

JANNAT
AL-FIRDAWS

Strive for the Best

QURAN & SUNNAH
PUBLICATIONS

THIS IS A GIFT COPY | NOT TO BE SOLD



JANNAT AL-FIRDAWS

Strive for the Best

This book contains advice and guidance on how we, as Muslims, should strive to not only attain a place in Paradise, but to also make extra effort and strive for the very best of it, in *Jannat al-Firdaws*. After the mercy of Allah, it is only through sincerity and correct actions that deeds are accepted. What then, does it mean to be sincere? And what makes an action correct? These questions and more will be answered herein with evidences from the Quran and Sunnah, according to the understanding of the early Muslim generations and noble scholars of Islam; **“So remind, if the reminder should benefit.”** (Quran, 87:9)

مطبعة القرآن والسنة
QURAN & SUNNAH
PUBLICATIONS

Retail Price: £7.95 | United Kingdom



142808102489098

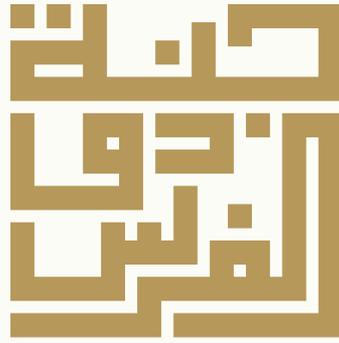
حکومت
اندر
افغانستان

Published by Quran & Sunnah Publications, 2018.

Written by A. Majothi, in collaboration and support of
Dr N. Ali.

This publication is for the sake of Allah. Anyone is
welcome to reprint it on the conditions that no changes
are made to its contents and that it is also distributed for
free.

Download a free copy of this publication at:
www.objectivejannah.com



JANNAT
AL-FIRDAWS

Strive for the Best

QURAN & SUNNAH
PUBLICATIONS

CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i>	7
The Description of Paradise	9
Jannat al-Firdaws and the Levels of Paradise	11
Why Settle for Less?	15
The Finest Role-Model	17
The Dunya	19
Returning to Allah	23
Hope and Fear	31
The Path to Success	35
Setting Priorities in Order	43
Paradise in this Life	47

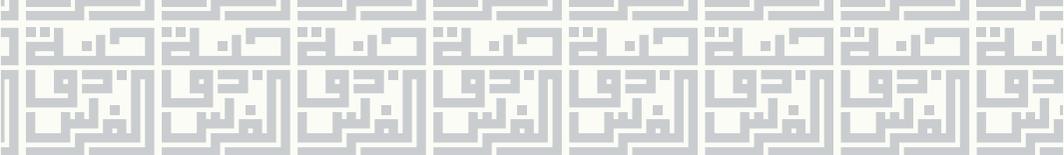
بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

PREFACE

This small book, which we hope you will find life-changing, is the result of a meeting between two brothers in Islam; both of whom expressed the same wish to remind one-another and every Muslim to remain steadfast on the religion of Islam and work for the highest level in *Jannat* (Paradise) possible. It is a reminder which we pray will benefit us and you in this life and the hereafter. Allah states in the Quran: **“By time, indeed all of mankind is at loss, except those who believe, do righteous deeds and encourage one another to truth and patience.”**¹

1. Al-Quran, 103:1-3.

حکومت آزاد و آفرین



THE DESCRIPTION OF PARADISE

Allah **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى** has described Paradise in the Quran, and His Messenger Muhammad **صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ** has informed us about it in many hadiths. It is easy to forget that Paradise exists now and will soon open its gates! Allah **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى** describes Paradise as a place of **“gardens and springs”** which will be a place of peace and security, where there will be no hatred in anyone’s heart for others and everyone will be like brothers and sisters, **“on thrones, facing one another; no tiredness will overtake them, and they will never be removed from it.”**² It is a place which will have **“whatever the souls desire and [whatever] delights the eyes.”**³ It is a place where the people of Paradise

2. Al-Quran, 15:45-48.

3. Al-Quran, 43:71.

will eat, drink and enjoy themselves; where people will not fall sick, experience old age and weakness or experience death again. The Messenger of Allah صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ narrated to us from Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى, who said: *“I have prepared for my righteous slaves what no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and the mind of no man has conceived.”*⁴

The greatest pleasure in Paradise will not be any of the things mentioned above. Instead, it will be the pleasure felt when finally looking at Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى and nothing in Paradise will equal this great moment. The Messenger of Allah صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ said: *“When the inhabitants of Paradise enter Paradise, Allah will say to them, ‘Do you want Me to give you anything more?’ They will reply, ‘Have You not made our faces bright? Have You not brought us into Paradise and moved us from Hell?’ Allah will then remove the Veil and they will feel that they have not been awarded anything dearer to them than looking at their Lord.”*⁵ O Allah! Count us all among those who are present for this moment like no other!

4. Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim.

5. Sahih Muslim.

JANNAT AL-FIRDAWS AND THE LEVELS OF PARADISE

Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى describes Paradise as a place of different levels and grades⁶ and the Messenger of Allah صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ informed us about these grades in more detail. The Messenger of Allah صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ said: *“There are one hundred grades in Paradise made by Allah for those who struggle in His cause. Between every two grades is a distance similar to the skies and the earth.”*⁷

The Messenger of Allah صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ further said that the people in Paradise will see others who obtained higher grades than them like *“illuminated planets”* which will cover the skies.⁸

6. See al-Quran, 4:96 and 8:4.

7. Sahih al-Bukhari.

8. Sahih al-Bukhari.

The highest level in Paradise is called *al-Firdaws*, which literally means *The Garden*. This is a place reserved for the best people as Allah ﷻ states: **“And those foremost (in faith and good deeds) will be foremost (in Paradise). They will be those who are nearest to Allah; in the Gardens of delight.”**⁹

Imagine what awaits those who reach *al-Firdaws*: they will be in the best company and among the Prophets, those truest in faith and good deeds, the martyrs and the righteous; they will have the best of what Paradise has to offer; they will be closest from the people of Paradise to Allah! The Messenger of Allah ﷺ encouraged the believers to beg Allah for a place in it, *“because it is in the middle of Paradise, and its superior part. Above it is the Throne of Allah from which the rivers of Paradise flow.”*¹⁰

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ also described the highest station in Paradise which is called *al-Waseelah* and is the nearest in proximity to Allah’s ﷻ Throne, as *“a place in the Paradise which will not be for anyone except for one servant among*

9. Al-Quran, 56:10-12.

10. Sahih al-Bukhari.

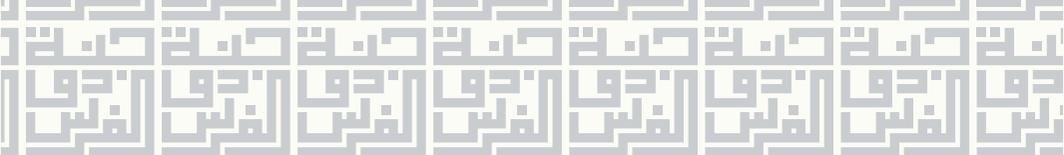
Allah's servants."¹¹ The Prophet ﷺ yearned for this station and encouraged us all to ask Allah to grant him *al-Waseelah*, and promised that whoever did this would be granted his intercession on the Day of Judgement.¹²

O Allah, grant Your servant and Messenger Muhammad ﷺ *al-Waseelah* and his followers *al-Firdaws*!

11. Sahih Muslim.

12. Sahih Muslim.





WHY SETTLE FOR LESS?

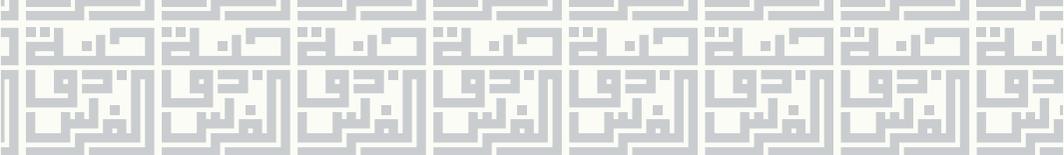
One might think that the higher levels of Paradise are reserved for the Prophets and Messengers alone. The companions of the Prophet ﷺ thought this too. After hearing about the grades of Paradise, they said to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ: “O Prophet! These grades are for the Messengers and no one else can reach them!” The Messenger of Allah ﷺ gave them, and us, the good news, that in fact the levels of Paradise are for everyone: *“I swear by the One in whose hand is my soul, [these grades] are for the people who believed in Allah and believed in the Prophets.”*¹³

This hadith is not only a message of hope and encouragement, but also a reminder that it is not one’s mere wealth, status or appearance which will

13. Sahih al-Bukhari.

give them the eternal success; it is, after the mercy of Allah *سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى*, one's beliefs and righteous actions.

Merely wishing for Paradise is not enough. And even more so, wishing for the highest place in Paradise will not be achieved by sitting back and having wishful thoughts and dreams. In this life, can anyone expect to achieve the best without hard work and determination? Then how much more so does this apply to the afterlife!

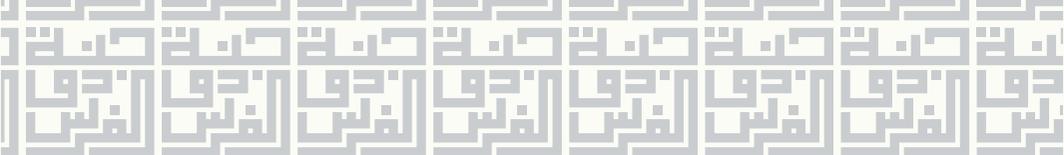


THE FINEST ROLE-MODEL

Again, one might think that Paradise and its higher levels are unobtainable and that no matter how hard one tries to follow the Prophet ﷺ, they will never be like him. As Muslims, we must firmly believe that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is the greatest human being. And despite him being guaranteed his place in Paradise, his life was riddled with more trials than most of us could bear: in his 63 years on earth, he witnessed the deaths of his mother, grandfather, uncle, wife and several of his children and close companions; he was attacked physically, verbally and boycotted; he starved many a night and slept on a straw mat which left marks on his back. Yet and still, he remained devoted to Allah and grateful to Him in every condition.

It is easy to brush aside these facts and make excuses that he was a Prophet, his past and future sins were forgiven etc. but one should remember that he was human, he hurt as we hurt, he cried as we cry, he suffered as we suffer; the Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ was sent as a role-model and showed us how to turn our every circumstance into an opportunity to please Allah and gain reward.

The Messenger of Allah صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ is the perfect role-model now and until the end of time; no matter what situation he found himself in, his goal never changed and neither should ours. Yes, we will never outdo the Prophet of Allah صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ in piety and good deeds, but we are his followers and there is a station close to him in Paradise should we follow his Sunnah and way.



THE DUNYA

The dunya, or life as we know it on planet earth, is very different to each and every person based on their own circumstances. Yet, there are some things which we cannot escape, no matter what our differences are. Life is temporary and it can end at any point. As Muslims, we know that death is not the end. In fact, it is just the beginning to another life which will never end. The hereafter is real. Judgement day is real. Paradise is real and Hell is real. Our belief in these unseen things has a huge impact on our personalities and attitudes. The more and more we keep the hereafter on our minds, the less time we have to waste.

Some people come to the conclusion that “we only live once” and do not believe in a hereafter. And some of them do everything within their power to make every second count, perhaps after suffering

a near-death experience or experiencing a life-defining moment. As Muslims, we should be more conscious than such people. After all, we believe that our actions, big and small, will be judged by Allah **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى** and every good and bad action will be recompensed. This inspires us to not only make the most of our lives, but to work in preparation of a good hereafter, in a way which will please Allah **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى** and earn His pleasure and reward.

In this life, success is often measured by different things which are all temporary, including:

- **Wealth** – a person who does not have much is often looked at as a failure, while a person who is rich is considered somehow better, even when he/she merely inherited their wealth.
- **Status** – a person may be born into a family with a noble lineage or class higher than others.
- **Appearance** – a person might be treated differently based on his/her race or even their good looks.

In the hereafter, none of the above things will give a

person a better chance of entering Paradise or being forgiven for his/her sins (unless of course, they were used for the sake of Allah *سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى*).

And so it should not surprise you that perhaps the poorest person on earth will in fact be the richest on the Day of Judgement when he/she is rewarded for their deeds, while the richest person might be the greatest loser!

As such, true success will be revealed in the hereafter and only Allah *سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى* knows who the deserving are. No matter what situation you find yourself in, you have an opportunity to achieve a great reward and a good ending.

حکومت
آزاد
افغانستان

RETURNING TO ALLAH

سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى

What is the purpose of life? Why are we here? What is the point? Perhaps all people will ask themselves questions like these at some point in their lives. Allah **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى** gives us the answer in the Quran as follows: **“And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me.”**¹⁴

This is a life-changing verse. And we have to understand it correctly. Every human being and jinn is a creation brought to life and existence by Allah **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى** for the purpose of singling Him out in worship and devotion. But this is not because Allah **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى** needs us to worship Him in order to benefit Him in some way; for after the above verse, Allah **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى** immediately goes on to say: **“I do not want**

14. Al-Quran, 51:56.

from them any provision, nor do I want them to feed Me. Indeed, it is Allah who is the [continual] Provider, the firm possessor of strength.”¹⁵ This is a message to us that Allah **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى** does not need us to worship Him as He is free of all needs, and He has power over all things. In fact, we are in complete need of Him. Furthermore, life is a test. But it is not a test that benefits Allah **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى** in any way, rather it is a test which will only benefit ourselves, if we are successful. Allah **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى** says: “[He] who created death and life to test you [as to] which of you is best in deed, and He is the Exalted in Might, the Forgiving.”¹⁶

We have each been given a specified time on earth with a limited amount of provisions. And more importantly, we have been given a Book, the Quran, as a guide. It tells us what is right and wrong, what to do and what not to do, and what to expect after this life.

Allah **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى** has also preserved the teachings of the final Messenger Muhammad **صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ** in the

15. Al-Quran, 51:57-58.

16. Al-Quran, 67:2.

Sunnah, which we possess in the books of hadith. In these hadiths, we have every detail to help us understand the Quran correctly. And in following the footsteps of the Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ, we can worship Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى in the manner in which He wants and for the purpose for which He created us.

Worship in Islam is unlike the worship carried out by people of other religions. For us, worship is not merely doing certain rituals on a specific day.

Our worship is built on sincerity, love, servitude and exaltation and is restricted to what Allah loves and is pleased with. Our prayer is worship. Our giving charity is worship. Our fasting during the month of Ramadan is worship. Our pilgrimage to Mecca is worship. And our good treatment to our parents, our neighbours, our communities and even for the environment is worship.

As long as an action is not forbidden or disliked in the sharia, it too can be an act of worship, provided it is done out of love, servitude and exaltation of Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى alone and according to the Sunnah of His Messenger صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ.

This is why many scholars have stipulated that every act of worship must fulfil two conditions:

1. It must be sincerely for the sake of Allah *سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى*.
2. It must be in accordance with the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah *صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ*.

The Messenger of Allah *صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ* said: *“Actions are only by intentions, and every man will have what he intended.”*¹⁷ This indicates just how important our intentions are. When doing any good deed, what makes it truly righteous is not the act itself, but the intention behind it. A person could pray, fast and make Hajj more than anyone else in his community, but what good would all these actions be if they were not for the sake of Allah *سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى* alone? Remember that the intention is made in the heart, and never uttered. This means that it is between you and Allah *سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى* and only He knows who is sincere and who is not.

Never belittle the power of intention. Even the most mundane acts have the potential of being classed as acts of worship. In one hadith for example, the Prophet *صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ* mentioned to us that a man

17. Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim.

was rewarded with Paradise for removing some tree branches from a public pathway so that people would not be harmed by them.¹⁸ Why did such a small action get such a large reward? This action was done in order to please Allah *سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى*; it was an action which agreed with the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah *صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ*, which teaches us - among many other things - that we should look after one-another and protect each other from harm. One of the early Muslim scholars said: *“How many great actions have been reduced in greatness because of a weak intention! And how many small actions have been magnified because of the sincerity of intention!”*

A good intention however, is not enough. It must be followed by an action which agrees with the Sunnah. Otherwise, it is an innovation in the religion, and the Messenger of Allah *صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ* said about all innovations, *“Every innovation is a misguidance, and every misguidance is in the Fire.”*¹⁹

Furthermore, Allah *سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى* does not accept innovations in the religion, even if they were

18. Sahih Muslim.

19. Jami' al-Tirmidhi.

introduced with a good intention in mind. The Messenger of Allah صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ said: “*Whoever introduces an innovation into our matter (Islam), he will have it rejected.*”²⁰ Perhaps no Muslim would disagree about an innovation if a person introduced a new prayer in Islam or a new type of zakat. But unfortunately, some Muslims have not understood that this principle in the religion also applies to things like celebrating the birthday of the Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ (something which has no basis in Islam).

If someone does an action that the Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ did not teach us, and which his companions رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ did not practise, then he or she should seriously consider what they are doing and why?

Love for Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى and love for His Messenger Muhammad صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ is not enough. By doing any good and sincere action, we are presenting it to Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى in the hope that He will accept it and reward us for it.

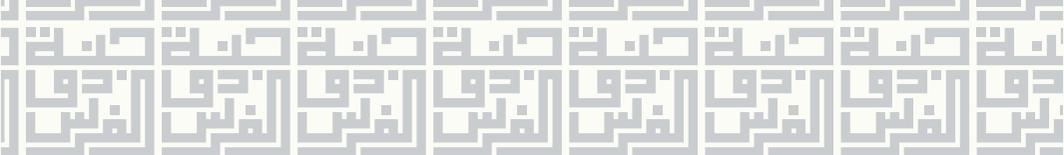
If we do an action in a way that Allah’s Messenger صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ did not teach us or approve of, then we

20. Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim.

have not loved or obeyed Allah **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى** as He deserves. Allah **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى** tells the Prophet **صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ** in the Quran: **“Say, [O Muhammad], ‘If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins. And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.’”**²¹

21. Al-Quran, 3:31.





HOPE AND FEAR

Allah **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى** is certainly the most merciful. There is no sin that He will not forgive except if a person dies committing shirk (which is to associate partners with Allah **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى** in anything that is exclusive to Him, such as worship). Allah **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى** tells us in the Quran: **“Indeed, Allah does not forgive association with Him, but He forgives what is less than that for whom He wills. And he who associates others with Allah has certainly fabricated a tremendous sin.”**²²

No matter what sins we commit, we must always have hope that Allah **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى** will forgive us for them if we ask Him alone. And we should never despair about our sins, and think that they are too many or too grave. Allah **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى** reminds us: **“O My servants who have transgressed against themselves**

22. Al-Quran, 4:48.

[by sinning], do not despair of the mercy of Allah! Indeed, Allah forgives all sins. Indeed, it is He who is the Forgiving, the Merciful.”²³

And the Prophet ﷺ encouraged us to seek Allah’s *سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى* forgiveness by informing us: *“Allah the Most High said: ‘O son of Adam, so long as you call upon Me and ask of Me, I shall forgive you for what you have done, and I shall not mind. O son of Adam, were your sins to reach the clouds of the sky and were you then to ask forgiveness of Me, I would forgive you. O son of Adam, were you to come to Me with sins nearly as great as the earth and were you then to face Me, ascribing no partner to Me, I would bring you forgiveness nearly as great as it.”*²⁴

At the same time, we have to balance hope with fear of Allah’s *سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى* anger and punishment as Ibn Qayyim *رَحِمَهُ اللَّهُ* once said. If a person has too much hope, he might commit more and more sins and become lax in seeking forgiveness and mercy. And as death can come to anyone of us, at any moment, we cannot guarantee that we will seek forgiveness

23. Al-Quran, 39:53.

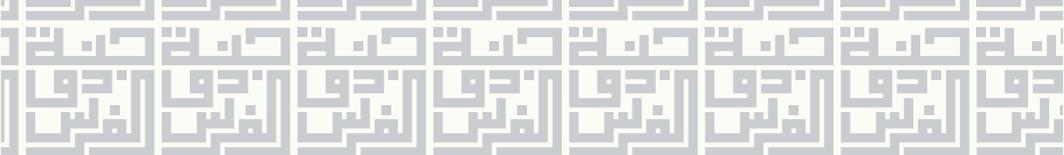
24. Jami’ al-Tirmidhi.

sincerely in time; nor should we simply rely on Allah's **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى** mercy and abandon seeking forgiveness altogether, even though His mercy supersedes His anger. Allah **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى** reminds us in numerous places of the Quran to fear Him, and be conscious that He is present, all-seeing and all-hearing. Allah **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى** tells us: **“O believers! Have *taqwa* (love, hope, fear and consciousness) of Allah as He deserves and do not die except as Muslims!”**²⁵

In the same way that one should not have more hope than fear, likewise, he or she should not have more fear than hope. Fearing Allah **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى** and going to extremes in this matter can lead to having bad thoughts about Allah **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى** and giving up on His promise of fair treatment on the Day of Judgement and His mercy. Again, we must have a balance of hope and fear. Reflect on the Quran and how, in many verses, after mentioning the Hell-fire, Allah **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى** mentions Paradise and vice-versa.

25. Al-Quran, 3:102.





THE PATH TO SUCCESS

Allah **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى** describes the successful in many verses of the Quran, including the following opening verses of Surah al-Mu'minin: **“Most certainly those believers have attained true success: those who are humbly submissive during their prayer; those who turn away from ill speech; those who are observant in paying zakat; those who guard their private parts except from their wives or those their right hands possess (i.e. they do not commit fornication or adultery); for indeed, they will not be blamed; but whoever seeks beyond that, then they are transgressors; and those who are attentive to their trusts and their promises; those who carefully maintain their prayers: such are the inheritors, who will inherit *al-Firdaws*. They will live therein eternally.”**²⁶

26. Al-Quran, 23:1-11.

In fact, there are countless actions which, if one does sincerely for the pleasure of Allah ﷻ and in accordance with the Sunnah of Allah's Messenger ﷺ, will count towards a successful end in the hereafter; actions such as:

- The five daily prayers and the optional prayers; this does not mean simply doing the actions of prayer, but instead, doing them in their correct times, according to the Sunnah, with humility, humbleness, focus and concentration.
- Giving zakat and *saqadah* (optional charity), particularly to one's family and relatives;
- Being kind to one's parents and grandparents, especially one's mother, then father; Allah says: **“And your Lord has decreed that you not worship except Him, and to give good treatment to parents; whether one or both of them reach old age [while] with you, do not say to them [so much as], ‘uff; and do not repel them but speak to them a kind word. And lower to them the wing of humility out of mercy and say, ‘My Lord, have mercy upon them as they brought me**

up [when I was] small.”²⁷

- Keeping ties with relatives; starting with those who are nearest and eldest.
- Being kind to one’s neighbours, particularly those who live closest to you.
- Seeking knowledge, especially the basics of the religion; remember that the greatest branch of knowledge is learning about Allah **سُبْحَانَہُ وَتَعَالَى** through His names and attributes, for the more one understands them, the more he/she will know and act accordingly.
- Giving *da’wah* (encouraging others to the truth), on the condition that it is done with sure knowledge, wisdom and patience.
- Reciting the Quran and learning its meanings (from reliable scholars and books) and acting according to its message, not simply reciting it for blessings.
- Making dua to Allah **سُبْحَانَہُ وَتَعَالَى**, sincerely for big and small things; one should start by praising Him and finish by sending *salah* and *salam* on the Prophet **صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ**;

27. Al-Quran, 17:23-24.

remember, the best duas are the ones found in the Quran and Sunnah so strive to learn them.

- Seeking Allah's **سُبْحَانَہُ وَتَعَالَى** forgiveness for sins and shortcomings and repenting from sins; the conditions of repentance are: 1) You should resolve to give up the sin; 2) You should regret having done it; 3) You should resolve never to go back to it. If the sin has something to do with the rights of another, then a fourth condition is that the right(s) are returned to their rightful owner. Allah **سُبْحَانَہُ وَتَعَالَى** tells us in the Quran: **“O you who believe! Turn to Allah with sincere repentance! It may be that your Lord will expiate from you your sins, and admit you into Gardens under which rivers flow (Paradise) on the Day that Allah will not disgrace the Prophet and those who believed with him.”**²⁸
- And the list goes on.

28. Al-Quran, 66:8.

Just as it is important to do good actions, it is also important to leave bad actions, particularly the major sins, such as shirk, bad treatment of parents, adultery, magic, murder, etc. Sins, no matter how small they are, are still sins and oppose the right path which Allah **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى** has guided us to. Try to remember, as one of the early Muslim scholars said, *“Do not consider the smallness of a sin, rather consider the greatness of the One who is being disobeyed.”* Keep in mind the principle set for us by the scholars of Islam: *Allah and His Messenger have not ordered a thing except that it has a pure or preponderant benefit and they have not forbidden a thing except that it has a pure or preponderant harm.*

Allah **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى** tells us in the Quran: **“So as for the person who transgressed, and preferred the life of this world, then indeed, Hell-fire will be [his] refuge. But as for the one who feared the standing before his Lord and prevented the soul from [unlawful] inclination, then indeed, Paradise will be [his] refuge.”**²⁹

The path to success in the hereafter is different for

29. Al-Quran, 79:37-41.

every individual. The very least a person must do, is have certain faith (*iman*) in his heart, which will in turn enable him or her to do actions based on faith and hope in Allah's **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى** reward.

The very minimum a Muslim must do is profess the *shahadah*, that there is nothing worthy of worship except Allah and that Muhammad **صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ** is His final Prophet and Messenger (*laa ilaaha illallah muhammadur rasulullah*); he/she must also believe in the angels, the books sent to us by Allah **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى** (the last of which is the Quran, which is the final revealed book), all the Prophets and Messengers sent by Allah **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى**, the Day of Judgement and everything that has been mentioned about its signs and events, Paradise and Hell-fire, and *qadr*, the good and bad of it.

A Muslim must also pray his/her five daily prayers, give zakat if it is obligatory on them, fast during the month of Ramadan (if physically able) and perform the Hajj at least once in their lifetime (if they are physically and financially able). The other acts of worship, such as good treatment of parents, are all obligations that will depend on one's circumstances and relate to the rights of others over us.

In short, Allah **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى** has a right over us (that we worship Him alone), society has a right over us (for example, that we treat them well, give people their dues and do not harm them) and we have a right over ourselves (for example, that we do not harm our minds and bodies or commit forbidden actions).

Being a Muslim, and doing the things mentioned above, even if it is only the bare minimum, is a sure path to Paradise, and the more sincere one is, the more good he/she does, and the more sins he/she avoids, will only increase the level of reward.

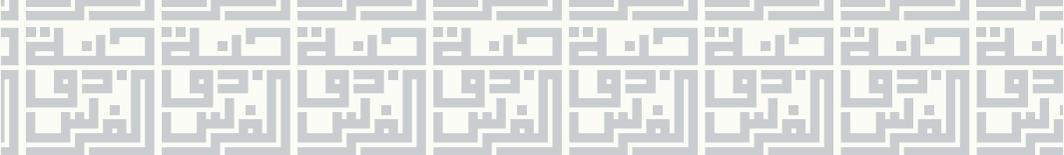
The last person to enter paradise will receive ten times the earth and everything in it;³⁰ now think of what those who enter paradise before him will obtain through Allah's **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى** generosity and kindness!

And we must all remember to have fear and humility when doing good deeds, even when we are certain that we have been sincere, and that the actions were in accordance with the Sunnah. It is reported that 'Ali **رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ** once said: *“Do not pay attention to the little amount of actions (you have*

30. Sahih Muslim.

done), give importance to (the actions) being accepted.”
And since we have no way of knowing whether our good deeds are accepted by Allah *سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى*, we must always hope that Allah *سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى* will have mercy on us and accept them. The Quran tells us: **“Indeed, Allah only accepts from those who have taqwa (love, hope, fear and consciousness of Allah).”**³¹

31. The Quran, 5:52.



SETTING PRIORITIES IN ORDER

After all that has been mentioned, one might feel overwhelmed and question whether they can truly achieve success; after all, we all have good and bad days. The truth is, that Islam is easy, just as the Prophet ﷺ stated in a hadith: *“The religion is easy and whoever overburdens himself in his religion will not be able to continue in that way.”*³² He ﷺ also instructed his companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ: *“Make things easy for the people, and do not make it difficult for them.”*³³ Therefore, it is important that we are not the ones making life difficult on ourselves by taking on too much. Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى wishes for us ease, as He states in the Quran: **“Allah intends for you ease**

32. Sahih al-Bukhari.

33. Sahih al-Bukhari.

and does not intend for you hardship.”³⁴ And Allah *سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى* does not burden a person with more than he or she can bear: **“Allah does not burden a soul except [with what is within] its capacity.”**³⁵ Nor are we accountable for the actions and burdens of others: **“no bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another.”**³⁶ Even when following the Sunnah, the Prophet *صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ* reminded us: *“What I have forbidden for you, avoid. What I have ordered you [to do], do as much of it as you can.”*³⁷

Keeping this all in mind, take a good look at your life, your circumstances and your duties. Ask yourself if you are doing things which you are not required to do, and which are effecting how you deal with things that are not only greater in obligation, but greater in reward too. Ibn Qayyim *رَحِمَهُ اللهُ* said: *“The best act of worship is the action which is done seeking the pleasure of Allah at the particular time it is required.”* Therefore, when the time for prayer

34. Al-Quran, 2:185.

35. Al-Quran, 2:286.

36. Al-Quran, 6:164.

37. Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim.

enters, the best act of worship you can do at this time is pray; when your parents ask you to do something for them (as long as it is not forbidden), even though you might have other things to do, then the best act of worship you can do at this time is to obey them; when a guest visits you, the best act of worship you can do at this time is give that guest his or her right of good treatment and hospitality, and so on. Even a basic understanding of what times in the year, months and days have the most virtue, will help you decide what to do and when. For example, the best month to do good deeds is in Ramadan, the best night in the year is *Lailat al-Qadr*, etc.

The scholars of Islam have also set a beautiful principle to help us set our priorities: *When you have to do one of two obligatory or recommended actions, then do the one which is more of an obligation, or greater in reward. And when you have no choice but to do one of two forbidden or disliked actions, then do the one which is less forbidden or will cause less damage.*

Therefore, you might find yourself in a position when you can either give *sadaqah* or spend on your family. Even though both are good deeds, spending

on your family is more obligatory and greater in reward. Or, you might find yourself feeling extreme hunger, and the only food you find is beef which has not been slaughtered correctly and pork. Although both are forbidden, in such a case of necessity, you should opt for the beef because it is less of a sin than eating pork.

To truly implement this principle, you should learn the rulings of Islam which are relevant to your situation. By knowing what is *halal*, *haram*, and so on, you can analyse your next steps and decide, for example, whether you will go on Hajj, which is obligatory, or visit a sick person, which is recommended. Or to take another example, you may have some spare time and wish to visit either a friend or a relative for the sake of Allah *سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى*. Both are considered good deeds in this case, but by visiting your relative, you can combine two good deeds: visiting someone for the sake of Allah *سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى* and keeping the ties of kinship. In such a case, do what will earn you more reward!

PARADISE IN THIS LIFE

Finally, we would like to end with a saying of *Shaykh al-Islam* Ibn Taymiyyah رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ: “Indeed in this life is a paradise; whoever does not enter it, will not enter Paradise in the hereafter.” When Ibn Taymiyyah رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ was asked what the paradise of this life is, he replied: “Indeed it is the paradise of faith.” If you are pleased with Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى as your Lord, with Islam as your religion, and with Prophet Muhammad صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ as your guide and imam, then no matter what trial you go through, no matter how hard life gets, your heart will be content and you will take the positives from your test on earth.

This is the paradise of faith that Ibn Taymiyyah رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ spoke of, and whoever experiences this paradise on earth, he will surely experience Paradise in the hereafter.

May Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى make us from those who are

grateful when we are given something, patient when we are tested, and repentant when we sin.

May Allah **سُبْحَانَكَ وَتَعَالَى** join us and you in *al-Firdaws*, among the Prophets, the truthful, the martyrs and the righteous! *Ameen!*

Our final words are: all praises and thanks belong to Allah, the Lord of all creation, and may His peace and blessings be showered in abundance on His last and final Messenger Muhammad, his family, his companions and those who follow them in righteousness.