

Section 5: The Parable of an Ungrateful and a Grateful Man

Surah Al-Kahf – Verses 32 – 36

وَاضْرِبْ لَهُم مَّثَلًا رَجُلَيْنِ جَعَلْنَا لِأَحَدِهِمَا جَنَّتَيْنِ مِنْ أَعْنَابٍ وَحَفَفْنَاهُمَا بِنَخْلٍ
وَجَعَلْنَا بَيْنَهُمَا زَرْعًا

كِلْتَا الْجَنَّتَيْنِ آتَتْ أُكُلَهَا وَلَمْ تَظْلِمْ مِنْهُ شَيْئًا وَفَجَّرْنَا خِلَالَهُمَا نَهْرًا

وَكَانَ لَهُ ثَمَرٌ فَقَالَ لِصَاحِبِهِ وَهُوَ يُحَاوِرُهُ أَنَا أَكْثَرُ مِنْكَ مَالًا وَأَعَزُّ نَفَرًا

وَدَخَلَ جَنَّتَهُ وَهُوَ ظَالِمٌ لِنَفْسِهِ قَالَ مَا أَظُنُّ أَنْ تَبِيدَ هَذِهِ أَبَدًا

وَمَا أَظُنُّ السَّاعَةَ قَائِمَةً وَلَئِنْ رُدِدْتُ إِلَى رَبِّي لَأَجِدَنَّ خَيْرًا مِنْهَا مُنْقَلَبًا

32. “And (O’ Prophet!) coin for them a parable: Two men, We made for one of them two gardens of vines and We surrounded them with date-palms and We placed between them tillage.”

33. “Both of the gardens gave their fruits and withheld naught thereof: and We caused a river to gush forth in their midst.”

34. “And he had fruits (in abundance), so he said to his companion, as he was conversing with him: ‘I have greater wealth than you, and am mightier in respect of men’.”

35. “And he entered his garden while he was unjust to himself. He said: ‘I do not think that this will ever perish,”

36. “And I do not think that the Hour (of Resurrection) will come, and even if I am returned unto my Lord, I shall surely find a better than this a resort’.”

From this verse on, Allah, the Exalted, tells a story that by hearing it people may come to themselves and obey Allah, and desist committing sins and ingratitude.

For this very purpose, He addresses His Prophet (S) and says:

“And (O’ Prophet!) coin for them a parable: Two men, We made for one of them two gardens of vines and We surrounded them with date-palms and We placed between them tillage.”

It was a fertile field with two gardens of vines and dates in addition to farms of wheat and kinds of corn, so that everything was complete in it.

These two gardens, from the point of agricultural products, were matured and the fruits of their trees were wholly in full maturation and their farmings were going to be harvested, in a manner that nothing was withheld therein.

The holy verse says:

“Both of the gardens gave their fruits and withheld naught thereof...”

Most important of all was water, the cause of the life of every thing, and in gardens and farmings there, in particular, it was available enough, since, as the verse says:

“...and We caused a river to gush forth in their midst.”

Thus, the possessor of those couple of gardens and farming had got many kinds of fruit and so much income.

The holy verse says:

“And he had fruits (in abundance)...”

But, since the world was in his favour, and those who are of little capacity and are in lack of personality, when everything is in their favour, they become proud and begin disobedience, the first stage of which is self-admiration and arrogance upon others, the owner of those couple of gardens started speaking with his friend.

The verse continues saying:

“...so he said to his companion, as he was conversing with him: ‘I have greater wealth than you, and am mightier in respect of men’.”

Therefore, he told his friend that, in comparison with him, he had many men in his authority and also he had both abundance of wealth, and social position and influence. Then he asked his companion what he could say and what he had to utter.

Little by little, as it is usual, these thoughts went on to be upper and upper in him, so much so that he considered the world was eternal and his wealth and honour were perpetual for him. So, he proudly entered his garden.

He looked round unto the green trees therein, the branches of which had come down unto the ground because of the height of the fruits, and unto the ears of corn, which were spread clinging every side, when he was listening to the sound of the river which was flowing forward, watering the trees, he neglectfully said that he did not think that destruction and mortality could fall over it.

The verse says:

“And he entered his garden while he was unjust to himself. He said: ‘I do not think that this will ever perish,’”

He went even further than that and, since the eternity of this world contrasts the fulfillment of Resurrection, he thought of the denial of Hereafter and said:

“And I do not think that the Hour (of Resurrection) will come...”

He thought that these ideas are some things that a group of people had invented to please themselves.

Then, he imagined if there were a resurrection in the course he would have a high rank and personality, and he added:

“...and even if I am returned unto my Lord, I shall surely find a better than this a resort’.”

He was wandering in these useless imaginations, and every moment he added some new vain words to his former undue words. Then his faithful friend began speaking and rejected his vain statements, which will be dealt with in the following discussions.

Note

The Arabic term /'ukul/ means some products and fruits which are edible while the term /amar/ is applied for kinds of fruit, and sorts of wealth and properties; it is even called to 'trees', too.

These verses can lead us to some principles of planting and keeping typical and attractive gardens.

These leadings are as follows:

A. The low and short trees may be planted in the middle, (vines), and the tall trees around the garden, (date-palms).

B. Gardens may be arranged separate with each other, so that there can be left a distance between them, (and We put between them).

C. The lands of the distance between gardens should be formed, (between them tillage).

D. Water ought to be gushed forth in the midst of the gardens, (and We cause a river to gush forth in their midst).

E. Gardens must not be hollow, weak and calamitous, (and withheld naught thereof).

Therefore, the best views of the gardens are the vine gardens with various grapes, and those that have vines and date-palms with together, and kinds of farming (tillage) are in between the gardens (and We Surrounded them) and that streams flow beneath the trees and beside the farms, (and We caused a river to gush forth in their midst).

Surah Al-Kahf – Verses 37 – 41

قَالَ لَهُ صَاحِبُهُ وَهُوَ يُحَاوِرُهُ أَكَفَرْتَ بِالَّذِي خَلَقَكَ مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ
سَوَّاكَ رَجُلًا

لَكِنَّهُ هُوَ اللَّهُ رَبِّي وَلَا أُشْرِكُ بِرَبِّي أَحَدًا

وَلَوْلَا إِذْ دَخَلْتَ جَنَّتَكَ قُلْتَ مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ إِنَّ تَرَنِّيًا أَقَلَّ مِنْكَ مَالًا
وَوَلَدًا

فَعَسَىٰ رَبِّي أَنْ يُؤْتِيَنِي خَيْرًا مِنْ جَنَّتِكَ وَيُرْسِلَ عَلَيْهَا حُسْبَانًا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ فَتُصْبِحَ
صَعِيدًا زَلَقًا

أَوْ يُصْبِحَ مَأْوُهَا غَوْرًا فَلَن تَسْتَطِيعَ لَهُ طَلَبًا

37. “His companion said to him, as he was conversing with him; ‘Do you disbelieve in Him Who created you from dust then from a sperm-drop, then He fashioned you a (complete) man?’”

38. “But, as for me He, Allah, is my Lord, and none do I associate with my Lord.”

39. “And why did you not say when you entered your garden: ‘As Allah will, there is no power except in Allah’? If you see me less than you in wealth and children.”

40. “Yet it may be that my Lord will give me better than your garden, and will send on it (your garden) a thunderbolt from heaven so that it becomes an even slippery ground without plant.”

41. “Or its water will be sunk (into the earth), so that you will never be able to seek it out.”

These holy verses are upon the rejections of the baseless utterances of that faithless, proud, and conceited rich man that are heard from the tongue of his faithful companion. He waited silently and was listening to the words of that haughty man in order that he would say whatever he had in his inside.

Then he answered him all the same time, as the verse says:

“His companion said to him, as he was conversing with him; ‘Do you disbelieve in Him Who created you from dust then from a sperm-drop, then He fashioned you a (complete) man?’”

In other words, this the Lord Who, at first, created man from soil. He caused the nutritious material existed in the soil to be absorbed by the roots of the trees. The trees in turn became the food of animals, and man consumed from the plant as well as the meat of the animals.

His life-germ was made up of them. In the womb of the mother, the life-germ developed its different stages of perfection until it became a complete man. A human being that is superior to all the existing things of the earth.

He can contemplate, think, make decision, and subject rather everything under his control. Yes, the change of worthless dust into such a wonderful being, with those different complicated organs of his body and soul, is one of the great reasonings of Unity.

Then, in order to break the infidelity and pride of his companion, the faithful man said that he boasted and was proud of his belief that Allah was his Lord.

The verse, from the tongue of the faithful man, says:

“But, as for me He, Allah, is my Lord, and none do I associate with my Lord.”

He told his faithless friend who boasted that he had garden, farming, fruit and water in abundance, that he was honoured that his Lord, his Creator, and his Sustainer was Allah.

He added that his companion glorified the life this world while he glorified his belief, faith, and monotheism, as the holy verse continues saying:

“...and none do I associate with my Lord.”

After pointing to the subject of Unity and infidelity which are the most important subjects in the fate of man, again he reproached his faithless companion, and said:

“And why did you not say when you entered your garden: ‘As Allah will...”

Why did you not consider all of these from the side of Allah and you did not thank for His bounties? And why did you not say that there is no power and ability save from the source of Allah?

The verse in this regard says:

“...there is no power except in Allah’?...”

You have ploughed the earth, scattered the seed, planted the shoot, guarded the trees, and provided every necessary thing for them on time in a manner that they grew like that. All of these activities have been done by means of the usage of the abilities, possibilities, and means that Allah has given you. You have nothing of yourself, and without Him you are naught.

Then, he added that it did not matter:

“...If you see me less than you in wealth and children.”

“Yet it may be that my Lord will give me better than your garden...”

My Lord not only will give me a better garden than yours, but also He will send a thunderbolt from heaven on your garden and, in a short time, He will change this green land into a plantless, slippery even plain.

The holy verse continues saying:

“...and will send on it (your garden) a thunderbolt from heaven so that it becomes an even slippery ground without plant.”

Or He may order the land to move so that this spring and gushing water should sink down into the earth and you will never be able to find it.

The verse says:

“Or its water will be sunk (into the earth), so that you will never be able to seek it out.”

The Arabic term /husban/, used in this holy verse, originally is derived from /hisab/ (calculation); then it has been used in the sense of the arrows which are counted at the time of shooting. It has also been

applied with the meaning of ‘the punishment which comes upon persons on reckoning’, and the purpose in the abovementioned verse is this very meaning.

The Qur’anic word /sa‘id/ means ‘the sand, or dust on the surface of the earth’ It is originally taken from /sa‘ud/ (a calamity).

The Arabic term /zalaq/ means an even land without any plant so that the foot may slip on it. (It is interesting that today, in order to fix the running sands and prevent the towns to be buried under the storms of sand, people try to grow some plants and trees on such lands so that they can control them, and deliver them from the state of being slippery.

Indeed, that faithful and monotheist man warned his proud companion that he could not attach and depend on those bounties, because none of them was reliable.

In fact he says that he has seen with his own eyes or, at least, has heard with his own ears that sometimes the heavenly thunderbolt, in a short moment, turns gardens, houses, and farms into a heap of soil, or a dry land without any water and any grass.

And also you may have heard or seen that sometimes a sharp earthquake may ruin the irrigation systems and make springs dry so that they cannot be mended.

When you know these clear facts, what is this pride and haughtiness for? You who have seen these events, why do you attach to them? Why do you say that you do not believe that these bounties will perish? But they will be eternal. What an ignorance and stupidity!

The Prophet of Islam (S) said that if a servant says ‘*that which Allah pleases*’ and ‘*There is no power except in Allah*’, when He bestows on him wealth and children, Allah may repel his calamities and disquiet from him so that he obtains his (good) wishes. Then he (S) recited this verse.¹

Some Islamic traditions denote that the recitation of the holy phrase

“There is neither might nor strength but in Allah”

causes afflictions to be repelled and bounties to last long, and it is a treasure out of the treasures of Heaven.

Surah Al-Kahf – Verses 42 – 44

وَأُحِيطَ بِثَمَرِهِ فَأَصْبَحَ يُقَلِّبُ كَفَّيْهِ عَلَى مَا أَنْفَقَ فِيهَا وَهِيَ خَاوِيَةٌ عَلَى عُرُوشِهَا
وَيَقُولُ يَا لَيْتَنِي لَمْ أُشْرِكْ بِرَبِّي أَحَدًا

وَلَمْ تَكُنْ لَهُ فِئَةً يَنْصُرُونَهُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَمَا كَانَ مُنتَصِراً

هُنَالِكَ الْوَلَايَةُ لِلَّهِ الْحَقِّ هُوَ خَيْرٌ ثَوَاباً وَخَيْرٌ عُقْباً

42. “And his fruits were enwrapped (into destruction), so he began wringing his hands for what he had expended in it, and it was fallen down upon its trellises, and he was saying: ‘Alas me! Would I had not associated with my Lord any one!’”

43. “And he had no troop to help him as against (the wrath of) Allah, nor could he help himself.”

44. “Thereover protection belongs only to Allah, the True; He is best rewarding, and best for consequence.”

Finally, the debate of those two men ended and the faithful man had got no penetration in the depth of the soul of that proud, faithless rich man who, with the same spirituality and doctrine, went back home.

He was unaware that the command of Allah had been issued that his green gardens and cultivations to be perished. He should receive the retribution of his pride and infidelity in this very world, in order that his end would become as a gazing-stock and a warning to others.

Perhaps it was at the same moment that the darkness of night had covered everywhere when the punishment of Allah, in the form of a destructive thunderbolt, or a terrible violent storm, or a horrible ruinous earthquake, in a short time, destroyed whatever there were in those pleasant gardens which contained so many fruitful tall trees, and fructified cultivations.

The verse says:

“And his fruits were enwrapped (into destruction)...”

The Arabic term /’uhit/ is from the root /’ihatah/ which, in such instances, means ‘an encompassing punishment’, the result of which is a complete destruction.

In the next morning, when the owner of the garden, with a series of desires and imaginations, went toward his garden in order to visit it and enjoy its products, approaching it, he encountered a dreadful scene, so terrible that his mouth dried because of wonder and his eyes became dim and motionless.

He could not know that he was observing that scene in dream or in vigilance. The trees had utterly dropped on the ground, the cultivations had become upside down, and there was seen little of life therein.

As if there were no pleasant garden and green tillage there. The doleful moans of owls were heard in its

ruins. The man's heart started its palpitation sharply, and his face grew pale. The saliva dried in his mouth, and whatever of pride and arrogance was in his heart and his mind suddenly dispersed.

As if he had got up from a long and deep sleep. He was thinking of the heavy expenses he had earned from every side in his lifetime and had expended in it.

The verse says:

"...so he began wringing his hands for what he had expended in it, and it was fallen down upon its trellises..."

It was just in the same time that he regretted from his false and futile statements and thoughts.

The verse continues saying:

"...and he was saying: 'Alas me! Would I had not associated with my Lord any one!'"

More lamentable than this it was that, at the time of confronting this calamity, he was perfectly alone and had no one to help him for this great damage and grievous affliction.

The verse says:

"And he had no troop to help him as against (the wrath of) Allah..."

He had not anything to substitute that, which was his whole capital.

The verse continues saying:

"...nor could he help himself."

In fact, in this event all his arrogant imaginations disturbed and proved to be nonsensical. On one side, he used to say that he never believed that his great capital and abundant wealth would have an annihilation, but he saw its annihilation with his own eyes.

On the other side, he arrogantly boasted to his faithful monotheistic companion and said that he was more powerful than him from the point of wealth and men. But, after this event, he observed that none was his helper.

On the third side, he depended on his own power and considered his ability illimitable. But, after that he became in lack of everything in that event, he comprehended his great mistake, because he had nothing in his disposal to compensate a part of that great damage.

Principally, those companions who, like flies around a candy, come nigh to a person because of his property and wealth whom the person considers as a support for his days of misfortune, will scatter when that bounty vanishes, because their friendship has not formed as a spiritual approach, but it has

been based on material support. When it vanishes, that friendship vanishes, too.

However, it was too late for him to be remorseful. This kind of compulsory vigilance, which appears at the time of befalling some grievous calamities upon a person, even for the Pharaohs, is worthless and, therefore, it is not useful for him, either.

Yes, it was at the same time that he stated the phrase:

“Would I had not associated with my Lord any one!”

by his own tongue. It was the same phrase that his faithful companion had said before, but he said it when he was in safety, and this man said it at the time of misfortune.

It was at that moment that this fact was proved once again that protection, guardianship and Power belong to Allah, the Lord Who is the Truth Himself.

The verse says:

“Thereover protection belongs only to Allah, the True...”

Yes, here it was made perfectly clear that all bounties belong to Him, and whatever He wills, it will be done. So, there will be performed nothing save by relying on His grace. Verily, it is only He Who has the best rewards and provides the best end and fate for the obedient.

The verse continues saying:

“...He is best rewarding, and best for consequence.”

Thus, if a person wants to attach some and to rely on him and to be hopeful to his reward, it is better for him that his support to be Allah, and his attachment and his hope to be unto the grace and kindness of the Lord.

But, O’ Man! How do you want to be the best in the world, while you tread the clearest laws of the world of creation; allocate all merits to yourself, and devour the right of others?

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