After you, are the days of patience. Holding patience in them will be like holding a live coal. Whoever works (good) during them will have the reward of fifty men doing like him."⁽³⁾

1. Narrated by Muslim.

2. Surat Al-Ma'idah: 105.

3. Narrated by Ibn Majah.

In another version narrated Abu Dawud,

"It was said, 'O Messenger of Allah! The reward of fifty of us or of them?' He said, 'But the reward of fifty of you.'"

This *Hadith* necessitates the enjoining the good and forbidding the wrong as long as one has got an ear that hears, a heart that feels, and has hope in any kind of response. But when all the doors are locked, and things turn out to be more than one can tolerate, one must be patient until Allah accomplishes a matter already enacted.

Patience here does not imply passiveness as that implies watching and waiting, and at the same time spiritually boiling just like a boiling kettle on fire. That is why the Prophet (pbuh) said,

"(Patience is) like holding a live coal."

Patience here may also mean thinking of some significant work that requires forbearance and tolerance, and that can change a corrupt situation from its deep roots. Such work will need the cooperation of the loyal and true believers because what one person cannot do on his own can be done by a group. And when one is strengthened by his brothers, Allah will always be behind the group. The work that the Prophet (pbuh) meant in the *Hadith* is the kind of work previously performed by his Companions, like clinging to the right, uniting forces for the sake of supporting Islam, fighting ignorance, sacrificing the soul and the precious for Allah's sake, and having patience till Allah says His final word.

Man's Second Lifetime

A man whom Allah has granted success in using his time, can prolong his lifetime even after his death. He may be dead but living, and may be able to do something for the living when he is in his grave.

This is only possible when he leaves something good that is of benefit to people still living. He may leave useful knowledge, righteous deeds, good influence that will be exemplified by others, an establishment for charity, or virtuous children. Such things can act as an extension to his righteous life, and to his life of piety. This is clear in the Prophet's (pbuh) words. He said,

"When the son of Adam dies, his work comes to an end except for three things; a continuous charity, knowledge that is beneficial, or a righteous son who prays for him."⁽¹⁾

In another *Hadith*, which gave preference to these three things, the Prophet (pbuh) said,

"Some of what follow the believer from his work and his good deeds after his death are: the knowledge that he has taught and spread, a righteous son whom he has left, a copy of the Qur'an (mushaf) that he has left as an inheritance, a mosque that he has built, a house that he has founded for the wayfarer, a river that he has caused to run, a charity that he has made from his property during his (enjoyment of) health and life that will catch up him after his death."⁽²⁾

1. Narrated by Muslim.

2. Narrated by Ibn Majah.

The Prophet (pbuh) also said,

"The one who introduces a good sunnah (exemplary act) will take its reward, and the reward of those who follow it, until the Day of Resurrection."⁽¹⁾

In the Glorious Qur'an, Allah, the Almighty, says,

﴿Verily We shall give life to the dead, and We record that which they send before and that which they leave behind.﴾

(Yasin: 12)

﴿That Day will Man be told (all) that he put forward, and all that he put back.﴾

(Al-Qiyamah: 13)

People agree that when a man leaves a good reputation behind him, it is like being given a second life, but this time an eternal life.

It is no wonder that Ibrahim, the father of the Prophets, asked Allah the following,

﴿Grant me honourable mention on the tongue of truth among the latest (generations).﴾

(Ash-Shu'ara': 84)

Hence, there is a great difference between the one who when he dies hearts mourn him, eyes weep for him, and tongues praise him asking Allah to have mercy upon him, and the one who when he dies, he finds no one to cry for him, feel sorry for his departure, or even ask mercy for him. The latter represents someone who is passive and leaves nothing to remind people of

1. Narrated by Muslim.

him. He may also represent those who are haughty and tyrannical. This kind of person is described in the Qur'anic verse that says,

﴿How many were the gardens and springs they left behind, and corn-fields and noble buildings, and pleasant things wherein they had taken such delight! Thus (was their end)! And We made other people inherit (those things)! And neither heaven nor earth shed a tear over them: nor were they given a respite (again).﴾

(Ad-Dukhan: 25-29)

When this kind of people die, they frequently leave another generation of followers to whom they bequeath their offenses, crimes, blasphemy, and error.

If the one who introduces a good *sunnah* will take its reward, and the reward of those who follow it until the Day of Resurrection, then the one who introduces a bad *sunnah* will bear its sin and the sins of those who follow it until the Day of Resurrection.

How unfortunate for those who are buried under the dust, while their sinful deeds, false sayings, and misleading ideas are represented in books, articles, films, serials, tapes, or records that eat up minds and hearts just like fire that eats up straw.

Hence, the righteous say, "How fortunate for the one who when he dies, his sins die with him, and how unfortunate for the one who when he dies, his sins remain behind him!"

Beware of Time Killing Epidemics

There are so many epidemics that waste man's time if he is not aware of their danger. Below are some of these epidemics:

- a) **Inattentiveness:** Inattentiveness is a disease that infects man's heart and mind in a way that makes him unaware of events, even of the succession of day and night, and of the meaning of things and the consequences of matters and affairs. In other words, inattentiveness makes man care for shapes rather than meanings, appearances rather than facts, the surface rather than the essence, and beginnings rather than endings.

The Ever-Honorable Qur'an warns people strongly against inattentiveness because those who adopt it will be the firewood of Hell, for they are more misguided than cattle. Allah, the Almighty, says,

﴿Many are the Jinns and men We have made for Hell: they have hearts wherewith they understand not, eyes wherewith they see not, and ears wherewith they hear not. They are like cattle,-nay more misguided: for they are heedless (of warning).﴾

(Al-A`raf: 179)

In another verse the Ever-Honorable Qur'an finds guilty those who care for only the surface of knowledge rather than for its essence and true nature. Allah, the Almighty, says,

﴿... but most men know not. They know but the outer (things) in the life of this world: but of the Hereafter they are heedless.﴾

(Ar-Rum: 6-7)

And He, Most High, addresses the Prophet (pbuh) saying,

﴿And do thou bring thy lord to remembrance in thy (very) soul, with humility and remember without loudness in words, in the mornings and evenings; and be not thou of those who are unheedful.﴾

(Al-A`raf: 205)

And in another Qur'anic verse, He, Most High, says,

﴿..nor obey any whose heart We have permitted to neglect the remembrance of Us, one who follows his own desires, and his affair has become all excess.﴾

(Al-Kahf: 28)

It is really disastrous to see our *Ummah* subjected to serious and catastrophic events without it learning any lesson from it, and without it trying even to move. Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) invoked Allah with these words, "O Allah, do not let us flounder heedless, do not take us by surprise, and do not make us inattentive."

Sahl Ibn `Abdullah used to say, "Do not accompany three kinds of people: flattering scholars, those ignorant people who pretend to be Sufi, and inattentive tyrants."

- b) Procrastination:** Another dangerous epidemic is procrastination and postponement. Its danger increases when man takes it to be his slogan, and becomes a distinctive feature of his attitude.

A wise man advised someone with the words: "Beware of procrastination." Another wise man said, "Procrastination is one of Satan's soldiers."

Your day has a right on you, and so you must try to fill it with useful knowledge righteous deeds as much as you can, and never postpone anything till tomorrow lest your present should slip from you and become the past. Alas regrets and lamentations will be of no use. In other words, you must plant today to reap tomorrow.

In a written message from Muhammad Ibn Samrah to Yusuf Ibn Asbat, he said, "O brother, beware of letting procrastination have power over your soul and heart, for it is the cause of weariness and dullness, the resort of damage and destruction, and the end of hopes. O brother, wake up and remember what you have done, what you have neglected, and what you have reaped, because everything is written down and counted. So hurry up brother to accumulate new good deeds, and repent for your former sins before death takes you by surprise."

Procrastination entails the following epidemics:

1. You can never be sure if you will live to see tomorrow. A prince once invited a good man for food, but the man apologized because he was fasting. The prince told him to eat that day and fast the next, but the good man refused saying, "Can you guarantee for me that I will live to see tomorrow?"

How could there be anyone who can give such a guarantee when death can surprise anyone for any reason? Despite the great progress of medicine and science, sudden death is more common at the present time than in any previous time. Thus medicine cannot prevent one dying from a heart attack or from angina.

Likewise, science cannot stop the deaths caused by the countless accidents which take place everyday owing to the tools of civilization like cars, planes, machines, and mechanical and electrical instruments. This means that science itself has arranged dying in such a way because before industrialization man used to be safe from these causes.

2. Even if someone claims that he is sure that he will live to see tomorrow, he can never be sure that he will be safe from any impediment like an unexpected disease, a sudden occupation, or a befalling disaster. That is why hastening to good deeds and carrying out duties are considered signs of determination, whereas procrastination and postponement are considered signs of impotence.

The Prophet (pbuh) once preached to a man, saying,

"Take advantage of five things before another five: your life before your death, your health before your sickness, your free time before your occupation, your youth before your old age, and your richness before your poverty."⁽¹⁾

An old scholar told a youth, "Work before the time comes when you cannot, for today I want to work but I cannot."

Hafsah Bint Sirin used to say, "O young people, work! Because it is in youth that you can work."

3. Every day has its own task, and every time has its own duties, which means that there is nothing called

1. Narrated by Ahmad and others.

"unoccupied time". One day when signs of exhaustion appeared on `Umar Ibn `Abd Ul-`Aziz, he was advised to delay what he was doing until the next day. But, he refused saying, "I have got tired from the work of one day, so what if I have to do the work of two days together."

Ibn `Ata' said that in every time Allah has a new right on you and a command that you must fulfil.

4. Delaying the process of carrying out Allah's commands, and procrastinating good deeds makes one get used to neglecting them. When a habit is firmly established, it becomes one's nature that cannot be easily erased. In this case, man may be convinced of the necessity of hastening to do good deeds, but still he will not find in himself the strong will and determination that can help him do so. He will find himself, instead, slackening and avoiding work, and if he one day moves one step forward, he will seem as if he is carrying a mountain on his back.

We shall find the same thing in the case of procrastinating repentance, for here the soul gets used to committing sins, and to its being led by desires. It will be very difficult then to purify it from such sinful pleasures because everyday that passes brings it closer to such pleasures, and adds to its fondness and adherence to it. The soul becomes overwhelmed by complete darkness, and has no hope or chance in seeing any ray of light. At-Tirmidhi narrated that the Prophet (pbuh) said,

"Surely when the believer commits a sin, it becomes a black speck in his heart. If he repents, gives up (sins), and asks

Allah's forgiveness, he will be refined from it, but if he increases (sins), it (the black speck) will grow larger until Allah wraps up his heart with it. This is the stain that Allah has mentioned in His Book: ﴿By no means! But on their hearts is the stain of the (ill) which they do!﴾⁽¹⁾."

5. Work is a duty on every living man. It is a must, whether it is religious or worldly, and the man who does not work does not deserve to live. An Islamic proverb says: "Work for your life as if you are living forever, and work for your afterlife as if you are dying tomorrow."

- c) **Cursing time:** Blaming time, and complaining of its oppression and cruelty is a troublesome epidemic and passive behavior. Some people may reach the extent of imagining time an opponent who persecutes them, an enemy who is lying in an ambush for them, or even a tyrannical ruler who punishes the innocent and spoils the guilty just because it pleases him to do so.

The truth, however, is that people exaggerate in clinging to the idea of predestination, just to acquit themselves from any guilt, and to avoid bearing the consequences of their mistakes. They thus throw the responsibility of their misdeeds on time, fate, luck, or circumstances.

It would have been worthier of them to look at what has befallen them, and analyze it deeply, relating results to causes and conclusions to introductions. This is because time has no hand in anything, for it is just a vessel for events that run as Allah pleases. That is why the Prophet (pbuh) said,

1. *Surat Al-Mutaffifin*: 14.

"Do not curse time, for Allah is surely time."⁽¹⁾

This means that Allah is the One who establishes the affairs and norms of time and it is He Who operates them.

When Muslims were defeated in the Battle of Uhud and seventy of them were killed, they wondered about the cause of the defeat, especially the Prophet (pbuh) was among them in the battlefield. The reply came in the Qura'nic verse that says,

﴿What! When a single disaster smites you, although you smote (your enemies) with one twice as great, do ye say? - "Whence is this? Say (to them): "It is from yourselves: for Allah hath power over all things.﴾

(Al `Imran: 165)

The Qur'an also confirms this general rule when it says,

﴿Because Allah will never change the Grace which He hath bestowed on a people until they change what is in their (own) souls.﴾

(Al-Anfal: 53)

Hence, it is more proper for people to blame themselves and try to rectify and straighten up whatever is corrupt, instead of blaming and cursing time.

So, the good Muslim is the one who, when afflicted, blames no one but himself, repents, and asks Allah's forgiveness, just like Adam and Eve when they were driven out of Heaven. They said,

1. Narrated by Muslim.

﴿Our Lord we have wronged our own souls: if Thou forgive us not and bestow not upon us Thy Mercy, we shall certainly be lost.﴾

(Al-A`raf: 23)

A good Muslim should say like what Moses said when he returned and found his people worshipping a golden calf,

﴿O my Lord! Forgive me and my brother! Admit us to Thy mercy! For Thou art the Most Merciful of those who show mercy.﴾

(Al-A`raf: 151)

He should also say like what the devout men said when many of them died as martyrs,

﴿But they never lost heart if they met with disaster in Allah's way, nor did they weaken (in will) nor give in. and Allah loves those who are firm and steadfast. All that they said was: "Our Lord forgive us our sins and anything we may have done that transgress our duty; establish our feet firmly, and help us against those that resist Faith." And Allah gave them a reward in this world and excellent reward of the Hereafter, for Allah loveth those do good.﴾

(Al`Imran: 147, 148)

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Time in the Life of the Muslim

is the result of what I have learned of far-reaching interests of Islam on time, and what I perceive of the lives of the *Salaf* (righteous predecessors). Also, it is the result of what I have seen, and still see everyday in the Muslim world. Muslims, nowadays, are wasting their time and their lives. After being accustomed to leading the world, they are now satisfied with lagging behind. If they apprehend Islam correctly, they will work for this life, as if they will live forever, and work for the afterlife as if they will die tomorrow. They will also take this verse to be their motto, ﴿Our Lord! Give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter. And save us from the torment of the Fire!﴾ (Al-Baqarah: 201)

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