

Wealth and Poverty

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It was a usual meeting. The Prophet (S) was in his place and his companions gathered around him to hear the words of wisdom and guidance. Suddenly a poor man in rags appeared, saluted the assembly:

“Salamun Alaikum” (Peace be on you)

and finding a vacant place, comfortably sat down.

The Prophet (S) had taught them that all Muslims were brothers and in an assembly one should sit wherever one finds a place, regardless of any status. Now, it so happened that this poor man was seated next to a very rich man. The rich man felt very disturbed and tried to collect the edges of his dress around himself, so that the poor man didn't touch them. The Prophet (S) observed this and addressing the rich man he said:

“Perhaps you are afraid that his poverty would affect you?”

“No, O Messenger of Allah,” he said.

“Then perhaps you were apprehensive about some of your wealth flying away to him?”

“No, O Messenger of Allah.”

“Or you feared that your clothes would become dirty if he touched them?”

“No, O Messenger of Allah.”

“Then why did you draw yourself and your clothes away from him?”

The rich man said:

“I admit that was the most undesirable thing to do. It was an error and I confess my guilt. Now to make

amends for it I will give away half of my wealth to this Muslim brother so that I may be forgiven.”

Just as he said this, the poor man rose and said,

“ O Prophet of Allah, I do not accept this offer.”

People present were taken by surprise, they thought that the poor man was a fool, but then he explained:

“ O Prophet of Allah, I refuse to accept this offer because I fear that I might then become arrogant and ill-treat my Muslim brothers the way he did to me.”

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