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Lesson 4: The Prophet's (S) Recommendation to Make Good Use of Present Abilities

Previously, sections of the *hadith* of Abu Dharr have been the subject of discourse. In those sections, emphasis has been laid on strengthening faith, making the most of opportunities and appreciating life and Allah's graces. Now those same issues will be repeated so as to have a deeper effect on the hearts of the believers.

When man has believed in Allah, the Exalted, the Day of Resurrection and divine values, he desires to be spotless before Allah and be the object of His favor, but this is dependent on him knowing the value of his life and to also know how to put it to use in order to attain the goal, which is eternal bliss. In continuation, the Prophet (S) warns man against being afflicted by heedlessness, sin and deviation, because it is likely that the hour of death finds him in that state and he gets propelled to the everlasting world [in a] guilty and conscience-stricken [state].

[The Role Of Meditation Upon Death And The Consequences Of](#)

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“O Abu Dharr! Beware lest your death finds you while in a state of sin in which case no opportunity remains for compensation and repentance and for returning to the world, no heirs of yours will extol you for the inheritance you have left them and Allah, the Exalted, will not accept the excuse which you will make.”

As has been said before this, the Prophet (S) has articulated some of the ethical concepts with different expressions and the aim of repeating these ethical notions is to produce higher effects on the hearts of the believers.

As you will understand after a short review of the verses of the Qur'an, a great deal of verses have been

repeated in various instances, and even the exact words have been repeated in some cases, like the blessed verse “Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?” that has been repeated thirty one times in *Surat al-Rahman*. Even if every verse acquires its own special meaning with every repetition, the role of every repetition in producing more profound effects on the hearts cannot be denied. In our daily actions repetition plays a considerable role in changing behavior and producing either good or bad habits.

It has been narrated that when the Qur’anic verse, “***And enjoin prayer on your followers, and steadily adhere to it; We do not ask you for subsistence, and the (good) end is for guarding against evil;***”¹ was revealed, the Prophet (S) used to go to ‘Ali’s (‘a) house for eight successive months and used to state, “Prayer! Allah’s mercy be upon thee, ‘Allah has willed to drive away uncleanness from you the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) and keep you pure’.”

(If the Prophet (S) used to go to ‘Ali’s (‘a) once every day, it can be inferred that this action was repeated two hundred and forty times, despite that this action was apparently repeated five times a day.)

The outcome of the Prophet’s (S) statement is that if man does not know what actions lead him towards prosperity and which ones lead him to perdition, he gets entangled in sin in the end and if death catches him while committing vice, he has earned the worst losses for his soul and he has lost the gem of life and existence, youth and divine gifts in the way of sin and in return has earned nothing save destruction. It is for this reason that the Noble Prophet (S) states that you should fear lest the hour of death comes while you are committing sin and get your soul in that state. In that case, you forever do not have another opportunity to make up for your sins and it will remain available in your record, because no permission will be given to any to return to the world.

With regard to this, the Qur’an states:

...حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَ أَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ رَبِّ ارْجِعُونِ * لَعَلِّي أَعْمَلُ صَالِحًا فِيمَا تَرَكْتُ كَلَّا إِنَّهَا كَلِمَةٌ هُوَ قَائِلُهَا

“Until when death overtakes one of them, he says: ‘Send me back, my Lord, send me back; haply I may do good in that which I have left.’ By no means! it is a (mere) word that he speaks; and before them is a barrier until the day they are raised...”²

Man will abstain from sin if at the time of committing vice he thinks about this point that it is likely for the hour of death to arrive while he is in a sinful state. Supposing that man too earns a lot of profit in his illicit businesses and transactions and leaves it as inheritance for his heirs, will it bear him any good? Are they not going to utilize this inheritance for their own pleasure-seeking and forget about him? Even though they were to praise him, what benefit has it got for his condition? On the other hand, he will meet Allah with all his errors and offences. Now, what pretexts has he got to present to Allah? He who knew that what he was doing was prohibited [*haram*] and is contrary to the orders of Allah and proof had been

made complete upon him, what pretexts is he going to present in the presence of Allah and what response is he going to give to the fire that will be dropped upon him?

“O Abu Dharr! I have never seen a fire like the fire of Hell, which [even] the sleeping seek to run away from, and I have never seen [anything] like Heaven, which is desired by even the sleeping.”

The Need For Appreciating Life

“O Abu Dharr! Be more miserly with your life than [you are] with your money and wealth.”

If a person saves money with a lot of difficulty and effort, does he freely place it at the disposal of other people? For the reason that he expended a lot of effort for its acquisition, he does not easily lose it and knows its value. On the contrary, it is likely that without feeling the slightest loss, man spends hours of his life pursuing vanity. In other words, it is likely for one to be mean with his money but not be miserly with his life despite the fact that the value of life cannot be compared to the value of money.

If the life of a person falls in danger, he is ready to spend many times all his belongings in order to save his life. Suppose that all gold, silver and diamond mines were at the disposal of an individual and it is said to him that he ought to give up all his life in order to stay alive. Does he not give it up?

Man desires worldly facilities for his own use, now of what benefit are they if he does not stay alive? For this reason, his life has more value than all the wealth of the world. Why then are you losing this precious asset freely? Not only do you lose it freely, but sometimes earn divine wrath in return for it? If losing money in the free air is not a wise action, how then can losing life freely in pursuit of transient passions be wise?

Do not put this invaluable asset at the free disposal of companion, friend, wife and friends. Do not squander it in vain activities for the sake of pleasing others, worse is that you should waste it on committing transgressions and sins. Yes, if for the good pleasure of Allah man expends his life pleasing others, gladdening his wife and children and his believing brother and/or on alleviating the needs of a believer, not only has he not freely lost his life but has earned the good pleasure of Allah whose value is more than the whole world. But it is not rational to expend life which is worth the whole world for the sake of amusing and entertaining this one and that one, because in this instance you will have lost it freely.

Discharging Duties On Time And Not Being Anxious About The Following Day

“O Abu Dharr! Does anyone of you expect something other than wealth which leads to disobedience, or poverty which results in forgetting Allah, or sickness which ruins his body or old age which withholds him from activity, or death which arrives hurriedly, or the arrival of the seditious imposter, or the approach of

the Day of Resurrection which is more dreadful and bitter.”

These expressions are another emphasis on making the most of opportunities in the direction of discharging obligations. If man does not employ the energy and opportunities that are at his disposal to fulfill his divine duties now, then which opportunities is he waiting for? These sentences are a warning to people who, when it is requested of them to discharge their obligations, respond that there is plenty of time for fulfilling responsibilities.

What day are you waiting for in order to make up for the past and discharge your duties that you remain idle [today] and put off your work until later, or get occupied in pursuing vain activities, or Allah forbid, you get absorbed in sin? For instance, during the period of poverty and want, man waits for the encumbrances of the period of poverty to be overcome and become rich and then discharge his duties. Despite that may be wealth and needlessness may have worse demands than poverty and lead you to disobedience, because man becomes defiant when he perceives himself needless.

كَلَّا إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لِرَبِّهِ لَكَنُفٍ، * أَنْ رَأَاهُ اسْتَغْنَى

“Nay! Man is most surely inordinate, because he sees himself free from want.”³

Do you during the period of needlessness and wealth wait for the encumbrances that have been brought about by your money and wealth to be removed and for the period of poverty and want to arrive so as to discharge your duties? Do you imagine that the loss of your wealth will reduce the encumbrances of your work and life and you can hence discharge your duties with ease? All too often, poverty results in forgetting goals and perfections and occupies all your time that you forget about perfection and spirituality.

When you are healthy you imagine that man remembers Allah more during the period of illness, despite that this has no universality; it is not always true that man gets busy with invocation of Allah, supplication and be taking to the Infallibles (‘a) when he is sick. Sometimes, illness gets so predominant on man that it robs him of the vigor to discharge acts of devotion.

During the age of youth, you tell yourself to let the passion of youthful pride and mischief get quenched and then you will discharge the acts of devotion when old age arrives, negligent of the fact that you will get besieged by the reduction of ability and strength and will not be able to fulfill your duties. Therefore, when do you intend to discharge your obligations? When your death arrives? Or, when the seditious imposter comes?

The term ‘*dajjal* (the seditious imposter)’ denotes the liquid of a goldsmith and is applied to a very deceptive person too, in the same way that the appearance of a lying person is deceptively attractive and entices others to himself by his hypocrisy and dissimulation.

In the *hadiths*, '*dajjal*' denotes wickedness and mischievousness. In any case, the Prophet's (S) intention may be one of these two meanings below:

1. The person who will appear at the end of time and cause sedition and wickedness.
2. The intention may not be a particular person, but every deceitful and fraudulent person: people who deceive others by means of enhancing their appearances and who attract others to themselves by means of their hypocrisy and dissimulation are instances of the *dajjal* and people who cause deviations among the people by presenting falsehood as right and right as falsehood.

The *dajjal* causes truth and falsehood to get so intertwined [with each other] that separating one from the other is impossible. That is why the Prophet (S) emphasizes that until you can distinguish right from falsehood, make the most of the opportunity and act upon what is right and be bound to its demands and needs, lest a day arrives when you will be misled and the way of guidance is closed in front of you; this is the worst occurrence that awaits man, most deplorable and more bitter than everything else is waiting for the Day of Resurrection.

In this saying, the Noble Prophet (S) warns man about the dangers of the future and embodies them for him, and mentions this possibility that it is likely for the problems of the future to be more than those of today; it is therefore fair for man to make the most of his opportunities today, and not play for time.

[1.](#) Surat Ta Ha 20:132.

[2.](#) Surat al-Mu'minun 23:99-100.

[3.](#) Surat al-'Alaq 96:6-7.

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