

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

THE DESTROYER OF PLEASURE

Many of you know that Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* used to wear a ring. Many of you also know that the words *Muhammad-ur-Rasulullah* were inscribed on the face of his ring. Following this practice of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*, many prominent personalities wore rings and many had short thought-provoking words inscribed on the faces of their rings. For the purpose of this article, I will suffice with only one example – the ring of Sayyiduna ‘Umar (ra). The inscription on its face was:

كفى بالموت واعظا

*Death is a sufficient admonisher.*¹

We regularly hear of people leaving the world. Their deaths should be a reminder for us that soon *it will be our turn*. Besides, the mere thought of death and the pangs of death are sufficient to deter us from sin and prompt us to prepare for our departure from this transitory world. Imaam Ghazzaali (ra) explains that even if a man never experienced sorrow, fear or punishment in his life, thinking of the pangs of death would certainly spoil his

¹ *Jam-‘ul-Wasaail*, V.1 Pg.172

pleasure and cause him sleepless nights and intense anxiety; especially when he realises that he too is going to die. A wise man said:

كُرب بيد سواك لا تدري متى يغشاك

*You'll never know when the agony of another person
will befall you.*²

Likewise, one of the most senior Sahaabah, Abdullah bin Mas'ood (ra), would say:

السعيد من وعظ بغيره

*Fortunate is the one who takes heed from others.*³

The Demolisher of Pleasure

On the other hand, death puts an end to all worldly pleasure. Hence, Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* described death as the *terminator of pleasure*. He said:

أكثرُوا ذكْرَ هَازِمِ اللذاتِ

*Frequently think of the terminator of pleasure.*⁴

The word هَازِم could be read as هَادِم (with a د instead of a ذ). Accordingly, the translation of the *hadith* would be, "Fear the demolisher of pleasure." In this instance, the *hadith* conveys a figurative description of the same meaning. Comparing the

² Maw'idhat-ul-Mu'mineen, Pg.239

³ Mukhtasar Minhaaj-ul-Qaasideen, Pg.384

⁴ Sunan At-Tirmidhi (Hadith 2307)

pleasures of life to a building, Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* says that death causes it to fall apart. (This type of comparison is called استعارة in the study of Arabic rhetoric.)⁵

Another Benefit

Apart from deterring sin and urging preparation for the Hereafter, an added benefit of frequent remembrance of death, as mentioned in another version of the above *hadith*, is that it reminds those suffering from worldly difficulty that ease is not far. In this version of the *hadith*, Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* exhorts us to remember death because:

لم يذكره أحد في ضيق من العيش إلا وسع عليه و لم يذكره أحد في سعة إلا ضيق عليه

*It creates hope for one in constrained circumstances and it constrains one in ease.*⁶

Three Groups of People

With regards remembering death, there are three groups of people.

The First Group

Engrossed in their worldly pursuits, these people seldom think of death. If they ever think of death, they do so with remorse, regretting unfulfilled worldly ambitions. Thus, the thought of death takes them further from Allah. When reminded of death, they get angry. *Can this Moulana not speak of anything else?*

⁵ Daleel-ul-Faaliheen, V.3 Pg.14

⁶ As-Sunan Al-Kubra lil-Bayhaqi (Hadith)

Why do the ‘ulamaa like to scare us? With regards such people, Allah Ta’aala says in the Qur’aan:

قل إن الموت الذى تفرون منه فإنه ملاقيكم ثم تردون إلى عالم الغيب والشهادة
فنبئكم بما كنتم تعملون

Say: The death from which you flee will certainly meet you and then you will be returned to the Knower of everything unseen and seen. Thus, He will inform you of your actions.⁷

The Second Group

This group comprises beginners in the journey to Allah. Having repented for their sins, they frequently think of death in order to complete their repentance. (Thinking frequently of death results in fear which urges increased repentance.) Like the first group, this group may also be afraid of death. However, based on fear that their repentance may be inadequate, their fear for death is excusable. Hence, they do not fall under the ambits of the *hadith*, “Allah dislikes meeting the one who dislikes meeting Him.”⁸

The Third Group

The members of this group are far ahead in the journey to Allah. Blessed with divine *ma’rifah* (recognition of Allah), they think of death all the time because death is a *bridge that joins the lover to his beloved*. In the words of Imaam Ghazzaali (ra), death is the

⁷ Surah Al-Jumu’ah, Aayah 8

⁸ Saheeh-ul-Bukhaari (Hadith 6507)

appointed time for meeting the beloved and the lover never forgets the time appointed for meeting his beloved. Often, the people in this category yearn for death and wish it would come sooner so that they may exit the world of sinners and enjoy divine proximity to Allah. Thus, a man of this calibre described death as:

حبيب جاء على فاقة

*A beloved that has arrived in my time of need.*⁹

It is in this context that death is also described as تحفة المؤمن (a gift for the believer).¹⁰

Question:

Did Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* not prohibit us from desiring death?

Answer:

Yes, Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* did prohibit us from desiring death. However, this prohibition only applies to desiring death due to inability to cope with worldly stress and agony. Such desire to die indicates dissatisfaction with *taqdeer* (how Allah has planned one's life) and is therefore detested by Allah.

⁹ *Mukhtasar Minhaaj-ul-Qaasideen* (Pg.382) and *Maw'idhat-ul-Mu'mineen* (Pg.238)

¹⁰ *Mishkaat-ul-Masaabih* (Hadith 1609) citing Baihaqi's *Shu'ab-ul-Imaan*

Conversely, the third group's yearning for death is based on love for Allah and the desire to meet Him.

Anyway, the question is: To which of the three groups do we belong? Do we get angry, worried or happy when people – the Imaams – speak of death? Do we even think of death? Or has our love for Allah and submission to His decree reached such heights that death neither scares nor pleases us? Do we belong to a fourth group who are pleased by neither life nor death but rather by submission to the will of Allah?

A Sign of Intelligence

Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* was asked, "Who is the most intelligent of the Believers?" He replied, "The one who remembers death more than the others and is most prepared for what comes thereafter."¹¹ Does this not indicate that remembering death is a sign of intelligence?

Ibn Hibbaan (ra) was a great and famous scholar of *hadith*. Among his works is a book titled *Rawdat-ul-'Uqalaa*. Translated as *The Garden of the Intelligent*, the aim of this book is to explain the traits of intelligent people. In the last chapter Ibn Hibbaan (ra) explains that an intelligent man never stops thinking of death. He thinks of it with every step and in every gaze. Is it

¹¹ Sunan Ibn Maajah (Hadith 4259)

possible to forget something which you anticipate and know is definitely going to happen?¹²

كل نفس ذائقة الموت

*Every soul will taste death.*¹³

أينما تكون يدرككم الموت و إن كنتم فى بروج مشيدة

*Death will seize you wherever you are,
even if you are in high forts.*¹⁴

Moosa (as) and the Angel

When the angel of death went to remove the soul of Moosa (as), the latter slapped him so hard that he gouged his eye. Thus, the angel complained to Allah that *you sent me to a slave that does not want to die*. Allah Ta'aala sent the angel back to Moosa (as) saying, "If you put your hand on the back of an ox, you will live for as many more years as the number of strands of hair your hand will cover." "Then what?" asked Moosa (as). "Then you will die" he was told.¹⁵ The lesson: No matter how long you may live, death is inevitable.

We terminate this discourse on death with the statement of a pious man, Mutarrif bin Abdullah (ra), "Death spoils the comfort

¹² *Rawdat-ul-'Uqalaa*, Pg.271

¹³ Surah Aal 'Imraan, Aayah 185

¹⁴ Surah An-Nisaa, Aayah 78

¹⁵ Saheeh-ul-Bukhaari (Hadith 3407)

of comfortable people. Therefore seek such comfort in which there is no death.”¹⁶

و آخر دعوانا ان الحمد لله رب العالمين
و صلى الله على نبينا المصطفى وعلى آله و أصحابه أجمعين
برحمتك يا أرحم الراحمين

Abu Hudhaifa Muhammed Karolia
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Jaami'ah Mahmoodiah
Dar-ul-'Uloom Springs

¹⁶ Maw'idhat-ul-Mu'mineen (Pg.238)