

Al fatihah: The Quran Summarized

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Achieve Noble Character

Al Fatihah: The Quran Summarized

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Al Fatihah: The Quran Summarized

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Table of Contents

[Acknowledgements](#)

[Compiler's Notes](#)

[Introduction](#)

[Al Fatihah: The Quran Summarized](#)

[Chapter 1 - Al Fatihah, Verse 1](#)

[Chapter 1 - Al Fatihah, Verse 2](#)

[Chapter 1 - Al Fatihah, Verse 3](#)

[Chapter 1 - Al Fatihah, Verse 4](#)

[Chapter 1 - Al Fatihah, Verse 5](#)

[Chapter 1 - Al Fatihah, Verse 6](#)

[Chapter 1 - Al Fatihah, Verse 7 of 7](#)

[Over 400 Free eBooks on Good Character](#)

[Other ShaykhPod Media](#)

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We pray that Allah, the Exalted, completes His favour on us and accepts each letter of this book in His august court and allows it to testify on our behalf on the Last Day.

All praise to Allah, the Exalted, Lord of the worlds and endless blessings and peace be upon the Holy Prophet Muhammad, on his blessed Household and Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all.

Compiler's Notes

We have tried diligently to do justice in this volume however if there are any short falls found then the compiler is personally and solely responsible for them.

We accept the possibility of faults and shortcomings in an effort to complete such a difficult task. We might have unconsciously stumbled and committed errors for which we ask for indulgence and forgiveness of our readers and the drawing of our attention thereto will be appreciated. We earnestly invite constructive suggestions which can be made to ShaykhPod.Books@gmail.com.

Introduction

The following is a fully-referenced and easy to understand detailed commentary (Tafseer) on Chapter 1 Al Fatihah of the Holy Quran. It is called “the Mother of the Book” as it contains the meaning of the entire Holy Quran. This has been discussed in Tafsir Ibn Kathir, Volume 1, Page 43. So in reality, whoever understands and acts on the teachings of chapter 1 Al Fatihah as understood and acted on the whole Holy Quran.

Striving to understand and act on this great chapter will aid a Muslim to Achieve Noble Character. According to the Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2003, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has advised that the heaviest thing in the Scales of Judgment Day will be Noble Character. It is one of qualities of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, which Allah, the Exalted, complimented in Chapter 68 Al Qalam, Verse 4 of the Holy Quran:

“And indeed, you are of a great moral character.”

Therefore, it is a duty on all Muslims to gain and act on the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in order to Achieve Noble Character.

Al Fatihah: The Quran Summarized

This chapter is called Al Fatihah, which can mean "the Opener of the Book". Therefore, the prayers should begin with the recitation of this chapter. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 910.

It has been referred to as "the Mother of the Book", by none other than the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This is mentioned in a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 915.

In a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3785, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has declared Al Fatihah to be the greatest chapter of the Holy Quran. It is a possible reason why the prayer is considered defective if this chapter is not recited in it. This is supported by a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 910.

Some believe it is also called "the Mother of the Book" as it contains the meaning of the entire Holy Quran. This has been mentioned in Tafsir Ibn Kathir, Volume 1, Page 43. So in reality, whoever understands and acts on the teachings of chapter 1 Al Fatihah as understood and acted on the whole Holy Quran. The Holy Quran consists of seven subjects all of which have been briefly mentioned in Al Fatihah. The first is Monotheism meaning, there is none worthy of worship except Allah, the Exalted. Al Fatihah begins by mentioning this subject.

The second subject mentioned in the Holy Quran and indicated in Al Fatihah is Prophethood. In the sixth verse of Al Fatihah Allah, the Exalted, mentions the path of those He has blessed. This path, which leads to Paradise, is the path of the Holy Prophets, blessings be upon them all. The people who have been blessed are mentioned in another verse of the Holy Quran. Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 69:

"...the prophets, the people of truth, the martyrs, and the righteous—what honourable company!"

The third subject mentioned in the Holy Quran is the worship of Allah, the Exalted, and is mentioned in verse 5 of Al Fatihah.

The fourth subject mentioned in the Holy Quran consists of promises of blessings and warnings of punishment. This subject is referenced in verse 4 of Al Fatihah, which reminds mankind that these promises and warnings will one day be witnessed by all.

The fifth subject discussed in the Holy Quran consists of stories and lessons. The lesson which is specifically mentioned in Al Fatihah, verses 6 and 7, is


how Allah, the Exalted, rewarded the pious and punished the sinners of the past nations.

The sixth subject discussed in the Holy Quran mentions the elements of the Day of Resurrection. This is when Allah, the Exalted, will resurrect the entire creation after they have died in order to judge the deeds they performed during their lives on Earth. This is indicated in verse 4 of Al Fatihah.

The seventh and final subject discussed in the Holy Quran and is summarized in Al Fatihah consists of supplications to Allah, the Exalted. Al Fatihah teaches mankind how to correctly supplicate to Allah, the Exalted. One should first praise and glorify Allah, the Exalted, according to His infinite status. This is best achieved by using the statements mentioned in the Holy Quran or the Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This is indicated in chapter 1, verses 2-3 of Al Fatihah. Demonstrating weakness and humility is an essential part of supplication. This is shown in chapter 1, verse 5 of Al Fatihah. The next two verses, 6 and 7, is the supplication itself. Asking for right guidance and refuge from the evil path is a supplication Muslims must make often as it is the most important goal to achieve.

The placing of this chapter at the beginning of the Holy Quran is a sign that Allah, the Exalted, urges mankind to recite and study the Holy Quran with the aim of discovering the right course in life i.e. the straight path mentioned in this chapter. Meaning, one should not recite and study the Holy Quran with mundane and worldly motives instead they should let this chapter guide their intention in obtaining success in both worlds.

Chapter 1 - Al Fatihah, Verse 1

 بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

“In the Name of Allah—the Most Compassionate, Most Merciful.”

“In the Name of Allah...”

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 2736, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that whoever knows the ninety nine names of Allah, the Exalted, will enter Paradise.

Knowing does not only refer to memorizing them. It actually means to study them and act on them according to one's status and potential. For example, Allah, the Exalted, is the Most Merciful according to His infinite status. This attribute means that Allah, the Exalted, bestows countless favours on the creation and is always extremely kind to them. This same characteristic has been attributed to others such as the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 9 At Tawbah, verse 128:

“There has certainly come to you a Messenger from among yourselves. Grievous to him is what you suffer; [he is] concerned over you [i.e., your guidance] and to the believers is kind and merciful.”

When used in reference to the creation merciful means soft-hearted and compassionate. Similarly, Allah, the Exalted, is All Forgiving according to His infinite status. And adopting this attribute by forgiving others is something which has been encouraged in Islam. Chapter 24 An Nur, verse 22:

“...and let them pardon and overlook. Would you not like that Allah should forgive you?...”

So the divine attributes of Allah, the Exalted, can be adopted by Muslims according to their status.

Therefore, Muslims must first understand the meaning of the divine attributes and names and then adopt the meaning of the names in their character through action until they become firmly rooted into their spiritual heart so that they can achieve noble character.

“In the Name of Allah...”

This is a reminder that not only should one's lawful actions and speech begin with the name of Allah, the Exalted, but the very purpose of their existence is connected to Allah, the Exalted, namely, servanthood. Chapter 51 Adh Dhariyat, verse 56:

“And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship [obey] Me.”

Just like a person's actions will be deficient in blessings when they fail to remember Allah, the Exalted, their very existence will be deficient until they understand the purpose of their creation and take practical steps to fulfill it. This involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted.

Before one can worship Allah, the Exalted, they must first recognise Him as it is not possible to obey someone without knowledge. In addition, people must first learn how to worship Allah, the Exalted, before they can fulfil this task. Therefore, worship is followed by knowledge. This is why in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, declared seeking useful knowledge a duty on all muslims. Without knowledge one will never be able to worship Allah, the Exalted, correctly. Few good deeds performed with knowledge are far superior to many good deeds performed incorrectly because of ignorance.

As Allah, the Exalted, is the One who created mankind no one has the right to be served and worshipped except Him. If an employer easily dismisses their employee for abandoning the duty they have been hired for, how can it be correct to abandon serving and worshipping Allah, the Exalted, when He alone created and sustains the creation? All of mankind have been granted free will and the ability to obey and worship Allah, the Exalted. So each person must decide whether they desire to fulfil their purpose of creation thereby receiving eternal reward or reject it and face punishment in both worlds. The same way a device, such as a mobile phone, which does not fulfil its primary purpose is discarded people may well be discarded on the Day of Judgement into Hell for failing to fulfil their primary purpose of existence.

It is important to note, that worship refers to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted. This involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This obedience must encompass every part of one's life and body, such as their tongue. It includes a person's duty towards Allah, the Exalted, such as offering the prayer and treating the creation with kindness.

Those who obey Allah, the Exalted, will be given the best rewards while those who disobey Him will receive the worst punishment in this world and the next. In a divine Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2466, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, narrates from Allah, the Exalted, who declares that if one busies themselves in worshipping Him,

through sincere obedience, He will fill their heart with richness and remove their poverty. But if they turn away from His worship and obedience Allah, the Exalted, will fill their life with problems and not remove their poverty.

It is important to note, that Allah, the Exalted, does not need the creation in anyway whatsoever. As clearly mentioned in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6572, people only benefit themselves with their good deeds as it raises their ranks. And they only harm themselves with their sins as they will be held accountable for them. The infinite status of Allah, the Exalted, does not change at all irrespective of if the entire creation worshipped Him or not. Allah, the Exalted, is the sole Creator and sole Provider. It is people who are completely and utterly in need of Him. Whoever understands this and sincerely obeys Allah, the Exalted, will fulfil the purpose of their creation and will therefore be given an eternal reward.

“In the Name of Allah...”

Mentioning the name of Allah, the Exalted, when doing lawful actions reminds muslims that they should always strive to connect to Allah, the Exalted, through His sincere obedience, which involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Him. When one connects to Allah, the Exalted, they will be empowered to successfully overcome any situation they face. But when one forgets to remember Allah, the Exalted, during their activities, then they will be encouraged to connected to worldly things. But as worldly things are innately weak they will not gain the empowerment they need to overcome the tests and difficulties of this world. This is like a person who seeks refuge in a strong fortified castle during a storm and another who seeks refuge in a straw hut. It does not take a genius to determine who is more likely to overcome the difficulty of the storm successfully.

Allah, the Exalted, has made it crystal clear that whoever correctly depends on Him through His sincere obedience will be sufficed from all issues they might face in both worlds. Chapter 65 At Talaq, verse 3:

“...And whoever relies upon Allah - then He is sufficient for him...”

As Allah, the Exalted, is firm on His promises when one depends on Him they too will become steadfast and firm when facing difficulties. But if they

rely on people who are prone to change with the passing of time they will become fickle and fail to remain steadfast.

“In the Name of Allah...”

When one remembers the name of Allah, the Exalted, during their lawful actions it constantly encourages them to adopt the different aspects of the remembrance of Allah, the Exalted.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6407, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that the difference between the person who remembers Allah, the Exalted, and the one who does not is like a living person compared to a dead person.

It is important for muslims who desire to create a strong connection with Allah, the Exalted, so that they can overcome all difficulties in this world and in the hereafter successfully to remember Allah, the Exalted, as much as possible. Put simply, the more they remember Him the more they will achieve this vital goal.

This is achieved by practically acting on the three levels of the remembrance of Allah, the Exalted. The first level is to remember Allah, the Exalted, internally and silently. This includes correcting one's intention so that they only act in order to please Allah, the Exalted. The second is by remembering Allah, the Exalted, through one's tongue. But the highest and most effective way of strengthening one's bond with Allah, the Exalted, is practically remembering Him with one's limbs. This is achieved by fulfilling His

commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This requires one to gain and act on Islamic knowledge which in turn is the root of all good and success in both worlds.

Those who remain on the first two levels will receive reward depending on their intention but they are unlikely to increase the strength of their faith and piety unless they move to the third and highest level of the remembrance of Allah, the Exalted.

"In the Name of Allah—the Most Compassionate, Most Merciful."

Scholars have debated whether this verse is part of Al Fatihah or if it is only used to begin recitation of the Holy Quran as well as all other lawful actions e.g. eating lawful food. There is one location where this statement is part of the Holy Quran and no Muslim denies this fact. It is found in chapter 27 An Naml, verse 30 of the Holy Quran:

"It is from Solomon, and it reads: 'In the Name of Allah—the Most Compassionate, Most Merciful.'"

There is no doubt that before all lawful actions the blessed name of Allah, the Exalted, should be mentioned. If it is not remembered a Muslim will gain less reward for the action they intend to do as it is the remembrance of Allah, the Exalted. Secondly, they will lose out on the grace which accompanies the remembrance of the blessed name of Allah, the Exalted. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 1894.

In addition, the blessed name of Allah, the Exalted, should be recalled before any action as it prevents the reciter from committing sins by reminding them of the divine presence and observance of Allah, the Exalted. Beginning with the blessed name of Allah, the Exalted, ensures a Muslim's mind is always turned towards Him regardless of if they are in a Mosque, at home or at work. When a Muslim's attention is towards Allah, the Exalted, they will increase

their obedience to Him and therefore reap much reward. In reality, sins only occur when a Muslim forgets the divine presence of Allah, the Exalted.

In addition, when one begins good actions with the blessed name of Allah, the Exalted, it encourages them to perform the deed sincerely for the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted. In other words, it ensures their intention is correct. This is vital as a person's actions will be judged according to their intention. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1. Therefore, remembering His blessed name before an action is an excellent way to achieve the correct intention.

Remembering the blessed name of Allah, the Exalted, also prevents one from adopting pride after completing a good deed as this remembrance reminds a Muslim that the strength, knowledge and opportunity to perform the good deed came from none other than Allah, the Exalted. This ensures they keep their good deed safe instead of destroying it through pride.

Allah, the Exalted, has countless divine qualities but only two of them have been mentioned in this verse. The first is the Most Compassionate. The other is that Allah, the Exalted, is the Most Merciful. There are many possible interpretations of these two divine qualities. One is that Allah, the Exalted, is the Most Compassionate towards all of creation in this world but He is the Most Merciful to the Muslims in both this world and in the hereafter. This is supported by chapter 33 Al Ahzab, verse 43:

"...Allah is All-merciful to the believers...."

The divine name Most Compassionate is exclusive to Allah, the Exalted. Therefore, no one else should be named this. This is because the Most Compassionate means the Being whose mercy encompasses all. Such a characteristic can only be possessed by Allah, the Exalted. A person can only have the Most Compassionate in their name if their full name is "the servant of the Most Compassionate."

On the other hand, the merciful has been attributed to others such as the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 9 At Tawbah, verse 128:

"There has certainly come to you a Messenger from among yourselves. Grievous to him is what you suffer; [he is] concerned over you [i.e., your guidance] and to the believers is kind and merciful."

The Most Merciful in respect to Allah, the Exalted, means the One who does countless favours and is benevolent towards others. When used in reference to the creation it means soft-hearted and compassionate. This is a quality all Muslims must strive to achieve if they desire to be treated with mercy by Allah, the Exalted, the Most Merciful. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4941.

People may question how Allah, the Exalted, is the Most Compassionate towards non Muslims. This is obvious and can be witnessed in everyday life. For example, non Muslims have been given many gifts such as wealth, good health, success, and fame.

In addition, the Most Compassionate indicates the overwhelming compassion and love for His creation and the Most Merciful stresses its continuity, consistency and constancy.

A Muslim must adopt these qualities by looking at the creation through the eye of mercy and by treating them with mercy and compassion whether they are obedient or sinful. Many Hadiths such as the one found in Sahih Muslim, number 6030, indicate that the one who does not show mercy to others will not be shown mercy by Allah, the Exalted. So it is vital for Muslims to show mercy to all through their actions such as financial and physical help and through their words such as supplicating for them. Islam in fact rewards a Muslim who shows mercy to all living things such as animals. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 2550. In addition, the mercy they show should not be selective or occasional instead they should strive to demonstrate mercy at all times with all of creation.

“...the Most Compassionate, Most Merciful.”

As discussed earlier, Muslims must strive to act on the divine qualities and attributes according to their created level.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 7376, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that Allah, the Exalted, will not show mercy to the one who does not show mercy to others.

Islam is a very simple religion. One of its fundamental teachings is so simple that even uneducated people can understand and act on them namely, how people treat others is how they will be treated by Allah, the Exalted. For example, those who learn to overlook and forgive the mistakes of others will be forgiven by Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 24 An Nur, verse 22:

“...and let them pardon and overlook. Would you not like that Allah should forgive you?...”

Those who support others in beneficial worldly and religious matters such as emotional or financial aid will be supported by Allah, the Exalted, in both worlds. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud,

number 4893. This same Hadith advises that the one who conceals the faults of others will have their faults concealed by Allah, the Exalted.

Simply put, if one treats others with kindness and respect according to the teachings of Islam they will be treated similarly by Allah, the Exalted. And those who mistreat others will be treated similarly by Allah, the Exalted, even if they fulfill the obligatory duties which are connected to Him such as the obligatory prayers. This is because a Muslim must fulfill both duties in order to achieve success namely, the duties towards Allah, the Exalted, and people.

Finally, it is important to note a Muslim will only be treated kindly by Allah, the Exalted, if they treat others kindly for His sake. If they do it for any other reason than they will undoubtedly forfeit the reward mentioned in these teachings. The foundation of all acts and Islam itself is one's intention. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1.

Chapter 1 - Al Fatihah, Verse 2

٢ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

"[All] praise is [due] to Allah, Lord of the worlds."

"[All] praise is [due] to Allah..."

All praise is only for Allah, the Exalted, as He created and continuously sustains the entire creation within the Heavens and Earth without any progeny, partner, or helper. His kindness in the form of countless blessings, such as faith, to the creation has no limits. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 18:

"And if you should count the favors of Allah, you could not enumerate them...."

Therefore, the creation should constantly praise Him through sincere obedience by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience.

Allah, the Exalted, is worthy of all praise, as He is full of perfection in terms of attributes and characteristics which are free from all shortcomings. This is still true even if He did not bestow any blessings on the creation. In addition, praising Allah, the Exalted, with the tongue and actions by using the blessings He has granted in ways pleasing to Him is a means to increase the blessings one receives. Chapter 14 Ibrahim, verse 7:

"And [remember] when your Lord proclaimed, 'If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favor]..."

A Muslim should praise Allah, the Exalted, as much as possible as it is has been declared the best supplication by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3800. In addition, this verse reminds mankind that whatever praise-worthy quality a person observes in the creation or within themselves is only possible because Allah, the Exalted, granted it. Therefore, all praise returns and solely belongs to Allah, the Exalted.

"[All] praise is [due] to Allah..."

Allah, the Exalted, is the One who is praised by His self-praise and by the praise of His creation. This also means that Allah, the Exalted, is the One who praises His righteous servants and handsomely rewards them for their efforts.

The Muslim who understands this divine name will be far too busy in praising and obeying Allah, the Exalted, to praise themselves and to worry about their rights. In addition, the fact that Allah, the Exalted, has praised Himself clearly indicates that He does not need anyone to praise Him. He is completely independent of the creation while the creation are in desperate and constant need of Him and His blessings. These can be obtained by sincerely praising Him. Remembering these facts will keep a Muslim away from pride which is a characteristic that leads to Hell. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 265.

A Muslim must act on this divine name by only performing praiseworthy actions and adopting a praiseworthy character. This is arguably the greatest tradition of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 68 Al Qalam, verse 4:

"And indeed, you are of a great moral character."

"[All] praise is [due] to Allah..."

Praising can be split into four categories. The first is praising a quality in order to highlight its worth, regardless of whether this praise is due to gaining a direct blessing or not.

The second category is verbally praising Allah, the Exalted, with the words taught by the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

The third category is to perform righteous actions with the body by using the blessings one possesses in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted.

The fourth category is praising Allah, the Exalted, through the spiritual heart by adopting the characteristics He loves meaning, noble character according to the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

The statement all praise is for Allah, the Exalted, alone removes the validity of worshipping the creation. This is because when someone worships anything from the creation then they do so because of the beauty and quality found within it. But this beauty or quality is not innately found within the

created entity it has instead been granted it by none other than Allah, the Exalted. Therefore, the created object which possesses praiseworthy qualities is not worthy of worship. Only the One who created the entity and granted these qualities to it namely, Allah, the Exalted, is.

"[All] praise is [due] to Allah..."

It is important to note that even though all praise and thanks belong to Allah, the Exalted, alone none the less showing gratitude to a person is a part of Islam.

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1954, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that whoever is not grateful to people cannot be grateful to Allah, the Exalted.

Even though there is no doubt that the source of all blessings is none other than Allah, the Exalted, none the less showing gratitude to people is an important aspect of Islam. This is because Allah, the Exalted, sometimes uses a person as a means to help others such as one's parents. As the means has been created and used by Allah, the Exalted, being grateful to them is in fact being grateful to Allah, the Exalted. Therefore, Muslims must show good character and always show appreciation for any aid or support they receive from others irrespective of its size. They should show gratitude to Allah, the Exalted, by using the blessing according to His commands as He is the source of the blessing and show gratitude to the person as they are the means which was created and chosen by Allah, the Exalted. A Muslim should show gratitude verbally to people and practically by repaying their act of kindness according to their means even if it is only a supplication on their behalf. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Imam Bukhari's, Adab Al Mufrad, number 216.

The person who does not show gratitude to people cannot show true gratitude to Allah, the Exalted, and therefore they will not be given an increase in blessings. Chapter 14 Ibrahim, verse 7:

“And [remember] when your Lord proclaimed, 'If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favor]...”

If a Muslim desires an increase in blessings they must fulfill both aspects of gratitude namely, to Allah, the Exalted, and to people.

"[All] praise is [due] to Allah..."

It is important to note that even if one praises Allah, the Exalted, to the utmost level both verbally and physically by using the blessings He has granted them in ways pleasing to Him, even then, they will never be able to fulfil the right of praising Allah, the Exalted, according to His infinite status. This fact has been confirmed by the one who was most grateful and most praising of Allah, the Exalted, namely, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 169.

The reason for this is that a person's praise and thanks of Allah, the Exalted, is in itself a blessing from Allah, the Exalted, as the inspiration, knowledge, strength and opportunity to do this comes from Allah, the Exalted. Understanding this fact prevents the deadly characteristic of pride. An atom's worth of which is enough to take one to Hell. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 266.

"[All] praise is [due] to Allah..."

It is important for Muslims to remain firm in praising Allah, the Exalted, both verbally and physically by using the blessings He has granted them in ways pleasing to Him. They must also avoid over-praising others for the qualities Allah, the Exalted, has granted them.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 2662, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned against over praising others.

This is a disliked deed as it firstly can be sinful if the praise is based on falsehood. Even if it is true over praising people especially, the ignorant can cause them to become proud. This is an evil characteristic as an atom's worth of it is enough to take one to Hell. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 265. Over praising can even cause the praised person to believe they have fulfilled their potential in obeying Allah, the Exalted, and therefore do not need to strive harder in His obedience.

A Muslim should not be fooled by the praise of others as they know their actions and inner hidden character better than any other person. Reflecting on this and the countless times Allah, the Exalted, has concealed their faults from people should prevent them from becoming proud. In addition, they should remember that the praised quality they possess was granted to them

by none other than Allah, the Exalted, therefore all praise belongs to Him. Finally, a Muslim should become more grateful to Allah, the Exalted, by using the blessings they possess in ways pleasing to Him. They should instead advise others about this Hadith and warn them not to over praise others.

Only in certain cases is praising others acceptable and must include not over praising them, sticking with the truth and it should be done in order to encourage them to do more good. This especially applies to children such as, praising them in respect to their school work, good behaviour and fulfilling the duties of Islam.

"[All] praise is [due] to Allah..."

A person praises another for one of four reasons. The first is that the praised one is full of perfection in terms of attributes and characteristics and free from defects and shortcomings. Regardless of whether any favor has been received from the praised one or not their perfection is still worthy of praise.

The second reason for praising others is when the praised one has done a favor in the past to the person praising them. Therefore, the words of praise are a form of gratitude for the past favour.

The third reason for praising others is that the one who praises hopes for a favour from the praised one in the future.

The final reason for praising others is that the praised possesses qualities which demand praise such as power and might.

All of these reasons equally apply to Allah, the Exalted, and whoever else possesses any of these reasons only does so as Allah, the Exalted, granted it to them. Therefore, all praise and thanks belongs to Allah, the Exalted, alone.

"[All] praise is [due] to Allah..."

A created being gives to another seeking some kind of return, whether that be divine reward, human praise, fulfilling a right or avoiding being called a miser. One who seeks a return is not truly a benefactor and is therefore not deserving of praise in reality. Whereas, Allah, the Exalted, does not bestow blessings on the creation for any of these reasons He does so as He is the Most Generous and Most Kind. He does not gain any type of benefit from bestowing blessings on the creation so therefore He is the only One who truly deserves all praise.

This fact should remind Muslims that every prohibition and command of Allah, the Exalted, do not exist to make people's life harder nor does Allah, the Exalted, benefit from the obedience of the creation. They only exist in order to benefit people in both this world and in the next even if these benefits are not apparent to people. For example, the negative effects of alcohol, which science has proven, was not always apparent such as its negative effect on the organs of the body. It only became unlawful in Islam to protect people from this and other harms. In addition, It is an aspect of faith to accept something without understanding its wisdoms. If all the wisdoms of the commands and prohibitions were made apparent then it would not allow Muslims to possess complete faith. Allah, the Exalted, does not benefit from these commands and prohibitions only people do.

"[All] praise is [due] to Allah..."

The word praise in this verse is a noun and not a verb. A verb is bound by time whereas a noun is timeless. This indicates that the praise of Allah, the Exalted, is timeless meaning, it has been occurring from pre-eternity and will continue to occur forever. A muslim should understand from this that they praised Allah, the Exalted, before they were sent to Earth when they accepted Him as their Lord. Chapter 7 Al A'raf, verse 172:

"And [mention] when your Lord took from the children of Adam - from their loins - their descendants and made them testify of themselves, [saying to them], "Am I not your Lord?" They said, "Yes, we have testified." [This] - lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection, "Indeed, we were of this unaware.""

They should praise Allah, the Exalted, in the present moment and be determined to praise Him in the future for as long as they live. True praise of Allah, the Exalted, involves fulfilling the different aspects of His remembrance.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6407, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that the difference between the person who remembers Allah, the Exalted, and the one who does not is like a living person compared to a dead person.

It is important for muslims who desire to create a strong connection with Allah, the Exalted, so that they can overcome all difficulties in this world and in the hereafter successfully to remember Allah, the Exalted, as much as possible. Put simply, the more they remember Him the more they will achieve this vital goal.

This is achieved by practically acting on the three levels of the remembrance of Allah, the Exalted. The first level is to remember Allah, the Exalted, internally and silently. This includes correcting one's intention so that they only act in order to please Allah, the Exalted. The second is by remembering Allah, the Exalted, through one's tongue. But the highest and most effective way of strengthening one's bond with Allah, the Exalted, is practically remembering Him with one's limbs. This is achieved by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This requires one to gain and act on Islamic knowledge which in turn is the root of all good and success in both worlds.

Those who remain on the first two levels will receive reward depending on their intention but they are unlikely to increase the strength of their faith and piety unless they move to the third and highest level of the remembrance of Allah, the Exalted.

“...Allah, Lord of the worlds.”

Allah, the Exalted, is the Lord of the Worlds as He is the Creator and Sustainer of the entire universe. He has full control over every single entity from the smallest atom to the largest creation such as the divine throne. Except for a few members of the creation every atom in existence recognises and acknowledges this great fact and thus continuously praises Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 17 Al Isra, verse 44:

"The seven heavens and the earth and whatever is in them exalt Him. And there is not a thing except that it exalts [Allah] by His praise, but you do not understand their [way of] exalting..."

No creature has the power to free themselves of His Lordship whether they believe in Him or not. His Lordship has no equivalent as it includes all of creation. It has no beginning, no end and no decline in authority or control. Allah, the Exalted, in His infinite knowledge knew the weakness of the creation in praising Him, according to His infinite status, so out of mercy He declared how to praise Him in this verse. Otherwise, how can a finite creature praise the Creator, according to His infinite status, without aid from Allah, the Exalted? This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 879.

As Allah, the Exalted, is the Lord of the universe He must be obeyed and never disobeyed. A Muslim must only be obedient to others when it involves the obedience of Allah, the Exalted. Acknowledging the Lordship of Allah, the Exalted, includes acknowledging one's servanthood to Him. This in itself is a clear declaration that a Muslim must not chart their own course in life but they must simply adhere to the commands of their Lord, Allah, the Exalted. Therefore, a Muslim should never declare their servanthood to Allah, the Exalted, by declaring His Lordship through their words and then contradict their declaration through their actions. Chapter 26 Ash Shu'ara, verses 23-24:

"Pharaoh said: "And who is this Lord of the Universe? Moses answered: "The Lord of the heavens and the earth and of all that is between them, if you were only to believe.""

“...Allah, Lord of the worlds.”

As Allah, the Exalted, is the Lord of the worlds it means that He owns the entire creation. When a Muslim understands that they are owned by Allah, the Exalted, and every blessing whether internal such as their five senses or external such as wealth are also owned by Allah, the Exalted, it becomes easier to use the blessings they possess in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. The major reason why people misuse their blessings is because they have falsely believed that they own the blessings so they therefore can use them according to their own desires. This verse reminds Muslims that all blessings belong to Allah, the Exalted, and therefore they must be used in accordance to His commands. The one who understands this will use their blessings correctly whereas the one who fails to understand this will not.

In reality, in most cases nothing in this material world in itself is good or bad, such as wealth. What makes a thing good or bad is the way it is used. It is important to understand that the very purpose of everything which was created by Allah, the Exalted, was for it to be used correctly according to the teachings of Islam. When something is not used correctly it in reality becomes useless. For example, wealth is useful in both worlds when it is used correctly such as being spent on the necessities of a person and their dependents. But it can become useless and even a curse for its bearer if it is not used correctly, such as being hoarded or spent on sinful things. Simply hoarding wealth causes wealth to lose value. How can paper and metal coins one tucks away be useful? In this respect, there is no difference between a blank piece of paper and a note of money. It is only useful when it is used correctly.

So if a Muslim desires all their worldly possessions to become a blessing for them in both worlds all they have to do is use them correctly according to the teachings found in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. But if they use them incorrectly then the same blessing will become a burden and curse for them in both worlds. It is as simple as that.

“...Allah, Lord of the worlds.”

As Allah, the Exalted, is the Lord of the worlds it means that He owns the entire creation. When a Muslim understands that they are owned by Allah, the Exalted, and every blessing whether internal such as their five senses or external such as wealth are also owned by Allah, the Exalted, it becomes easier to use the blessings they possess in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. The major reason why people misuse their blessings is because they have falsely believed that they own the blessings so they therefore can use them according to their own desires. This verse reminds Muslims that all blessings belong to Allah, the Exalted, and therefore they must be used in accordance to His commands. The one who understands this will use their blessings correctly whereas the one who fails to understand this will not.

Every worldly blessing a Muslim possesses is only a means which should aid them in reaching the hereafter safely. It is not an end in itself. For example, wealth is a means one should use in order to obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, fulfilling their necessities and the necessities of their dependents. It is not an end or an ultimate goal in itself.

This not only aids a Muslim in maintaining their focus on the hereafter but it also aids them whenever they lose worldly blessings. When a Muslim treats each worldly blessing, such as a child, as a means to please Allah, the Exalted, and reach the hereafter safely then losing it will not have such a detrimental impact on them. They may become sad, which is an acceptable emotion, but they will not become grieved which leads to impatience and

other mental problems, such as depression. This is because they firmly believe the worldly blessing they possessed was only a means so losing it does not cause a loss in the ultimate goal namely, Paradise, the loss of which is disastrous. Therefore, still possessing and concentrating on the ultimate goal will prevent them from becoming grieved.

In addition, they will understand that just like the thing they lost was only a means they firmly believe they will be provided with another means to reach and fulfil their ultimate goal by Allah, the Exalted. This will also prevent them from grieving. Whereas, the one who believes their worldly blessing is the end instead of a means will experience severe grief when losing it as their whole purpose and objective has been lost. This grief will lead to depression and other mental issues.

To conclude, Muslims should treat each blessing they possess as a means to reach the hereafter safely not as an end in itself. This is how one can possess things without being possessed by them. This is how they can keep worldly things in their hands and not in their hearts.

“...Allah, Lord of the worlds.”

This verse also eliminates the mentality that the material world should be physically abandoned meaning, monasticism. Allah, the Exalted, would never attach His divine attribute of Lordship to something which is lowly and must be abandoned namely, the material world which is a part of the worlds He has created. Allah, the Exalted, criticized this mentality in chapter 57 Al Hadid, verse 27:

“...monasticism, which they innovated; We did not prescribe it for them...”

Islam teaches a spiritual detachment instead of a physical one. The material world which one should detach from actually refers to one's desires. It does not refer to the physical world, such as the mountains. This is indicated by chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 14:

“Beautified for people is the love of that which they desire - of women and sons, heaped-up sums of gold and silver, fine branded horses, and cattle and tilled land. That is the enjoyment of worldly life, but Allah has with Him the best return [i.e., Paradise].”

These things are connected to the desires of people and by them one becomes distracted from preparing for the hereafter. When one abstains from their desires they are in fact detaching from the material world. This is why a muslim who does not possess worldly things can still be regarded a worldly person because of their inner desire and love for it. Whereas, a muslim who possesses worldly things, like some of the righteous predecessors, can be considered detached from the material world as they do not desire and occupy their minds, hearts and actions with them. Instead they desire lies in the eternal hereafter.

The first level of abstinence is turning away from unlawful and vain desires which are not connected to the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted. This person busies themselves in fulfilling their duties and responsibilities all the while focusing on the hereafter. They turn away from things and people who prevent them from fulfilling this important deed.

The next stage of abstinence is when one takes only the things they need from the material world in order to fulfil their necessities and responsibilities. They do not occupy their time on things which will not derive them benefit in the next world. This is the advice given by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6416. He advised a muslim to live in this material world as a stranger or a traveller. Both types of people will only take what they need from the material world in order to reach their destination meaning, the hereafter safely. A muslim can achieve this by understanding how close their death and departure to the hereafter is. Not only can death pounce on a person at any time but even if one lives a long life it seems as though it passed in a moment. By realising this reality one sacrifices the moment for the sake of the eternal hereafter. Shortening one's hope for a long life in this material

world will encourage them to perform righteous deeds, sincerely repent from their sins and prioritise preparing for the hereafter over all else. The one who hopes for a long life will be inspired to behave in the opposite manner.

The one who is truly abstinent in the material world neither blames it nor praises it. They do not rejoice when they gain it nor do they grieve when it passes them by. The mind of this pious muslim is too focused on the eternal hereafter to greedily notice the small material world.

Abstinence consists of several different levels. Some muslims abstain in order to free their hearts of every vain and useless occupation so that they can fully concentrate on obeying Allah, the Exalted, and fulfil their responsibilities towards people. According to the Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 257, the one who behaves in such a manner will find that Allah, the Exalted, will suffice them by taking care of their worldly issues. But the one who is only concerned with worldly things will be left to their devices and will find nothing but destruction. This is why it is been said that the one who pursues the excess of this material world, such as excess wealth, will find that the minimal effect it has on them is that it distracts them from the remembrance and obedience of Allah, the Exalted. This is still true even if a person commits no sins in their pursuit of the excess aspects of the material world.

Some abstain from the world in order to lighten their accountability on the Day of Judgement. The more one possesses the more they will be held accountable. In fact, whoever has their deeds scrutinised by Allah, the Exalted, on Judgement Day will be punished. This has been warned in a

Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6536. The lighter one's accountability the less likely this will occur. It is why the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6444, that those who possess plenty in the world will possess very little good on the Day of Rising except for those who dedicated their belongings and wealth in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, but these are a few in number. This long accountability is the reason why each person, rich or poor, will wish on the Day of Judgement that they were only given their daily provision during their lives on Earth. This has been confirmed in Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4140.

Some muslims abstain from the excess of this material world out of desire for Paradise which will make up for losing out on the pleasures of this material world.

Some abstain from the excess of the material world out of fear of Hell. They rightfully believe that the more one indulges in the excess of this material world the closer they are to the unlawful, which leads to Hell. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1205. In fact, it is why the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4215, that a muslim will not become pious until they abstain from something which is not a sin out of fear it may lead to a sin.

The highest degree of abstinence is to understand and act on what Allah, the Exalted, desires from His servants which has been mentioned throughout the Holy Quran and the Hadiths of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and

blessings be upon him. Namely, to abstain from the excess of the material world out of servanthood to Allah, the Exalted, knowing that their Lord does not like the material world. Allah, the Exalted, has condemned the excess of this material world and has belittled its worth. These pious servants were embarrassed that their Lord should see them inclining towards something which He dislikes. These are the greatest servants as they only act according to the wishes of their Lord even when they are given an opportunity to enjoy the lawful luxuries of this world. This is the very reason why the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, chose poverty even though he was offered the treasuries of the Earth. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6590. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, chose this as he knew it was what Allah, the Exalted, desired for His servants. As Allah, the Exalted, disliked the material world the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, rejected it out of love for His Lord. How can a true servant love and indulge in what their Lord dislikes?

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, did set an example for the poor by choosing poverty and taught the rich how to live through his words and actions. He could have easily chosen the alternative and practically showed the rich how to live by taking the treasuries of the world which were offered to him and he could have taught the poor how to live correctly through his words and actions. But he chose poverty for a specific reason which was out of servanthood to his Lord, Allah, the Exalted. This abstinence was adopted by the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them. For example, the first rightly guided Caliph of Islam Abu Bakkar Siddique, may Allah be pleased with him, once cried when water sweetened with honey was given to him. He explained that he once observed the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, pushing away an invisible object. The Holy Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, told him the material world had come to him and he commanded it to leave him alone. The material world replied that he had escaped the material world but

those after him would not. Because of this Abu Bakkar Siddique, may Allah be pleased with him, wept when seeing the water sweetened with honey believing the material world had come to misguide him. This incident is recorded in Imam Ashfahani's, Hilyat Al Awliya, number 47.

In reality, the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, never ate or dressed to gain pleasure but only took what they needed from the material world while focusing on preparing for the hereafter. They disliked when the material world was placed at their feet being fearful that perhaps their reward had been given to them in this world instead of in the hereafter.

Anyone who is truly abstinent will follow in their footsteps. Muslims should not fool themselves by indulging in the unnecessary luxuries of this material world while claiming their heart is attached to Allah, the Exalted. If a person's heart is purified it manifests on their limbs and in their actions which is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 4094. Whoever's heart is attached to Allah, the Exalted, follows in the footsteps of the righteous predecessors by taking what they need from the material world, spending only for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, and turning away from the excess of the material world while striving to prepare for the hereafter. This is true abstinence.

“...Allah, Lord of the worlds.”

The Arabic word worlds has been derived from the source word which means knowledge. This is because all the creatures found within the worlds are knowledgeable of the fact that Allah, the Exalted, is their Lord. This is connected to chapter 7 Al A'raf, verse 172 of the Holy Quran:

“And [mention] when your Lord took from the children of Adam - from their loins - their descendants and made them testify of themselves, [saying to them], "Am I not your Lord?" They said, "Yes, we have testified." [This] - lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection, "Indeed, we were of this unaware.””

All humans were brought forth so that they could take this pledge to Allah, the Exalted. The lesson to understand behind this incident is that all people accepted Allah, the Exalted, as their Lord. Meaning, the One who created them, sustains them and the One who will judge their deeds on the Day of Judgment. It is important for all Muslims to fulfil this pledge through sincere obedience to Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

This verse indicates that Allah, the Exalted, did not ask the creation if they were His servants instead, He asked them if He was their Lord. This is an

indication that the will of Allah, the Exalted, should always come before the will and desire of a person. If a Muslim has a choice between pleasing Allah, the Exalted, or someone else this pledge should remind them that the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted, must come first.

This question is also an indication of the infinite mercy of Allah, the Exalted, as He hinted the answer to the creation by wording it as He did. This shows Muslims that even though Allah, the Exalted, is the Lord who will judge their deeds yet, He is also infinitely merciful.

The effect of this covenant is deeply embedded in the hearts of all mankind. In fact, this is the nature which has been indicated in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6755. From this one can understand that it is important for people not to search for the truth after making their minds up beforehand and then search for evidence which supports their predetermined belief. Only those who open their minds without making a predetermined decision will unlock this covenant which has been embedded deep in their hearts. In fact, having an open mind is important in all issues not just in matters of faith as it helps one to find the truth and the best path. This attitude strengthens society and always encourages peace between people. But the stubbornness of those who predetermine their choices will always create wedges between members of a society which can affect people on a national level. It is important for Muslims not to always believe they are correct in worldly matters otherwise they will adopt this stubborn attitude. This will prevent them from accepting the opinions of others which will lead to arguments, enmity and fractured relationships. Therefore, this attitude should be avoided at all costs.

Finally, the fact that this covenant is deeply embedded in a person's heart indicates that it is a duty on Muslims to uncover it. This will lead one to certainty of faith which is much stronger than faith based on hearsay meaning, being told by one's family that they are a Muslim. Certainty of faith allows a Muslim to overcome all difficulties successfully in this world while fulfilling their religious and worldly duties. One only fails in tests and their duties because of weakness in their faith. Certainty of faith is only obtained by gaining and acting on the knowledge found within the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 53:

“We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth...”

“...Allah, Lord of the worlds.”

The Lordship of Allah, the Exalted, includes sustaining the entire creation. This can occur in two ways. The first is in a general way which includes the entire creation. He grants them provision and guides them to things which are best for them. This allows them to survive in this world.

The second way is specific and includes sustaining those who strive to sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This includes strengthening their faith and removing any distractions and obstacles that could prevent this. It includes protecting them from all things which are bad and guiding them to all things which are good for them in both worlds even if this guidance is not obvious to them. This might be the reason for most of the supplications of the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, including the word Lord since all their requests and needs came under this specific category.

“...Allah, Lord of the worlds.”

When Allah, the Exalted, created and sustains the universe a muslim should understand that they will never gain success and peace through His disobedience. If they remain sincerely obedient to Him, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, then He will ensure they obtain success and peace in both worlds, as He alone controls everything which occurs. Chapter 65 At Talaq, verse 2:

“...And whoever fears Allah - He will make for him a way out.”

In addition, the main verse also encourages one not to stress about the things which occur within their lives as the Lord of worlds will ensure they successfully overcome all the situations they encounter. This will encourage them to focus on His sincere obedience and not pay attention to the creation or the situations they face.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, indicated the infinite and absolute power and authority of Allah, the Exalted, in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2516. This Hadith advises that the entire creation cannot benefit a person if Allah, the Exalted, did not desire them to do so. Similarly, the entire creation together could not harm someone if Allah,

the Exalted, did not desire them to. This means only what Allah, the Exalted, decides happens within the universe. It is important to note, that this advice does not indicate one should abandon using means, such as medicine, but it means that one can use the means as they have been created by none other than Allah, the Exalted, but they must understand that Allah, the Exalted, is the only One who decides the outcome of all things. For example, they are many sick people who take medicine and recover from their illness. But they are others who take medicine and do not recover. This indicates that another factor decides the end result namely, the will of Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 9 At Tawbah, verse 51:

“Say, “Never will we be struck except by what Allah has decreed for us...”

The one who understands this knows that anything that affected them could not have been avoided. And those things which missed them could never have been obtained.

It is important to note, that whatever the end result even if it is against a person's desire they should remain patient and truly believe Allah, the Exalted, has chosen the best for them even if they do not observe the wisdom behind the outcome. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

When one truly understands this truth they stop relying on the creation knowing they cannot innately harm or benefit them. Instead, they turn to Allah, the Exalted, seeking His support and protection through sincere obedience by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience. This leads a muslim to trusting in Allah, the Exalted. It also encourages one to only fear Allah, the Exalted, as they know the creation cannot harm them without the will of Allah, the Exalted.

Recognising that all things which occur within one's life and the universe originate from Allah, the Exalted, is a part of understanding the Oneness of Allah, the Exalted. This is a topic which has no end and goes beyond only superficially believing that there is none worthy of worship except Allah, the Exalted. When this is fixed in one's heart then they only hope in Allah, the Exalted, knowing He is the only One who can help them. They will only submit and obey Allah, the Exalted, in all aspects of their life. In reality, a person only obeys another in order to receive protection from harm or gain some benefit. Only Allah, the Exalted, can grant this therefore only He deserves to be obeyed and worshipped. If anyone chooses the obedience of another over the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, this shows they believe that this other can bring them some sort of benefit or protect them from harm. This is a sign of the weakness of their faith. The source of all things which occur is Allah, the Exalted, so muslims should only obey Him. Chapter 35 Fatir, verse 2:

“Whatever Allah grants to people of mercy - none can withhold it; and whatever He withholds - none can release it thereafter...”

It is important to note, that obeying a person which encourages the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in reality is obeying Allah, the Exalted. For example, obeying the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 80:

“He who obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah...”

“...Allah, Lord of the worlds.”

When Allah, the Exalted, alone manages the affairs of the universe, one should place their hope and fear in none other than Him.

In a long divine Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 7405, Allah, the Exalted, advises that He acts and treats His servant according to their perception of Him. This means if a muslim has good thoughts and expects good from Allah, the Exalted, He in turn will not disappoint them. Similarly, if a person harbours negative thoughts about Allah, the Exalted, such as believing they will not be forgiven then Allah, the Exalted, may act according to their belief.

It is important to note, there is a vast difference between true hope in Allah, the Exalted, which this Hadith refers to and wishful thinking. Wishful thinking is when one fails to strive in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience and then expects Allah, the Exalted, to forgive them. This is not true hope it is merely wishful thinking. This is like a farmer who fails to plant any seeds, fails to water their crop and still hopes to reap a large harvest. True hope is when one strives to obey Allah, the Exalted, and whenever they slip up they sincerely repent and then hope for the mercy and forgiveness of Allah, the Exalted. This is like a farmer who plants seeds, waters their crop, dedicates effort to keeping the crop healthy and then hopes for a large harvest. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has summarised this explanation in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2459.

Generally speaking, a muslim should harbour more fear of Allah, the Exalted, during their life as it prevents sins which is superior to hope which inspires one to perform righteous deeds especially, the voluntary type. But during periods of illness and difficulty and especially at the time of death a muslim should have nothing but hope in the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, even if they have spent their life disobeying Him as this has specifically been commanded by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 2877.

“...Allah, Lord of the worlds.”

At one point in history Earth seemed to be the only significant thing in the universe. But with the passing of time and scientific advancements it was discovered that Earth is in fact only a drop in a vast ocean namely, the universe. It is important for muslims to understand these scientific teachings as it inspires one to adopt good characteristics, such as trust in the infinite power of Allah, the Exalted. When a muslim faces difficulties and questions the help of Allah, the Exalted, they should ponder over the size of the universe and how many creatures exist in it. The Earth is a single planet in a solar system which is made up of many planets and a star. Many solar systems make up a galaxy. Many galaxies make up the universe. As indicated by this verse, a muslim firmly believes that all these things were created and are sustained by Allah, the Exalted, without any partner or help. When a muslim reflects on this deeply they should realise that if Allah, the Exalted, can sustain the entire universe without anything being deprived or falling out of sync He can also take care of their issues and difficulties.

Provision is something people often stress about and in some cases this stress even drives them to seek provision from unlawful sources. Whenever a muslim faces this stress they should reflect on the universe and on the countless creations which Allah, the Exalted, provides continuous provision for. If He does this why should one suspect He will not provide provision for a person who only needs a few things to sustain themselves? Taking a step back when facing difficulties and assessing these facts is an excellent way to remove stress and strengthen one's trust in Allah, the Exalted.

Teachings are found in the Holy Quran and in the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, such as the promise of Allah, the Exalted, to provide continuous provision to the creation. Chapter 29 Al Ankabut, verse 60:

“And how many a creature carries not its [own] provision. Allah provides for it and for you...”

But the truth of these teachings is also found in the creation, such as the universe. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 190:

“Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day are signs for those of understanding.”

Therefore, it is important for muslims to firstly learn and act on the teachings of the divine scriptures and then reflect on the creation. This will lead to the strengthening of one's faith, which includes the strengthening of one's trust in Allah, the Exalted.

“...Allah, Lord of the worlds.”

This indicates that Allah, the Exalted, did not create the universe and then abandon it. Instead, He alone manages and sustains the entire creation within the Heavens and the Earth. Just like a wise king who governs a nation would not allow his subjects to disobey him and his laws without holding them accountable nor will the Lord of the worlds. Therefore, this verse indicates the necessity for the Day of Judgement as the Lordship of Allah, the Exalted, would not be complete without fully holding the creation accountable for their actions within the universe He manages. This verse therefore reminds muslims of the Day of Judgement and practically preparing for it by using the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted.

Logically speaking, the Day of Judgement is something which must occur. If one observes the universe they will notice many examples of balance. For example, the Earth is at a perfect and balanced distance from the Sun. If the Earth was slightly closer or further away from the Sun it would not be inhabitable. Similarly, the water cycle, which involves the evaporation of water from the ocean into the atmosphere which is then condensed in order to produce rain, is perfectly balanced so that the creation can continue living on Earth. The ground was created in a balanced way so that the weak branches and shoots of seeds can penetrate through it in order to provide crops for the creation yet the same ground is tough enough to withstand heavy buildings being built on top of it. There are many such examples that not only clearly indicate a Creator but also balance. But there is one major thing in this world which is clearly unbalanced namely, the actions of mankind. One often observes oppressive and tyrannical people who escape punishment in this world. Conversely, there are countless people who are oppressed by others and face other difficulties yet do not receive their full

reward for their patience. Many Muslims who sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, often face many difficulties in this world and only receive a small share in reward whereas those who openly disobey Allah, the Exalted, enjoy the luxuries of this world and only face some problems. Just like Allah, the Exalted, has set up a balance in all His creations the reward and punishment of actions must also be balanced. But this obviously does not occur in this world so therefore it must occur in another time namely, the Day of Recompense i.e. the Day of Judgment.

Allah, the Exalted, could reward and punish fully in this world. But one of the wisdoms behind not fully punishing in this world is that Allah, the Exalted, gives opportunity after opportunity to them so that they sincerely repent and correct their behaviour. He does not fully reward Muslims in this world as this world is not Paradise. In addition, believing in the unseen namely, the full reward waiting for a Muslim in the next world, is an important aspect of faith. In fact belief in the unseen is what makes faith special. Believing in something which can be perceived through the five senses, such as receiving full reward in this world, would not be so special.

Having fear of full punishment and hope in receiving full reward in the hereafter will encourage one to abstain from sins and perform righteous deeds.

In order for the Day of Recompense to commence this material world must end. This is because punishment and reward can only be given once everyone's actions terminate. Therefore, the Day of Recompense cannot

take place until the actions of people have been concluded. This indicates that the material world must end, sooner or later.

In addition, when one observes the Heavens and Earth and observes the countless cycles of life and death, such as the coming and going of the day and night, the seasons and the lands for growing crops, they will understand that they too will face a cycle of death and life namely, the resurrection on Judgement Day.

When one reflects on this discussion it will strengthen their faith in the Day of Judgement thereby encouraging them to prepare for it by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

“...the worlds.”

The worlds includes everything that Allah, the Exalted, has created in both worlds.

The word worlds in Arabic is derived from a word which indicates that it is a sign testifying to the existence of its Creator and to His Oneness. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 191:

“...and give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth, [saying], “Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly; exalted are You [above such a thing]...””

This reminds Muslims the importance of reflecting on the Heavens and the Earth. When done correctly this clearly indicates the Oneness of Allah, the Exalted, and His infinite power. For example, if a Muslim ponders over the night and day and how perfectly in sync they are and the other things linked to them they will truly believe that this is not a random thing meaning, there is a force which ensures everything runs like clockwork. This is the infinite power of Allah, the Exalted. In addition, if one ponders over the perfect timing of the night and day they will realise it clearly indicates that there is only one God namely, Allah, the Exalted. If there were more than one God each god would desire the night and day to occur according to their own desires. This would lead to utter chaos as one God might desire the Sun to rise whereas the other God might desire the night to continue. The perfect uninterrupted

system found within the universe proves there is only one God namely, Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 21 Al Anbiya, verse 22:

“Had there been within them [i.e., the heavens and earth] gods besides Allah, they both would have been ruined...”

In addition, the worlds could be referring to every creation found within every time period meaning, each world is a separate time period and Allah, the Exalted, is the Lord of every time period and all the creatures which exist in that time period. Understanding this makes it clear that the teachings of Islam, the religion Allah, the Exalted, has chosen for mankind, is valid and applicable to every time period till the end of time. Therefore, any problem which can occur that affects an individual or an entire society can be solved through the teachings of Islam. Muslims must therefore strive to gain and act on Islamic knowledge in order to benefit from this timeless knowledge.

"[All] praise is [due] to Allah, Lord of the worlds."

As the first chapter of the Holy Quran begins with this verse, it reminds muslims that their purpose of existence is to praise Allah, the Exalted, meaning, to obey Him. All the things they have been granted in this world must be seen as a means to praising Allah, the Exalted, by using them in ways pleasing to Him. The one who fails to do this has failed to recognize their purpose. This will lead to an empty and meaningless existence. Chapter 51 Adh Dhariyat, verse 56:

"And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me."

Before one can worship Allah, the Exalted, they must first recognise Him as it is not possible to obey someone without knowledge. In addition, people must first learn how to worship Allah, the Exalted, before they can fulfil this task. Therefore, worship is followed by knowledge. This is why in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, declared seeking useful knowledge a duty on all muslims. Without knowledge one will never be able to worship Allah, the Exalted, correctly. Few good deeds performed with knowledge are far superior to many good deeds performed incorrectly because of ignorance.

As Allah, the Exalted, is the One who created mankind no one has the right to be served and worshipped except Him. If an employer easily dismisses

their employee for abandoning the duty they have been hired for, how can it be correct to abandon serving and worshipping Allah, the Exalted, when He alone created and sustains the creation? All of mankind have been granted free will and the ability to obey and worship Allah, the Exalted. So each person must decide whether they desire to fulfil their purpose of creation thereby receiving eternal reward or reject it and face punishment in both worlds. The same way a device, such as a mobile phone, which does not fulfil its primary purpose is discarded people may well be discarded on the Day of Judgement into Hell for failing to fulfil their primary purpose of existence.

It is important to note, that worship refers to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted. This involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This obedience must encompass every part of one's life and body, such as their tongue. It includes a person's duty towards Allah, the Exalted, such as offering the prayer and treating the creation with kindness.

Those who obey Allah, the Exalted, will be given the best rewards while those who disobey Him will receive the worst punishment in this world and the next. In a divine Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2466, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, narrates from Allah, the Exalted, who declares that if one busies themselves in worshipping Him, through sincere obedience, He will fill their heart with richness and remove their poverty. But if they turn away from His worship and obedience Allah, the Exalted, will fill their life with problems and not remove their poverty.

It is important to note, that Allah, the Exalted, does not need the creation in anyway whatsoever. As clearly mentioned in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6572, people only benefit themselves with their good deeds as it raises their ranks. And they only harm themselves with their sins as they will be held accountable for them. The infinite status of Allah, the Exalted, does not change at all irrespective of if the entire creation worshipped Him or not. Allah, the Exalted, is the sole Creator and sole Provider. It is people who are completely and utterly in need of Him. Whoever understands this and sincerely obeys Allah, the Exalted, will fulfil the purpose of their creation and will therefore be given an eternal reward.

"[All] praise is [due] to Allah, Lord of the worlds."

The Holy Quran begins with praising Allah, the Exalted, and this praise is recited at the beginning of the prayer as well. In addition, according to the Holy Quran the chapter of life connected to this world will end when Muslims enter Paradise and praise Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 10 Yunus, verse 10:

"...And the last of their call will be, "Praise to Allah, Lord of the worlds!"

The fact that the beginning and end is connected to praising Allah, the Exalted, clearly indicates an important lesson namely, everything in between the beginning and end should also be dedicated to praising Allah, the Exalted. This is not only done through one's words but by through one's actions by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This includes the duties concerning others, such as one's dependents and using every blessing one possesses in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. This does not mean one should abandon the material world completely. But it means one should not forget this vital lesson and their purpose of existence and therefore prioritise acting on it over all other things. The same way a person who has been hired for a specific job would get fired if they busied themselves with doing other duties instead of those connected to their job so will a Muslim who fails to fulfil the purpose of their creation. When a person gets fired from a job they only lose their job but if someone gets fired by Allah, the Exalted, they will lose peace of mind in this world and eternal bliss in the next.

Chapter 1 - Al Fatihah, Verse 3

۳ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

“The Most Compassionate, Most Merciful.”

“The Most Compassionate, Most Merciful.”

Allah, the Exalted, has countless divine qualities but only two of them have been mentioned in this verse. The first is the Most Compassionate. The other is that Allah, the Exalted, is the Most Merciful. There are many possible interpretations of these two divine qualities. One is that Allah, the Exalted, is the Most Compassionate towards all of creation in this world but He is the Most Merciful to the Muslims in both this world and in the hereafter. This is supported by chapter 33 Al Ahzab, verse 43:

“...Allah is All-merciful to the believers....”

The divine name Most Compassionate is exclusive to Allah, the Exalted. Therefore, no one else should be named this. This is because the Most Compassionate means the Being whose mercy encompasses all. Such a characteristic can only be possessed by Allah, the Exalted. A person can only have the Most Compassionate in their name if their full name is "the servant of the Most Compassionate."

On the other hand, the merciful has been attributed to others such as the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 9 At Tawbah, verse 128:

"There has certainly come to you a Messenger from among yourselves. Grievous to him is what you suffer; [he is] concerned over you [i.e., your guidance] and to the believers is kind and merciful."

The Most Merciful in respect to Allah, the Exalted, means the One who does countless favours and is benevolent towards others. When used in reference to the creation it means soft-hearted and compassionate. This is a quality all Muslims must strive to achieve if they desire to be treated with mercy by Allah, the Exalted, the Most Merciful. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4941.

In addition, the Most Compassionate indicates the overwhelming compassion and love for His creation and the Most Merciful stresses its continuity, consistency and constancy.

A Muslim must adopt these qualities by looking at the creation through the eye of mercy and by treating them with mercy and compassion whether they are obedient or sinful. Many Hadiths such as the one found in Sahih Muslim, number 6030, indicate that the one who does not show mercy to others will not be shown mercy by Allah, the Exalted. So it is vital for Muslims to show mercy to all through their actions such as financial and physical help and through their words such as supplicating for them. Islam in fact rewards a Muslim who shows mercy to all living things such as animals. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 2550. In addition,

the mercy they show should not be selective or occasional instead they should strive to demonstrate mercy at all times with all of creation.

“The Most Compassionate, Most Merciful.”

It is believed that these two divine qualities of Allah, the Exalted, have been mentioned straight after the previous verse, which declares the Lordship of Allah, the Exalted, in order to create a balance between fear and hope. Chapter 1 Al Fatihah, verse 2:

"[All] praise is [due] to Allah, Lord of the worlds."

When one truly believes that Allah, the Exalted, is the Lord of the worlds it will encourage them towards fearing Him. If a person is inviting punishment when they cross the limits of a worldly king, can one imagine the seriousness of crossing the limits set by the Lord of the worlds? So in order to balance this fear Allah, the Exalted, mentioned these two divine qualities of hope so that people understand that even though the punishment of Allah, the Exalted, is severe He is also the Most Merciful and Most Compassionate.

But it is important for Muslims not confuse true hope in Allah, the Exalted, with wishful thinking.

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2459, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, described the difference

between true hope in the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, and wishful thinking. True hope is when one controls their soul by avoiding the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted, and actively struggles for preparing for the hereafter. Whereas, the foolish wishful thinker follows their desires and then expects Allah, the Exalted, to forgive them and fulfill their wishes.

It is important for Muslims not to confuse these two attitudes so that they avoid living and dying as a wishful thinker as this person is highly unlikely to succeed in this world or the next. Wishful thinking is like a farmer who fails to prepare the land for planting, fails to plant seeds, fails to water the land and then expects to harvest a huge crop. This is plain foolishness and this farmer is highly unlikely to succeed. Whereas, true hope is like a farmer who prepares the land, plants seeds, waters the land and then hopes Allah, the Exalted, will bless them with a huge harvest. The key difference is that the one who possesses true hope will actively strive to obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. And whenever they slip up they sincerely repent. Whereas, the wishful thinker will not actively strive in obeying Allah, the Exalted, and instead follow their desires and still expect Allah, the Exalted, to forgive them and fulfill their wishes.

Muslims must therefore learn the key difference so that they can abandon wishful thinking and instead adopt true hope in Allah, the Exalted, which always leads to nothing except good and success in both worlds. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 7405.

A specific type of wishful thinking which affected the past nations and even the muslim nation is when a person believes that they can ignore the commands and prohibitions of Allah, the Exalted, and somehow someone on the Day of Judgement will intercede for them and save them from Hell. Even though the intercession of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, is a fact and has been discussed in many Hadiths, such as the one found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4308, none the less even with his intercession some muslims whose punishment will be reduced by it will still enter Hell. Even a single moment in Hell is truly unbearable. So one should abandon wishful thinking and instead adopt true hope by practically striving in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted.

The Devil convinces those who do not believe in Judgement Day that even if it occurs they will make peace with Allah, the Exalted, on that day by claiming that they were not so bad as they avoided major crimes such as murder. They have convinced themselves that their pleas will be accepted and they will be sent to Paradise even though they disbelieved in Allah, the Exalted, during their lives on Earth. This is incredibly foolish as Allah, the Exalted, will not treat the person who believed in Him and tried to obey him like the one who disbelieved in Him. A single verse has erased this type of wishful thinking. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 85:

“And whoever desires other than Islām as religion - never will it be accepted from him, and he, in the Hereafter, will be among the losers.”

“The Most Compassionate, Most Merciful.”

Muslims must strive to act on the divine qualities and attributes according to their created level.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 7376, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that Allah, the Exalted, will not show mercy to the one who does not show mercy to others.

Islam is a very simple religion. One of its fundamental teachings is so simple that even uneducated people can understand and act on them namely, how people treat others is how they will be treated by Allah, the Exalted. For example, those who learn to overlook and forgive the mistakes of others will be forgiven by Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 24 An Nur, verse 22:

“...and let them pardon and overlook. Would you not like that Allah should forgive you?...”

Those who support others in beneficial worldly and religious matters such as emotional or financial aid will be supported by Allah, the Exalted, in both worlds. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud,

number 4893. This same Hadith advises that the one who conceals the faults of others will have their faults concealed by Allah, the Exalted.

Simply put, if one treats others with kindness and respect according to the teachings of Islam they will be treated similarly by Allah, the Exalted. And those who mistreat others will be treated similarly by Allah, the Exalted, even if they fulfill the obligatory duties which are connected to Him such as the obligatory prayers. This is because a Muslim must fulfill both duties in order to achieve success namely, the duties towards Allah, the Exalted, and people.

Finally, it is important to note a Muslim will only be treated kindly by Allah, the Exalted, if they treat others kindly for His sake. If they do it for any other reason than they will undoubtedly forfeit the reward mentioned in these teachings. The foundation of all acts and Islam itself is one's intention. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1.

“The Most Compassionate, Most Merciful.”

This verse reminds Muslims to remain patient when facing difficulties and tests as the Most Merciful will only decree what is best for His servant even if the wisdoms behind the difficulties are hidden. Similarly, a Muslim will demonstrate gratitude in times of ease by using the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as they know that the Most Merciful has granted them the opportunity to gain reward and further blessings through gratitude. Chapter 14 Ibrahim, verse 7:

"And [remember] when your Lord proclaimed, 'If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favor]..."

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 7500, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that every situation is blessed for a believer. The only condition is that they need to respond to each situation they encounter while obeying Allah, the Exalted, specifically, patience in difficulties and gratitude in times of ease.

There are two aspects of life. One aspect are the situations people find themselves in whether they are times of ease or difficulties. The control of what situation a person faces is out of their hands. Allah, the Exalted, has decided this and there is no escaping them. Therefore, stressing over the situations one faces does not make sense as they are destined and therefore

inevitable. The other aspect is a person's reaction to each situation. This is in each person's control and this is what they are judged on for example, showing patience or impatience in a difficult situation. Therefore, a Muslim must concentrate on their behaviour and reaction in each situation instead of stressing over being in a situation as this is unavoidable. If a Muslim desires to succeed in both worlds they should assess each situation and always act in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted. For example, in times of ease they must use the blessings they possess as prescribed by Islam which is true gratitude to Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 14 Ibrahim, verse 7:

“And [remember] when your Lord proclaimed, 'If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favor]...”

And in times of difficulty they must show patience knowing Allah, the Exalted, chooses what is best for His servants even if they do not understand the wisdom behind the choices. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

“The Most Compassionate, Most Merciful.”

This verse at the beginning of the Holy Quran also corrects a Muslim’s mentality so that they understand that the verses of the Holy Quran that describe the punishment of Allah, the Exalted, such as Hell are actually a source of mercy. This is because they are a warning, which acted upon will cause a person to avoid serious harm and danger in both worlds. This is just like a traffic road sign which warns drivers about certain hazards that they will encounter on the road. Another worldly example to further clarify this point would be of a person sleeping while camping in the wilderness. If another person observes a lion approaching the sleeping person they will not refrain from shouting and screaming in order to alert the sleeping person to the danger, out of fear of scaring the sleeping person by their screaming and shouting. Neither will the sleeping person become angry at the person who shouts and screams thereby scaring them half to death in order to warn them of the lion and the life threatening danger. In fact, the sleeping person will thank the person even though their behaviour scared them. They will understand that the warning the person gave them might have been frightening none the less it aided them in the long run i.e. escaping the lion. This is how the verses describing the punishment of Allah, the Exalted, such as Hell should be treated, which this verse indicates. If Allah, the Exalted, hid His punishment such as Hell, from mankind until Judgement Day out of dislike for scaring them then mankind would undoubtedly complain that they had not been warned beforehand. Chapter 55 Ar Rahman, verses 43-45:

“This is Hell, which the criminals deny. They will circulate between it and scalding water, heated [to the utmost degree]. So which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?”

“The Most Compassionate, Most Merciful.”

This verse also indicates that the coming verses of the Holy Quran, which contain the rules and regulations of Islam, have been decreed as a source of mercy upon mankind and not as a source punishment or restriction. This indicates that Islam is a religion of ease and not difficulty.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 39, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that religion is simple and straight forward. And a muslim should not over burden themselves as they will not be able to keep up with it.

This means that a muslim should always lead a simple religious and worldly life. Islam does not demand muslims to overburden themselves in performing righteous deeds. But it in fact teaches simplicity which is the most beloved religion to Allah, the Exalted, according to a Hadith found in Imam Bukhari's, Adab Al Mufrad, number 287. A muslim should firstly strive to fulfil their obligatory duties which are undoubtedly within their strength to fulfil as Allah, the Exalted, does not burden a muslim with more than they can bear. This is confirmed in chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 286 of the Holy Quran:

“Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity...”

Next, they should take some time out of their day to study Islamic teachings so that they can act on the Holy Quran and the established traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, according to their strength. This attracts the love of Allah, the Exalted, which has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6502.

If a muslim persists on this behaviour they will be provided with such mercy that they will fulfil all their duties towards Allah, the Exalted, and people and find time to enjoy the lawful pleasures of this world without excess, waste or extravagance.

This is how a muslim makes things easier for themselves. And if they possess dependents, such as children, they should teach them the same thereby, making things easier for them also. Overburdening oneself makes things hard and can push one to completely quit. And relaxing too much will make things hard as one will lose out on the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, in both worlds through laziness.

“The Most Compassionate, Most Merciful.”

This verse also indicates that the coming verses of the Holy Quran, which contain the rules and regulations of Islam, have been decreed as a source of mercy upon mankind and not as a source punishment or restriction. The one who fails to recognize and therefore act on these commands will find difficulties in both worlds.

Those who disbelieve or avoid acting on their faith in Islam do so out of love for the material world and the things within it. They believe that believing or acting on their faith will prevent them from enjoying worldly blessings meaning, for them faith is something that restricts their desires and therefore they turn away from it either literally or practically. Instead they turn towards the material world and strive to fulfill their desires without restrictions believing that true peace lies in this. They look down at those who accept and actualize their faith by controlling their actions and using their worldly blessings in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. They believe that these pious Muslims are lowly slaves who been restricted from enjoying themselves whereas they, the disbelievers and the misguided, are free. But in actual fact this could not be further from the truth as the real slaves are those who fail to accept and submit to Allah, the Exalted, and the superior ones are those who have done this as they become free of slavery to the world. This can be understood by an example. A good parent will restrict the type of food their child eats meaning, they will only let them eat junk and unhealthy food once in a while and instead force them to follow a healthy diet. This child therefore believes that their parent has placed undesirable restrictions on them and that they have become slaves to their parent and their healthy diet. On the other hand another child has been given permission from their parent to eat whatever they desire, whenever they desire and how

much they desire. So this child believes that they are completely free of all restrictions. When these children come together the child who has been given complete freedom criticizes and looks down on the child who has been restricted by their parent. The latter child will also feel sorry for themselves when they observe the other child has been given free reign to behave however they wish. Outwardly it appears the child who has been granted freedom has obtained happiness whereas the other child is too tied up with restrictions to enjoy life. But years down the line the truth will become manifest. The child who had no restrictions grows up to become extremely unhealthy e.g. obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, etc. As a result of this they even become mentally unhealthy as they lose confidence in their body and the way they look. Because of this they become a slave of medications, diseases, mental and social problems. All these things restrict their happiness and life. Whereas, the child who was restricted by their parent grows up healthy in mind and body. As a result they become confident in their body and ability, which aids them to succeed in life. They become free of any slavery to medications, diseases, mental and social problems as they grew up with the correct balance and guidance. So the child who had no restrictions grew up becoming a slave to many things, whereas the child who had restrictions grew up independent of all restrictions.

To conclude, the real slave is the one who becomes a slave to all other things except Allah, the Exalted, such as social media, society, fashion and culture, and this leads to mental, physical and social problems, whereas the real free person is the one who submits only to Allah, the Exalted, thereby achieving peace of mind and body.

Chapter 1 - Al Fatihah, Verse 4

مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ

“Sovereign of the Day of Recompense.”

“Sovereign of the Day of Recompense.”

Even though Allah, the Exalted, is the Sovereign of everyday and all things the Day of Recompense has specifically been highlighted as on this Day none of the creation will deny His sovereignty whereas, there are plenty of people which do deny this fact in this world. This indicates that the one who actualises this fact in this world through sincere obedience by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, will be at peace with the sovereignty of Allah, the Exalted, on the Day of Judgement.

In addition, when Allah, the Exalted, makes it clear in this verse that no one will have any authority to sway their final judgement or the final judgement of others without the permission of Allah, the Exalted, i.e. intercession, irrespective of how much influence and authority they possessed during their lives on Earth, it will encourage them to use their authority and influence in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, before they completely lose it on the Day of Judgement, instead of being fooled into committing oppression of others through it.

This verse reminds one to remember that the one who uses their authority correctly in this world will be blessed by the Sovereign on the Day of Recompense but the one who misuses it will lose it and will be humiliated by Allah, the Exalted, on the Day of Judgement. There will be no authority or influence other than the sovereignty of Allah, the Exalted, on the Day of Judgement. Chapter 40 Ghafir, verse 16:

“The Day they come forth nothing concerning them will be concealed from Allah. To whom belongs [all] sovereignty this Day? To Allah, the One, the Prevailing.”

“Sovereign of the Day of Recompense.”

This verse also indicates an important teaching of Islam namely, equality. The fact that there will be no sovereignty on the Day of Judgement except Allah's, the Exalted, reminds one that in reality there is no sovereignty even in this material world except Allah's, the Exalted, even if this fact is not obvious. By understanding this truth a Muslim will not believe they are superior to others because of their authority or social influence. Instead they will remember that in reality all sovereignty belongs to Allah, the Exalted, alone and the only thing which makes one superior to others is their level of piety.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6543, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that Allah, the Exalted, does not judge people based on their outward appearance or their wealth instead He observes and judges people's inward intention and their physical actions.

The first thing to note is that a Muslim should always correct their intention when performing any deed as Allah, the Exalted, will only reward them when they perform righteous deeds for His sake. Those who perform deeds for the sake of other people and things will be told to gain their reward from those who they acted for on Judgment Day, which will not be possible. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3154.

In addition, this Hadith indicates the importance of equality in Islam. A person is not superior to others by worldly things such as their ethnicity or wealth. Even though, many Muslims have erected these barriers such as social castes and sects thereby believing some are better than others Islam has clearly rejected this concept and declared that in this respect all people are equal in the sight of Islam. The only thing which makes one Muslim superior to another is their piety meaning, how much they fulfill the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refrain from His prohibitions and face destiny with patience. Chapter 49 Al Hujurat, verse 13:

“...Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you...”

A Muslim should therefore busy themselves in obeying Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His rights and the rights of people and not believe that something they possess or belong to will somehow save them from punishment. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has made it clear in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6853, that the Muslim who lacks in righteous deeds meaning, the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, will not be increased in rank because of their lineage. In reality, this applies to all worldly things such as wealth, ethnicity, gender or social brotherhoods and castes.

“Sovereign of the Day of Recompense.”

Allah, the Exalted, is the One who possesses all sovereignty which is free of all defects. It is a sovereignty which has no beginning, no end, no reduction and no limit. Allah, the Exalted, has complete and total control over the creation through management and judgment without any limitations, partners or helpers. The King cannot be hindered or prevented from carrying out His will.

By accepting Allah, the Exalted, as the only King a Muslim indirectly accepts their servanthood to Him. Therefore, they must fulfil all His commands and avoid all His prohibitions. A true servant never questions the wise decisions of the King and instead submits with full trust to His choices knowing that the wise King only decrees the best for His servant. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

When a Muslim recognises Allah, the Exalted, as the King they will not turn to another when seeking help and instead only seek His support through sincere obedience to Him. They will always remember if they obey the King He will protect them from the creation. But if they obey the creation over Allah, the Exalted, the creation will not be able to protect them from the

punishment of the only King. This is indicated in a Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 2625. He declared that there is no obedience to the creation if it leads to the disobedience of the Creator.

A Muslim should adopt this characteristic according to their status by purifying their inner spiritual king namely, the spiritual heart through acting on the knowledge found within the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This will cause their servants meaning, their bodily limbs, to obey their spiritual heart in acts of righteousness. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has advised in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 4094, that if the spiritual heart is pure the rest of the body will be pure but if the spiritual heart is corrupt the whole body will become corrupt. One should not become a slave of their evil desires and instead become a true king which controls their desires according to the teachings of Islam.

Whoever perfects this will be given a spiritual kingdom in both worlds. The ultimate destination of the one who fulfils the rights of the King by perfecting servanthood has been mentioned in the Holy Quran. They will be granted a high station in the presence of the only Omnipotent King. Chapter 54 Al Qamar, verse 55:

“In a seat of honour near a Sovereign, Perfect in Ability.”

“Sovereign of the Day of Recompense.”

After declaring that Allah, the Exalted, is the Most Affectionate and Most Merciful in the previous verse, the Holy Quran immediately declares that Allah, the Exalted, is the Master of the Day of Judgment. Chapter 1 Al Fatihah, verse 3:

"the Most Affectionate, Most Merciful."

Again, this is aimed to create a balance between hope and fear. This is to ensure the qualities of mercy and affection do not mislead anyone into remaining heedless of the fact that on the Day of Judgment Allah, the Exalted, will gather the entire creation and hold each person accountable for their deeds. A Muslim should therefore strive to avoid wishful thinking by believing they can live in disobedience; yet obtain the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, in this world and in the next. One must prove their servanthood and acceptance of Allah, the Exalted, as the Lord of the worlds through sincere obedience by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience. Only then is a Muslim in the right position to hope and rely on the infinite mercy of Allah, the Exalted, to save them in both worlds.

“Sovereign of the Day of Recompense.”

In the opening verse of chapter 1 Al Fatihah, Allah, the Exalted, mentions five of His names/attributes: Allah, Lord, Compassionate, Merciful, Sovereign of the Day of Recompense. Chapter 1 Al Fatihah, verses 2-4:

“...Allah, Lord of the worlds. the Most Compassionate, Most Merciful. Sovereign of the Day of Recompense.”

He is Allah, the Exalted, because He created all things. He is Lord because He blessed mankind with countless blessings. He is Compassionate because He overlooks the sins of people. He is Merciful because He accepts the repentance of people, forgives them and guides them to success in both worlds. And He is the Sovereign of the Day of Recompense because He will judge the actions of mankind.

When a Muslim understands these five names/attributes they will realize that truly none has the right to be worshipped except Allah, the Exalted. They will actualise this by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, so that they fully benefit from each of these divine names/attributes in both worlds.

“Sovereign of the Day of Recompense.”

This verse does not declare that Allah, the Exalted, will be the sovereign of the Day of Recompense but instead declares He is the Sovereign even though the Day of Judgement has not occurred yet. This indicates that as the Day of Judgement is so certain to occur it has been described as if it already exists even though it is a future event. This language teaches Muslims to strengthen their faith in order to obtain certainty of faith.

All Muslims have faith in Islam but the strength of their faith varies from person to person. For example, the one who follows the teachings of Islam because their family told them to is not the same as the one who believes in it through evidence. A person who has heard about something will not believe in it in the same way as the one who has witnessed the thing with their own eyes.

As confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224, gaining useful knowledge is a duty on all Muslims. One of the reasons for this is that it is the best way a Muslim can strengthen their faith in Islam. This is important to pursue as the stronger one's certainty of faith the greater the chance they will remain steadfast on the correct path, especially when facing difficulties. In addition, having certainty of faith has been described as one of the best things one can possess in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3849. This knowledge should be obtained by studying the Holy Quran and the Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, through a reliable source.

Allah, the Exalted, did not only declare a truth in the Holy Quran but He also provided evidence for it through examples. Not only examples which are to be found in the past nations but examples which have been placed in one's very own life. For example, in the Holy Quran Allah, the Exalted, advises that sometimes a person loves a thing even though it will cause them trouble if they obtained it. Similarly, they might hate a thing while there is much hidden good in it for them. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

There are many examples of this truth in history such as the Pact of Hudaiba. Some Muslims believed this pact, which was made with the non-Muslims of Mecca, would completely favour the latter group. Yet, history clearly shows that it favoured Islam and the Muslims. This event is discussed in the Hadiths found in Sahih Bukhari, numbers 2731 and 2732.

If one reflects on their own life they will find many examples when they believed something was good when it was actually bad for them and vice versa. These examples prove the authenticity of this verse and help one's faith strengthen.

Another example is found in chapter 79 An Naziat, verse 46:

“It will be, on the Day they see it (Judgement Day) as though they had not remained [in the world] except for an afternoon or a morning thereof.”

If one turns the pages of history they will clearly observe how great empires came and went. But when they left they passed away in such a way as if they were only on Earth for a moment. All but a few of their signs have faded away as if they were never present on Earth in the first place. Similarly, when one reflects on their own life they will realise that no matter how old they are and no matter how slow certain days might have felt overall their life so far has passed in a flash. Understanding the truthfulness of this verse strengthens one's certainty of faith and this inspires them to prepare for the hereafter before their time runs out.

The Holy Quran and the Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, are full of such examples. Therefore, one should strive to learn and act on these divine teachings so that they adopt certainty of faith. The one who achieves this will not be shaken by any difficulty they face and will remain steadfast on the path which leads to the gates of Paradise. Chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 53:

“We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth...”

“Sovereign of the Day of Recompense.”

This verse destroys the incorrect mentality that worshipping other than Allah, the Exalted, or obeying others in the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted, will truly benefit them. One is only worshipped or obeyed in order to derive benefit or protect from harm. No one will be in more need of benefit and protection from harm than on the Day of Judgement. But as all sovereignty belongs to Allah, the Exalted, on the Day of Judgement no one will achieve benefit or be protected from harm unless Allah, the Exalted, grants it either directly or indirectly by granting intercession to someone such as the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. His intercession has been discussed in many Hadiths such as the one found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4308.

Understanding this encourages one to sincerely obey and worship Allah, the Exalted, alone and refrain from His prohibitions and only obey those who encourage the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, such as the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 80:

“He who obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah...”

“Sovereign of the Day of Recompense.”

As Allah, the Exalted, alone will control the affairs of Judgement Day one will therefore, only succeed if they practically prepare for it in a way ordained by Him. This involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Him.

In reality, in most cases nothing in this material world in itself is good or bad, such as wealth. What makes a thing good or bad is the way it is used. It is important to understand that the very purpose of everything which was created by Allah, the Exalted, was for it to be used correctly according to the teachings of Islam. When something is not used correctly it in reality becomes useless. For example, wealth is useful in both worlds when it is used correctly such as being spent on the necessities of a person and their dependents. But it can become useless and even a curse for its bearer if it is not used correctly, such as being hoarded or spent on sinful things. Simply hoarding wealth causes wealth to lose value. How can paper and metal coins one tucks away be useful? In this respect, there is no difference between a blank piece of paper and a note of money. It is only useful when it is used correctly.

So if a Muslim desires all their worldly possessions to become a blessing for them in both worlds all they have to do is use them correctly according to the teachings found in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. But if they use them incorrectly then the same blessing will become a burden and curse for them in both worlds. It is as simple as that.

“Sovereign of the Day of Recompense.”

As Allah, the Exalted, alone will control the affairs of Judgement Day one will therefore, only succeed if they practically prepare for it in a way ordained by Him. This involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Him. One can adopt the correct attitude when they understand the purpose of these blessings.

Every worldly blessing a Muslim possesses is only a means which should aid them in reaching the hereafter safely. It is not an end in itself. For example, wealth is a means one should use in order to obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, fulfilling their necessities and the necessities of their dependents. It is not an end or an ultimate goal in itself.

This not only aids a Muslim in maintaining their focus on the hereafter but it also aids them whenever they lose worldly blessings. When a Muslim treats each worldly blessing, such as a child, as a means to please Allah, the Exalted, and reach the hereafter safely then losing it will not have such a detrimental impact on them. They may become sad, which is an acceptable emotion, but they will not become grieved which leads to impatience and other mental problems, such as depression. This is because they firmly believe the worldly blessing they possessed was only a means so losing it does not cause a loss in the ultimate goal namely, Paradise, the loss of which is disastrous. Therefore, still possessing and concentrating on the ultimate goal will prevent them from becoming grieved.

In addition, they will understand that just like the thing they lost was only a means they firmly believe they will be provided with another means to reach and fulfil their ultimate goal by Allah, the Exalted. This will also prevent them from grieving. Whereas, the one who believes their worldly blessing is the end instead of a means will experience severe grief when losing it as their whole purpose and objective has been lost. This grief will lead to depression and other mental issues.

To conclude, Muslims should treat each blessing they possess as a means to reach the hereafter safely not as an end in itself. This is how one can possess things without being possessed by them. This is how they can keep worldly things in their hands and not in their hearts.

“Sovereign of the Day of Recompense.”

The fact that the Day of Judgement is mentioned in this chapter and the material world is not, indicates the importance of prioritizing preparing for the Day of Judgement over accumulating and enjoying the pleasures of the material world. This verse therefore reminds muslims of their purpose on Earth namely, to prepare for their meeting with Allah, the Exalted, the Sovereign, on the Day of Judgement. This involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. The one who responds to Allah, the Exalted, in this manner will therefore return to the Sovereign on the Day of Judgement while He is pleased with them.

The trumpet blast will lead to the death of the creation. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 7381. The important thing to learn is that this is a call which no one can or will reject responding to. It will lead to the resurrection and final judgment. Therefore, muslims should respond to the call of Allah, the Exalted, through the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, through sincere obedience by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 8 An Anfal, verse 24:

“O you who have believed, respond to Allah and to the Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life...”

Whoever responds to this call in this world will find the final call easy to endure and respond to. Whereas, the one who lives heedless to the call of Allah, the Exalted, in this world will not find peace in it and they will be forced to answer the call of the trumpet which will be a great burden for them to endure and respond to. A person can only ignore the call of Allah, the Exalted, for so long as the final call will occur, sooner or later, and no one will be able to avoid or ignore it. If this is inevitable it makes sense that one respond to it now, today, instead of living in heedlessness. If one hears the trumpet blast while heedless no action or regret will benefit them and what comes after for this person will be even more terrifying.

“Sovereign of the Day of Recompense.”

This verse also reminds one not to be fooled by the fact that they do not recognize the consequences of their actions in this world. Even if they manage to escape the consequences of their actions in this world they will certainly not escape them in the next. This verse therefore encourages one to constantly assess their actions in preparation for their accountability on the Day of Judgement.

Merely performing worship will not raise someone to the highest levels of faith. Muslims can only reach this level by purifying their inner beings. This is achieved by removing the negative characteristics they possess and replacing them with good characteristics. But this is only achieved through serious reflection and self-assessment.

When one recognises their own reality this will encourage them to live like a servant and fulfil the purpose of their creation. This will lead them to recognising Allah, the Exalted, as their Lord, which is the ultimate goal. Chapter 51 Adh Dhariyat, verse 56:

“And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me.”

This self-assessment is vital for triggering one to take the steps needed to purify their character and soul of evil characteristics which is the path of success in both worlds. Some are so lost in the material world they never perform this important deed and therefore decades pass by without them changing one single bit. Muslims must use the time of strength they have been given in order to self-assess and change for the better before they reach the final stage of weakness. At this point they will desire to change but they will not possess the intelligence or strength to do so. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6412.

One only needs to turn the pages of history to observe those who were given great power and wealth but eventually a time came when their moment of strength ran out and because of their persistent disobedience they were destroyed.

Those who used their moments of strength in the correct way by pleasing Allah, the Exalted, will be blessed by Him in such a way that even after departing from this world they will still be honoured by society.

As the majority of muslims do not understand the Arabic language an abundant amount of worship will not trigger this inner purification. One can only reach it by reflecting on this material world, death, the grave and Hell. Because of this a single moment of reflection can become better than sixty years of voluntary worship.

Those who live without wisdom or reflection habitually make mistakes which only lead to constant stress. It is these people who lead an aimless life with no higher aspirations and move through each day without understanding their true purpose.

The pious always take time out of their day to reflect on their aims, what actions they have performed and whether they have pleased Allah, the exalted, or not. This mentality will ensure that one avoids sins, performs righteous deeds and if they happen to commit sins to sincerely repent. This mentality fits the advice given by the second rightly guided Caliph of Islam, Omar Bin Khataab, may Allah be pleased with him, which is recorded in Imam Asfahani's, Hilyat Al Awliya, number 98. He advised that one should judge their own actions before someone else judges them namely, Allah, the exalted, on the Day of Judgement.

This self-assessment is the key which inspires one to sincerely repent and change for the better. This is the best stage compared to the stage where one only realises their mistakes when another points it out to them. But even this stage requires one to possess good friends and relatives who are wise and sincerely concerned over their eternal welfare instead of only being concerned with the material world. A truly blessed muslim is the one who possesses these types of relatives and friends who aid them to adopt piety.

Reflecting at the start of one's day also ensures a person prioritises their daily tasks and saves time by avoiding those tasks which should be delayed.

The following verse describes the state of successful muslims. They reflect on and are deeply affected by the teachings of Islam and strive to implement them in their lives. If one is affected in this way they should be grateful to Allah, the Exalted, and show no signs of pride. But if one is not affected in this way they must repent and change before it is too late. Chapter 5 Al Ma'idah, verse 83:

“And when they hear what has been revealed to the Messenger, you see their eyes overflowing with tears because of what they have recognized of the truth...”

A lack of self-reflection has caused muslims to become lost in the material world even though Islamic knowledge is more readily available than it ever was. Voluntary worship will only take one so far but to reach the height of faith they must reflect and assess their character. This will inspire them to abandon their evil traits and replace them with good ones. The vital ingredient needed to stimulate this self-assessment and reflection is Islamic knowledge which must be obtained from a reliable source. This is one of the reasons the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, declared in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224, that obtaining this type of knowledge is obligatory on all muslims.

“Sovereign of the Day of Recompense.”

Allah, the Exalted, has appointed muslims as His representatives on Earth. It is obvious that the ambassador of a worldly king will face a penalty if they fail to represent the king correctly. Similarly, those who fail to represent Allah, the Exalted, correctly will also face the consequences of their failure.

Muslims must remember the very important position they have been appointed to by Allah, the Exalted, namely, the ambassadors of Islam. It is extremely important for muslims to fulfil this duty according to their potential. The best way to achieve this is by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and being patient with His choices. Islam spread across the entire globe because the righteous predecessors took this duty very seriously. When they gained and acted on beneficial knowledge the outside world recognised the truthfulness of Islam through their behaviour. This caused countless people to enter the fold of Islam. Unfortunately, many muslims today believe that showing others about Islam is merely in one's appearance, such as growing a beard or wearing a scarf. This is only an aspect of representing Islam. The greatest part is by adopting the characteristics of Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, discussed in the Holy Quran and his traditions. Only with this attitude will the outside world observe the true nature of Islam. A muslim should always remember that adopting an Islamic appearance while possessing characteristics which oppose the teachings of Islam only causes the outside world to disrespect Islam. They will be held accountable for this disrespect as they are the cause of it. A muslim should therefore behave as a true ambassador of Islam by adopting the inward teachings of Islam as well as the outer appearance of Islam.

In addition, this important position should remind muslims that they will be held accountable and questioned whether they fulfilled this role or not on Judgment Day. The same way a king would become angry at their diplomat and representative if they failed to fulfil their duty so will Allah, the Exalted, become angry with the muslim who fails to fulfill their duty as an ambassador of Islam.

“Sovereign of the Day of Recompense.”

In these few words Allah, the Exalted, has given the vital ingredient required to achieve a peaceful society on Earth namely, the fear of the consequences of one's actions.

Unfortunately, there are some who claim that faith is not required in this world and others who are Muslims claim it is enough to profess Islam without supporting it with sincere obedience to Allah, the Exalted. But the increase in crimes within society proves the importance of faith and strengthening it through knowledge and action. This is because crimes and sins only occur as a person feels they will either face no consequences for their actions, such as prison, or they will somehow escape them for example, by fleeing the country. But the person who believes that no matter what action they perform, whether open or secret, big or small, and no matter what tricks they attempt a day will undoubtedly come where they will be held accountable for all their deeds will always think twice before committing a crime or a sin. If this belief is strengthened through gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge it will deter one from committing crimes and sins. If people acted in this way peace and justice would spread across society. The crime rate would decrease and the times would closely match the times of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and his rightly guided Caliphs, may Allah be pleased with them. This fact alone indicates the importance of faith and strengthening it through gaining and acting on knowledge within society. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 90:

“Indeed, Allah orders justice and good conduct and giving [help] to relatives and forbids immorality and bad conduct and oppression. He admonishes you that perhaps you will be reminded.”

“...the Day of Recompense.”

An important aspect of the Day of Recompense are the Scales which will be used to weigh a person's good and bad deeds. This great event has been discussed throughout the Holy Quran and the Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. For example, chapter 101 Al Qari'ah, verses 6-9:

“Then as for one whose scales are heavy [with good deeds]. He will be in a pleasant life. But as for one whose scales are light. His refuge will be an abyss.”

It is important for Muslims to regularly assess their own deeds. As no one except Allah, the Exalted, is better aware of them than themselves. When one honestly judges their deeds it will inspire them to sincerely repent from their sins and encourage them towards righteous deeds. But the one who fails to regularly assess their deeds will lead a life of heedlessness whereby they commit sins without sincerely repenting. This person will find the weighing of their deeds on the Day of Recompense extremely difficult. In fact, it may well cause them to be hurled into Hell.

A clever business owner will always regularly assess their accounts. This will ensure their business heads in the right direction and ensures they complete all the necessary accounts, such as a tax return correctly. But the foolish

business owner will not regularly take accounts of their business. This will lead to a loss in profits and a failure in correctly preparing for their accounts. Those who fail to file their accounts correctly with the government face penalties which only make their lives more difficult. But the key thing to note is that the penalty of failing to correctly assess and prepare one's deeds for the Scales of Judgment Day does not involve a monetary fine. Its penalty is more severe and truly unbearable. Chapter 99 Az Zalzalah, verses 7-8:

“So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it. And whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it.”

“...the Day of Recompense.”

The one who understands the seriousness of their recompense on the Day of Judgement will choose a simple life in order to make their accountability easier.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 103, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that whoever has their deeds scrutinized by Allah, the Exalted, on Judgment Day will be punished.

It is important for muslims to understand that even though enjoying the lawful pleasures of this material world are not prohibited they often lead to the unlawful. For example, vain speech is usually the first step before sinful speech. In addition, the more one indulges in unnecessary lawful things the longer their accountability will be on Judgment Day. One should bear in mind that Judgment Day will be a difficult day. For example, the Sun will be brought within two miles of the creation. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2421. Even though, a muslim may be forgiven and saved by Allah, the Exalted, but none the less, the longer their accountability the greater stress they will endure. Seeing as Judgment Day will be fifty thousand years long, according to the Holy Quran, it does not make sense to enjoy a few decades of lawful pleasures if it means one will face a difficult accountability on a day which will last so long. Chapter 70 Al Ma'arij, verse 4:

“...during a Day the extent of which is fifty thousand years.”

It is therefore best to lead a simple life in order to minimize one's accountability on the Day of Judgment. It is one of the reasons why the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4118, that simplicity is a part of faith.

“...the Day of Recompense.”

Logically speaking, the Day of Judgement is something which must occur. If one observes the universe they will notice many examples of balance. For example, the Earth is at a perfect and balanced distance from the Sun. If the Earth was slightly closer or further away from the Sun it would not be inhabitable. Similarly, the water cycle, which involves the evaporation of water from the ocean into the atmosphere which is then condensed in order to produce rain, is perfectly balanced so that the creation can continue living on Earth. The ground was created in a balanced way so that the weak branches and shoots of seeds can penetrate through it in order to provide crops for the creation yet the same ground is tough enough to withstand heavy buildings being built on top of it. There are many such examples that not only clearly indicate a Creator but also balance. But there is one major thing in this world which is clearly unbalanced namely, the actions of mankind. One often observes oppressive and tyrannical people who escape punishment in this world. Conversely, there are countless people who are oppressed by others and face other difficulties yet do not receive their full reward for their patience. Many Muslims who sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, often face many difficulties in this world and only receive a small share in reward whereas those who openly disobey Allah, the Exalted, enjoy the luxuries of this world and only face some problems. Just like Allah, the Exalted, has set up a balance in all His creations the reward and punishment of actions must also be balanced. But this obviously does not occur in this world so therefore it must occur in another time namely, the Day of Recompense i.e. the Day of Judgment.

Allah, the Exalted, could reward and punish fully in this world. But one of the wisdoms behind not fully punishing in this world is indicated by the previous

verse meaning, instead of immediately fully punishing someone Allah, the Exalted, gives opportunity after opportunity to them so that they sincerely repent and correct their behaviour. Chapter 1 Al Fatihah, verse 3:

"the Most Compassionate, Most Merciful."

He does not fully reward Muslims in this world as this world is not Paradise. In addition, believing in the unseen namely, the full reward waiting for a Muslim in the next world, is an important aspect of faith. In fact belief in the unseen is what makes faith special. Believing in something which can be perceived through the five senses, such as receiving full reward in this world, would not be so special.

Having fear of full punishment and hope in receiving full reward in the hereafter will encourage one to abstain from sins and perform righteous deeds.

In order for the Day of Recompense to commence this material world must end. This is because punishment and reward can only be given once everyone's actions terminate. Therefore, the Day of Recompense cannot take place until the actions of people have been concluded. This indicates that the material world must end, sooner or later.

When one reflects on this discussion it will strengthen their faith in the Day of Judgement thereby encouraging them to prepare for it by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

Chapter 1 - Al Fatihah, Verse 5

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ ﴿٥﴾

"It is You we worship and You we ask for help."

“It is You we worship...”

True worship involves sincerity. In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim number 196, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that Islam is sincerity towards Allah, the Exalted.

Sincerity towards Allah, the Exalted, includes fulfilling all the duties given by Him in the form of commands and prohibitions, solely for His pleasure. As confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1, all will be judged by their intention. So if one is not sincere towards Allah, the Exalted, when performing good deeds they will gain no reward in this world or in the next. In fact, according to a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3154, those who performed insincere deeds will be told on Judgement Day to seek their reward from those who they acted for, which will not be possible. Chapter 98 Al Bayyinah, verse 5.

"And they were not commanded except to worship Allah, [being] sincere to Him in religion....."

If one is lax in fulfilling their duties towards Allah, the Exalted, it proves a lack of sincerity. Therefore, they should sincerely repent and struggle to fulfil them all. It is important to bear in mind Allah, the Exalted, never burdens one with duties they cannot perform or handle. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 286.

"Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity...."

Being sincere towards Allah, the Exalted, means that one should always choose His pleasure over the pleasure of themselves and others. A Muslim should always give priority to those actions which are for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, over all else. One should love others and dislike their sins for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, and not for the sake of their own desires. When they help others or refuse to take part in sins it should be for the sake of Allah, the Exalted. The one who adopts this mentality has perfected their faith. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4681.

“It is You we worship...”

Worship represents the highest limit of magnification and is only appropriate to the one who has bestowed the greatest of favours. The greatest favour is to bestow life by which one can derive benefit from other favours. The other great favour is to bestow one with things which can benefit them. Both these have been granted by none other than Allah, the Exalted. The first stage of creating life is indicated in the Holy Quran for example, chapter 19 Maryam, verse 9:

“...for I created you before, while you were nothing.”

The second favour is granting things which one can benefit from. An example of this is mentioned in chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 29:

“It is He who created for you all of that which is on the earth...”

As these great favours and all others are granted by none other than Allah, the Exalted, therefore He alone is worthy of worship and sincere obedience, which involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

“It is You we worship...”

It is important for Muslims to understand a key concept in Islam. Namely, there is nothing wrong with desiring lawful worldly things from Allah, the Exalted, but it is best to avoid worshipping and obeying Allah, the Exalted, in order to obtain them. This is because these types of Muslims often only worship Allah, the Exalted, and inhabit the Mosques when they desire worldly things. But if they do not receive them they become impatient and fed up which causes them to stop obeying Allah, the Exalted. Or if they obtain them then the joy of them often makes them turn away from the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, as they believe they achieved what they desired therefore there is no need to obey Allah, the Exalted, anymore. These Muslims worship Allah, the Exalted, meaning, they obey Allah, the Exalted, only when it suits their desires. And because of this attitude they are in danger of becoming misguided. Chapter 22 Al Hajj, verse 11:

“And of the people is he who worships Allah on an edge. If he is touched by good, he is reassured by it; but if he is struck by trial, he turns on his face [to unbelief]. He has lost [this] world and the Hereafter. That is what is the manifest loss.”

These Muslims may claim that they are worshipping Allah, the Exalted, but in reality, they are only worshipping their own desires and the gifts and blessings they receive.

It is praiseworthy to worship Allah, the Exalted, in order to obtain religious blessings, such as Paradise, as this has been recommended by Islamic teachings. But it is far superior to worship Allah, the Exalted, as He is the only One worthy of it and because the creation are His servants.

If a Muslim must desire gifts and blessings then it is best to aim for religious blessings as aiming for worldly blessings can shift a person's intention so that they end up worshipping the gift instead of the Giver.

“It is You we worship...”

One of the wisdoms behind this verse using the word you instead of the name of Allah, the Exalted, is to remind Muslims to strive to reach excellence of faith whereby they worship Allah, the Exalted, as if they are observing Him and therefore, conversing with Him directly.

In a long Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 99, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, explained the meaning of Ihsan, which can be translated to mean excellence. This excellence refers to one's conduct and behavior towards Allah, the Exalted, and the creation. Acting with excellence has been mentioned throughout the Holy Quran, such as chapter 10 Yunus, verse 26:

“For them who have done excellent is the best [reward] - and extra...”

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has explained this verse in Hadiths found in Sahih Muslim, numbers 449 and 450. The word extra in this verse refers to when the inhabitants of Paradise will be blessed with the divine vision of Allah, the Exalted. This reward befits the Muslim who acts with excellence. As excellence means to lead one's life as if they can witness Allah, the Exalted, observing their outer and inner being at all times. A person who can observe a powerful authority watching them will never misbehave out of awe of them. In fact, the Holy Prophet

Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, once advised someone to always behave as if they were constantly being observed by a righteous man they respected. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Imam Tabarani's, Al Mu'jam Al Kabir, number 5539.

Whoever acts in this manner will very rarely commit sins and always hasten towards good deeds. This attitude creates the fear of Allah, the Exalted, and acts as a shield from the fire of trials in this world and the fire of Hell in the hereafter. This vigilance will ensure one not only fulfills all their duties towards Allah, the Exalted, but it also encourages them to fulfill their responsibilities towards the creation. The peak of which is to sincerely treat others with kindness. This person will fulfill the Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 251, which advises that a person cannot be a true believer until they love for others what they love for themselves.

This level of excellence ensures one acts with the right intention, which is the foundation of faith according to the Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1. Success is guaranteed for the one who performs good deeds and demonstrates good behavior with the right intention namely, to please Allah, the Exalted. The more excellent a person acts the stronger their faith becomes until they become a Muslim who is far from heedlessness and is always struggling to beautify their hereafter and worldly life according to the teachings of Islam.

It is feared that the opposite of this reward will be given to those who turned away from Allah, the Exalted. As they lived without fearing the all-

encompassing gaze of Allah, the Exalted, they will be veiled from seeing Him in the hereafter. Chapter 83 Al Mutaffifin, verse 15:

“No! Indeed, from their Lord, that Day, they will be partitioned.”

Those who fail to reach the level of acting as if they witness Allah, the Exalted, must act on the second part of the advice given in the main Hadith quoted at the beginning. This person should sincerely believe that Allah, the Exalted, is constantly observing them. Even though this state is lower in rank than the one who acts as if they observe Allah, the Exalted, none the less, it is a great way of adopting true fear of Allah, the Exalted. As mentioned earlier this attitude will prevent one from committing sins and encourage them towards good deeds. As advised by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in Imam Tabarani’s, Al Mu’jam Al Kabir, number 7935, the one who strives to adopt this mentality will be granted shade on the Day of Judgment by Allah, the Exalted.

The divine presence of Allah, the Exalted, is mentioned throughout the Holy Quran, such as Chapter 57 Al Hadid, verse 4:

“...He is with you wherever you are. And Allah, of what you do, is Seeing.”

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has advised to adopt the true awareness of the divine presence of Allah, the Exalted, in many Hadiths. For example, in one divine Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 7405, Allah, the Exalted, declares that He is with whoever remembers Him. This is the reason why it has been reported in Hilyat Al Awliya, volume 1, pages 84 and 85, about the Commander of the Faithful, Ali Bin Abu Talib, may Allah be pleased with him, that he shied away from the glitter and pomp of the material world and only found solace in the lonely night. Meaning, he sought the companionship of Allah, the Exalted, rather than the companionship of people.

Adopting the awareness of the divine presence of Allah, the Exalted, not only prevents sins and encourages good deeds but it also prevents loneliness and depression. A person is very rarely affected by mental health issues when they are constantly surrounded by a person who loves them and aids them. No one loves the creation more than Allah, the Exalted, and there is no doubt that He is the source of all aid. Therefore, acting with excellence benefits one's faith, actions, emotional state and the wider society.

A Muslim must avoid becoming like those who treat Allah, the Exalted, as the most insignificant of those who observe them. This is a serious spiritual illness which leads to all types of sins and evil behavior towards Allah, the Exalted, and the creation.

“...and You we ask for help.”

It is important to note that the Arabic word used for help in this verse refers to the type of seeking aid when one first applies their full effort to a situation. For example, when one asks another for assistance in changing their car's tyre after they put their full effort into trying to change it themselves. Therefore, this verse indicates that one must sincerely strive to obey Allah, the Exalted, according to their strength and then supplicate and hope for His aid. Chapter 47 Muhammad, verse 7:

“O you who have believed, if you support Allah, He will support you and plant firmly your feet.”

This verse means that if one aids Islam then Allah, the Exalted, will help them in both worlds. It is strange how countless people desire the help of Allah, the Exalted, yet do not fulfil the first part of this verse through the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience. The excuse most people give is that they do not have time to perform righteous deeds. They desire the help of Allah, the Exalted, yet will not make time to do the things which please Him. Does this make sense? Those who do not fulfil the obligatory duties and then expect the aid of Allah, the Exalted, in their moment of need are quite foolish. And those who do fulfil the obligatory duties yet refuse to go beyond them will find that the aid they receive is limited. How one behaves is how they are treated. The more time and energy dedicated to Allah, the Exalted, the more support they will receive. It really is that simple.

A Muslim needs to understand that the majority of the obligatory duties, such as the five daily prayers, only takes a small amount of time in one's day. A Muslim cannot expect to barely dedicate an hour a day to offering the obligatory prayers and then neglect Allah, the Exalted, for the rest of the day and still expect His continuous support through all difficulties. A person would dislike a friend who treated them in such a manner. How then can one treat Allah, the Exalted, the Lord of the worlds, like this then?

Some only dedicate extra time to pleasing Allah, the Exalted, when they encounter a worldly problem then demand Him to fix it as if they done Allah, the Exalted, a favour by performing voluntary good deeds. This foolish mentality clearly contradicts servanthood to Allah, the Exalted. It is amazing how this type of person finds time to do all their other leisurely activities, such as spending time with family and friends, watching TV and attending social functions yet finds no time to dedicate to pleasing Allah, the Exalted. They cannot seem to find time to recite and adopt the teachings of the Holy Quran. They do not seem to find time to study and act on the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. These people somehow find wealth to spend on their unnecessary luxuries yet seem to find no wealth to donate in voluntary charity.

It is important to understand that a Muslim will be treated according to how they behave. Meaning, if a Muslim dedicates extra time to please Allah, the Exalted, then they will find the support they need to journey through all difficulties safely. But if they fail to fulfil the obligatory duties or only fulfil them without dedicating any other time to pleasing Allah, the Exalted, then they

will find a similar response from Allah, the Exalted. Put simply, the more one gives the more they shall receive. If one does not give much they should not expect much in return.

“...and You we ask for help.”

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, indicated the infinite and absolute power and authority of Allah, the Exalted, in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2516. This Hadith advises that the entire creation cannot benefit a person if Allah, the Exalted, did not desire them to do so. Similarly, the entire creation together could not harm someone if Allah, the Exalted, did not desire them to. This means only what Allah, the Exalted, decides happens within the universe. It is important to note, that this advice does not indicate one should abandon using means, such as medicine, but it means that one can use the means as they have been created by none other than Allah, the Exalted, but they must understand that Allah, the Exalted, is the only One who decides the outcome of all things. For example, they are many sick people who take medicine and recover from their illness. But they are others who take medicine and do not recover. This indicates that another factor decides the end result namely, the will of Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 9 At Tawbah, verse 51:

“Say, “Never will we be struck except by what Allah has decreed for us...”

The one who understands this knows that anything that affected them could not have been avoided. And those things which missed them could never have been obtained.

It is important to note, that whatever the end result even if it is against a person's desire they should remain patient and truly believe Allah, the Exalted, has chosen the best for them even if they do not observe the wisdom behind the outcome. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

When one truly understands this truth they stop relying on the creation knowing they cannot innately harm or benefit them. Instead, they turn to Allah, the Exalted, seeking His support and protection through sincere obedience by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience. This leads a Muslim to trusting in Allah, the Exalted. It also encourages one to only fear Allah, the Exalted, as they know the creation cannot harm them without the will of Allah, the Exalted.

Recognising that all things which occur within one's life and the universe originate from Allah, the Exalted, is a part of understanding the Oneness of Allah, the Exalted. This is a topic which has no end and goes beyond only superficially believing that there is none worthy of worship except Allah, the Exalted. When this is fixed in one's heart then they only hope in Allah, the Exalted, knowing He is the only One who can help them. They will only submit and obey Allah, the Exalted, in all aspects of their life. In reality, a person only obeys another in order to receive protection from harm or gain some benefit. Only Allah, the Exalted, can grant this therefore only He deserves to be obeyed and worshipped. If anyone chooses the obedience of another over the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, this shows they believe

that this other can bring them some sort of benefit or protect them from harm. This is a sign of the weakness of their faith. The source of all things which occur is Allah, the Exalted, so Muslims should only obey Him. Chapter 35 Fatir, verse 2:

“Whatever Allah grants to people of mercy - none can withhold it; and whatever He withholds - none can release it thereafter...”

It is important to note, that obeying a person which encourages the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in reality is obeying Allah, the Exalted. For example, obeying the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 80:

“He who obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah...”

“...and You we ask for help.”

As this verse does not declare help for a specific task or thing it indicates that as people are ignorant and short-sighted it is best to keep their requests to Allah, the Exalted, general instead of requesting help for specific things. This is because the specific thing one desires may not be best for them in the long run as they are unaware of the negative aspects of it. Whereas, if one keeps their requests more general and restricted to the ones mentioned in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, then they will not only gain reward for behaving in this manner but they will also obtain good beyond their imagination and expectations in both worlds. This approach will also prevent them from becoming impatient and angry when their specific request is not fulfilled as Allah, the Exalted, grants what is best for each person according to His infinite knowledge and He does not grant people things according to their desires as this may lead to their destruction. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you...”

“...and You we ask for help.”

It is quite common for people to become dependent on others, such as their family. Even though, having hope in people is not a sin but as they are imperfect a muslim always runs the risk of being let down, in fact it is inevitable. They should instead strive to rely on Allah, the Exalted. This is only achieved through his obedience by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience as a muslim who is disobedient will not depend on Allah, the Exalted. They should then fulfil their duties in respect of the creation without expecting or hoping in anything in return from them. This will aid in eliminating their dependency on them. Allah, the Exalted, has made it crystal clear that whoever correctly depends on Him through His sincere obedience will be sufficed from all issues they might face in both worlds. Chapter 65 At Talaq, verse 3:

“...And whoever relies upon Allah - then He is sufficient for him...”

As Allah, the Exalted, is firm on His promises when one depends on Him they too will become steadfast and firm when facing difficulties. But if they rely on people who are prone to change with the passing of time they will become fickle and fail to remain steadfast.

The stronger one's helper and refuge the stronger they will become. If a muslim seeks refuge with Allah, the Exalted, who has power over all things,

through sincere obedience, they will become empowered to overcome all difficulties. But if they seek refuge and depend on people, who by their nature are weak, they too will become weak in the face of difficulties. This is like a person who seeks refuge in a strong fortified castle during a storm and another who seeks refuge in a straw hut. It does not take a genius to determine who is more likely to overcome the difficulty of the storm successfully.

“It is You we worship and You we ask for help.”

This verse reminds mankind to always act with sincerity towards Allah, the Exalted, both outwardly and inwardly. Outwardly in the form of physical prayer and inwardly by only relying on His infinite mercy while turning away from relying on anything else. This does not mean one should not use means, such as medicine, and instead rely only on direct divine help. Instead, a Muslim should use the means created and provided by Allah, the Exalted, rely on His help and then accept His decree under all circumstances believing He chooses the best for His servants. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

This is why the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised someone to tie up their camel, meaning use the means provided by Allah, the Exalted, and then trust that He will keep the camel safe. This is mentioned in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2517. In reality, using the means created and provided by Allah, the Exalted, while acknowledging they are from Him is an aspect of trusting in Him.

Acknowledging that Allah, the Exalted, is the only Entity worthy of worship is in fact an acknowledgment of a Muslim’s servanthood to Him. One should

therefore prove their declaration of servanthood by striving to obey their Master by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience.

“It is You we worship and You we ask for help.”

It is important to note that this verse has been arranged in a specific way. Meaning, the remembrance of Allah, the Exalted, has come before the remembrance of the worshipper (“It is YOU, WE worship...”). This is an indication that a Muslim should always fulfil the etiquette of true servanthood by placing the will and desire of Allah, the Exalted, before their will and desire. Meaning, they should not observe their servanthood and the worldly blessings they possess instead they should focus on the Lordship of Allah, the Exalted, and strive to fulfil His rights.

In addition, one should never become distracted by the Giver of help and blessings by the blessings themselves. This is why Allah, the Exalted, is mentioned first then His help in the form of blessings mentioned next. So a Muslim should not become lost in the blessings they receive as this is the first step to misusing them thereby failing to fulfil true gratitude and servanthood to Him. If one always focuses on the Giver of blessings and help, namely Allah, the Exalted, they will always use the blessings according to His command. This is true gratitude and leads to an increase in blessings. Chapter 14 Ibrahim, verse 7:

“And [remember] when your Lord proclaimed, 'If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favor]...”

The specific order of words in the verse also inspires one to adopt patience during difficulties, such as the loss of blessings. If one focuses on the lost blessings instead they will more easily become impatient. But the Muslim who fulfils the order sequence of this verse by focusing on Allah, the Exalted, and their obedience to Him will not be effected in such a way if they lose some worldly blessings. Instead they will remain patient through sincere obedience to Him.

Finally, the specific order of words clearly indicates the purpose of mankind namely, the sincere obedience and worship of Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 51 Adh Dhariyat, verse 56:

“And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me.”

A person may serve others such as an employer with the purpose of gaining worldly blessings such as wealth. But a Muslim’s purpose in respect to Allah, the Exalted, should be sincerely obeying and worshipping Him. Gaining help, such as worldly blessings, are a bonus which the Muslim receives from the infinite mercy of Allah, the Exalted, they should not be a goal in themselves. Understanding this encourages Muslims to realize and actualise the purpose of their creation which not only increases their sincere obedience to Allah, the Exalted, but also prevents worldly blessings from distracting them from this noble goal. This is the reason why the previous nations were reminded to remember the favours of Allah, the Exalted, as they were focused more on worldly blessings whereas, the Muslim nation were told to remember Allah, the Exalted, directly. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 122:

“O Children of Israel, remember My favor which I have bestowed upon you...”

And chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 152:

“So remember Me; I will remember you...”

“It is You we worship and You we ask for help.”

This verse uses the plural form when describing a person’s behaviour towards Allah, the Exalted, instead of the singular form even though a single person is reciting this verse. This eliminates the major sin of pride. It is important to note that an atom’s worth of it is enough to lead a person to Hell. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 265. When one recites the plural form they are reminded that they are only a single person worshipping Allah, the Exalted, amongst countless beings some of which do nothing except worship Him, such as the Angels.

Acknowledging that there is no help, power or strength except from Allah, the Exalted, also eliminates pride. How can one be proud of any act of worship or any righteous deed they perform when they acknowledge that the inspiration, strength, knowledge and opportunity needed to perform the deed comes only from Allah, the Exalted.

“It is You we worship and You we ask for help.”

This verse also aims to eliminate wishful thinking. This occurs when a Muslim fails to fulfil their duty to Allah, the Exalted, and the creation and still expects the help and mercy of Allah, the Exalted. No doubt, Allah, the Exalted, can provide help to anyone at any time but this verse shows the correct method of obtaining the help and mercy of Allah, the Exalted. A Muslim should first strive in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and then hope for the help of Allah, the Exalted.

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2459, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, described the difference between true hope in the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, and wishful thinking. True hope is when one controls their soul by avoiding the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted, and actively struggles for preparing for the hereafter. Whereas, the foolish wishful thinker follows their desires and then expects Allah, the Exalted, to forgive them and fulfill their wishes.

It is important for Muslims not to confuse these two attitudes so that they avoid living and dying as a wishful thinker as this person is highly unlikely to succeed in this world or the next. Wishful thinking is like a farmer who fails to prepare the land for planting, fails to plant seeds, fails to water the land and then expects to harvest a huge crop. This is plain foolishness and this farmer is highly unlikely to succeed. Whereas, true hope is like a farmer who prepares the land, plants seeds, waters the land and then hopes Allah, the

Exalted, will bless them with a huge harvest. The key difference is that the one who possesses true hope will actively strive to obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. And whenever they slip up they sincerely repent. Whereas, the wishful thinker will not actively strive in obeying Allah, the Exalted, and instead follow their desires and still expect Allah, the Exalted, to forgive them and fulfill their wishes.

Muslims must therefore learn the key difference so that they can abandon wishful thinking and instead adopt true hope in Allah, the Exalted, which always leads to nothing except good and success in both worlds. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 7405.

A specific type of wishful thinking which affected the past nations and even the muslim nation is when a person believes that they can ignore the commands and prohibitions of Allah, the Exalted, and somehow someone on the Day of Judgement will intercede for them and save them from Hell. Even though the intercession of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, is a fact and has been discussed in many Hadiths, such as the one found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4308, none the less even with his intercession some muslims whose punishment will be reduced by it will still enter Hell. Even a single moment in Hell is truly unbearable. So one should abandon wishful thinking and instead adopt true hope by practically striving in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted.

The Devil convinces those who do not believe in Judgement Day that even if it occurs they will make peace with Allah, the Exalted, on that day by claiming that they were not so bad as they avoided major crimes such as murder. They have convinced themselves that their pleas will be accepted and they will be sent to Paradise even though they disbelieved in Allah, the Exalted, during their lives on Earth. This is incredibly foolish as Allah, the Exalted, will not treat the person who believed in Him and tried to obey him like the one who disbelieved in Him. A single verse has erased this type of wishful thinking. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 85:

“And whoever desires other than Islām as religion - never will it be accepted from him, and he, in the Hereafter, will be among the losers.”

“It is You we worship and You we ask for help.”

When one follows this verse in the correct order then they will receive the help and mercy of Allah, the Exalted, in both worlds. In a divine Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6502, Allah, the Exalted, declares that a Muslim can only draw close to Him through fulfilling their obligatory duties. And they can achieve the love of Allah, the Exalted, through voluntary righteous deeds.

This description splits the servants of Allah, the Exalted, into two categories. The first group draws near to Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling their obligatory duties in respect to Allah, the Exalted, such as the obligatory prayer, and in respect to people, such as the obligatory charity. This can be summed up by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and being patient with destiny.

The second category of those who are brought near to Allah, the Exalted, are superior to the first group as they not only fulfil their obligatory duties but strive in voluntary righteous deeds. This clearly shows that this is the only path to the proximity of Allah, the Exalted. Whoever takes a path other than this will not achieve this vital goal. This completely rejects the concept of obtaining sainthood without striving in obedience to Allah, the Exalted. The person who claims this is simply a liar. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 4094, that when the spiritual heart is pure the rest of the body becomes pure. This leads to righteous deeds. So if a person does not perform righteous deeds, such as their obligatory duties, then their body is

impure which means their spiritual heart is impure as well. This person can never reach the proximity of Allah, the Exalted.

It is important to note, the greatest voluntary righteous deeds one can perform are those based on the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Anyone who chooses to perform voluntary righteous deeds not based on his traditions has been fooled by the Devil as no path will take one close to Allah, the Exalted, except the path and actions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 31:

“Say, [O Muhammad], “If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins....”

The pious Muslims who belong in the second higher group are also those who avoid unnecessary things of this material world. This attitude aids them in focusing their efforts on performing voluntary righteous deeds. It is this group who have perfected their faith by loving, hating, giving and withholding all for the sake of Allah, the Exalted. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4681.

The next thing mentioned in the main Hadith under discussion is that when one strives in fulfilling the obligatory duties and performing voluntary righteous deeds Allah, the Exalted, blesses their five senses so that they use

them in obedience to Him. This righteous servant will very rarely commit sins. This increase in guidance has been indicated in Chapter 29 Al Ankabut, verse 69:

“And those who strive for Us - We will surely guide them to Our ways...”

This Muslim reaches the level of excellence which has been discussed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 99. This is when a Muslim performs actions, such as the prayer, as if they observe Allah, the Exalted. The one who reaches this level will guard their mind and body from sins. This is the one who when they speak they speak for Allah, the Exalted, when they are silent they are silent for Allah, the Exalted. When they act they act for Him and when they are still they are for His sake. This is an aspect of monotheism and understanding the Oneness of Allah, the Exalted.

The next thing mentioned in the main Hadith under discussion is that this Muslim's supplication will be fulfilled and they will be granted the refuge and protection of Allah, the Exalted. This is a clear lesson for those who desire lawful worldly things. They should not seek to obtain them using any means except through the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted. No spiritual teacher or anyone else will be able to grant things to a person unless the person strives in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted and they are destined to obtain those things.

To conclude this Hadith makes it clear that the proximity of Allah, the Exalted, is only gained through sincere obedience to Him in the form of fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and being patient with destiny. This is the path of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and the only path of success in both worlds.

“It is You we worship and You we ask for help.”

One of the wisdoms behind this verse using the word you instead of the name of Allah, the Exalted, is to remind Muslims that He is always close to them. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 186:

“And when My servants ask you, [Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him], concerning Me - indeed I am near...”

In a long divine Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 7405, Allah, the Exalted, advises that He is with anyone who remembers Him.

With the rise of mental problems and disorders, such as depression, it is vital for Muslims to understand the importance of this declaration. There is a small chance of a person experiencing a mental issue when they are constantly surrounded and aided by someone that truly loves them. If this is true for a person it is undoubtedly more befitting for Allah, the Exalted, who has promised to be with the one who remembers Him. Acting on this declaration alone would eliminate all mental issues, such as depression. It is the reason why being secluded from others or being amongst others did not affect the mental state of the righteous predecessors as they were always in the company of Allah, the Exalted. It is obvious that when one obtains the company of Allah, the Exalted, they will overcome all obstacles and difficulties successfully until they reach His proximity in the hereafter.

In addition, out of His infinite mercy Allah, the Exalted, has not restricted this declaration in anyway. For example, He did not declare He was only with the righteous or with those who perform specific good deeds. He in fact encompassed every Muslim irrespective of the strength of their faith or how many sins they have committed. So a Muslim should never lose hope in the mercy of Allah, the Exalted. But it is important to note the condition mentioned in this Hadith namely, to remember Allah, the Exalted. This is not only remembering Him with one's tongue but more importantly it is to remember Him through one's actions. This is only achieved by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience. This is the true remembrance of Allah, the Exalted. The one who behaves in such a manner will be blessed with the company and support of Allah, the Exalted.

Simply put, the more one obeys Allah, the Exalted, the more they will receive His company. What one gives is what they shall receive.

“It is You we worship and You we ask for help.”

A person’s life is subject to three states: past, present and future. The second and third verses of chapter 1 Al Fatihah reminds people that in respect to their past and present they owe everything to Allah, the Exalted, alone. He created them from nothing and blessed them with countless blessings both in the past and in the present. In addition, He is the only One who can forgive their past sins and guide them in the present time. Chapter 1 Al Fatihah, verses 2-3:

“[All] praise is [due] to Allah...the Most Compassionate, Most Merciful.”

The fourth verse of chapter 1 Fatihah indicates that one’s future state is also completely dependent on Allah, the Exalted, as no one can help them except Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 1 Al Fatihah, verse 4:

“Sovereign of the Day of Recompense.”

These verses have made it clear that people are completely and solely dependent on Allah, the Exalted, in all their affairs and states. Therefore, the present verse concludes this understanding by declaring that none has the

right to be worshipped except Allah, the Exalted, and He alone can help one in every aspect of their life.

So if Muslims desire to obtain blessings in all their affairs and states then they must sincerely obey and worship Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

“It is You we worship and You we ask for help.”

The order of this verse also reminds muslims that the purpose of their creation is to sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted. Gaining support to overcome the difficulties of life is only a consequences of obeying Him.

The Holy Quran clearly declared the purpose of mankind in chapter 51 Adh Dhariyat, verse 56:

“And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me.”

Before one can worship Allah, the Exalted, they must first recognise Him as it is not possible to obey someone without knowledge. In addition, people must first learn how to worship Allah, the Exalted, before they can fulfil this task. Therefore, worship is followed by knowledge. This is why in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, declared seeking useful knowledge a duty on all muslims. Without knowledge one will never be able to worship Allah, the Exalted, correctly. Few good deeds performed with knowledge are far superior to many good deeds performed incorrectly because of ignorance.

As Allah, the Exalted, is the One who created mankind no one has the right to be served and worshipped except Him. If an employer easily dismisses their employee for abandoning the duty they have been hired for, how can it be correct to abandon serving and worshipping Allah, the Exalted, when He alone created and sustains the creation? All of mankind have been granted free will and the ability to obey and worship Allah, the Exalted. So each person must decide whether they desire to fulfil their purpose of creation thereby receiving eternal reward or reject it and face punishment in both worlds. The same way a device, such as a mobile phone, which does not fulfil its primary purpose is discarded people may well be discarded on the Day of Judgement into Hell for failing to fulfil their primary purpose of existence.

It is important to note, that worship refers to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted. This involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This obedience must encompass every part of one's life and body, such as their tongue. It includes a person's duty towards Allah, the Exalted, such as offering the prayer and treating the creation with kindness.

Those who obey Allah, the Exalted, will be given the best rewards while those who disobey Him will receive the worst punishment in this world and the next. In a divine Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2466, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, narrates from Allah, the Exalted, who declares that if one busies themselves in worshipping Him, through sincere obedience, He will fill their heart with richness and remove their poverty. But if they turn away from His worship and obedience Allah, the Exalted, will fill their life with problems and not remove their poverty.

It is important to note, that Allah, the Exalted, does not need the creation in anyway whatsoever. As clearly mentioned in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6572, people only benefit themselves with their good deeds as it raises their ranks. And they only harm themselves with their sins as they will be held accountable for them. The infinite status of Allah, the Exalted, does not change at all irrespective of if the entire creation worshipped Him or not. Allah, the Exalted, is the sole Creator and sole Provider. It is people who are completely and utterly in need of Him. Whoever understands this and sincerely obeys Allah, the Exalted, will fulfil the purpose of their creation and will therefore be given an eternal reward.

“It is You we worship and You we ask for help.”

This verse also indicates that the one who fails to sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, will never obtain the help they need to overcome the difficulties of life so that they obtain peace of mind and body.

First of all, it is important to understand, that the major thing which separates a human from an animal is the fact that people live by a higher moral code. If people abandoned this and simply acted on their desires then they would be no difference between them and animals. In fact, people would be worse as they possess the higher level of thinking yet, still choose to live like animals.

Secondly, whether people want to admit it or not in reality, every person is a servant of something or someone. Some are servants of others, such as Hollywood executives and do whatever they command them to do even if it challenges modesty and shame. Others are servants of their relatives and friends and do whatever it takes to please them. Others are the worse by being servants of their own desires as this is the attitude of animals who generally act to please themselves. The best and highest form of servanthood is being a servant of Allah, the Exalted. This is quite evident if one turns the pages of history which clearly shows that those who were the servants of Allah, the Exalted, such as the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, were granted the highest honour and respect in this world and will be granted this in the next. Centuries and millennia have passed yet their names are remembered as the pillars and beacons of history. Whereas those who became servants of others especially, their own desires were eventually

disgraced in this world even if they achieved some worldly status and they became mere footnotes in history. The media barely remembers those who pass away for more than a few days before moving onto the next person to report on. During their lives these people eventually become sad, lonely, depressed and even suicidal as selling their souls and decency to their worldly masters did not grant them the contentment they were looking for. One does not need to be a scholar to understand this obvious truth. So if people must be servants they should be the servants of Allah, the Exalted, as lasting honour, greatness and true success lies only in this.

“It is You we worship and You we ask for help.”

This verse also indicates that the one who fails to sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, will never obtain the help they need to overcome the difficulties of life so that they obtain peace of mind and body.

It is important for muslims to strive in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience as Allah, the Exalted, has guaranteed a good life in both worlds for the one who behaves in this manner. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

“Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do.”

This good life will protect a muslim from severe grief, depression and other extreme moods and mental disorders which can destroy a person's life. Even though, muslims will face difficulties which will sadden them but if they obey Allah, the Exalted, this sadness will never become extreme and effect their entire life on a long term basis. This is because a muslim who strives in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, has an excellent reason to continue moving forward through their difficulty without giving up and turning to depression and even suicide. For example, they look forward to the countless reward which will be granted to the patient. Chapter 39 Az Zumar, verse 10:

“...Indeed, the patient will be given their reward without account [i.e., limit].”

Whereas, the muslim who does not strive in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, and only claims the title of being a muslim with their tongue will not be granted this attitude and a good life. And whenever they face difficulties it will drive them to extreme moods and mental disorders which will destroy their entire life.

“It is You we worship and You we ask for help.”

This verse also indicates that the one who fails to sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, will never obtain the help they need to overcome the difficulties of life so that they obtain peace of mind and body.

Those who disbelieve or avoid acting on their faith in Islam do so out of love for the material world and the things within it. They believe that believing or acting on their faith will prevent them from enjoying worldly blessings meaning, for them faith is something that restricts their desires and therefore they turn away from it either literally or practically. Instead they turn towards the material world and strive to fulfill their desires without restrictions believing that true peace lies in this. They look down at those who accept and actualize their faith by controlling their actions and using their worldly blessings in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. They believe that these pious Muslims are lowly slaves who been restricted from enjoying themselves whereas they, the disbelievers and the misguided, are free. But in actual fact this could not be further from the truth as the real slaves are those who fail to accept and submit to Allah, the Exalted, and the superior ones are those who have done this as they become free of slavery to the world. This can be understood by an example. A good parent will restrict the type of food their child eats meaning, they will only let them eat junk and unhealthy food once in a while and instead force them to follow a healthy diet. This child therefore believes that their parent has placed undesirable restrictions on them and that they have become slaves to their parent and their healthy diet. On the other hand another child has been given permission from their parent to eat whatever they desire, whenever they desire and how much they desire. So this child believes that they are completely free of all restrictions. When these children come together the child who has been

given complete freedom criticizes and looks down on the child who has been restricted by their parent. The latter child will also feel sorry for themselves when they observe the other child has been given free reign to behave however they wish. Outwardly it appears the child who has been granted freedom has obtained happiness whereas the other child is too tied up with restrictions to enjoy life. But years down the line the truth will become manifest. The child who had no restrictions grows up to become extremely unhealthy e.g. obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, etc. As a result of this they even become mentally unhealthy as they lose confidence in their body and the way they look. Because of this they become a slave of medications, diseases, mental and social problems. All these things restrict their happiness and life. Whereas, the child who was restricted by their parent grows up healthy in mind and body. As a result they become confident in their body and ability, which aids them to succeed in life. They become free of any slavery to medications, diseases, mental and social problems as they grew up with the correct balance and guidance. So the child who had no restrictions grew up becoming a slave to many things, whereas the child who had restrictions grew up independent of all restrictions.

To conclude, the real slave is the one who becomes a slave to all other things except Allah, the Exalted, such as social media, society, fashion and culture, and this leads to mental, physical and social problems, whereas the real free person is the one who submits only to Allah, the Exalted, thereby achieving peace of mind and body.

“It is You we worship and You we ask for help.”

The plural form is used in this supplication in order to indicate that the correct worship of Allah, the Exalted, and therefore obtaining His aid, will not be possible without following in the footsteps of the guides of mankind namely, the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them. Meaning, religion is not about charting one's own course, rather it is to adhere to the path of those who have correctly worshipped Allah, the Exalted, and been granted His support.

This verse therefore indicates the importance of sincerely obeying and following the two sources of guidance namely, the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim number 196, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that Islam is sincerity towards the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

Sincerity towards the Holy Quran includes having deep respect and love for the words of Allah, the Exalted. This sincerity is proven when one fulfils the three aspects of the Holy Quran. The first is to recite it correctly and regularly. The second is to understand its teachings through a reliable source and teacher. The final aspect is to act on the teachings of the Holy Quran with the aim of pleasing Allah, the Exalted. The sincere muslim gives priority to

acting on its teachings over acting on their desires which contradict the Holy Quran. Modelling one's character on the Holy Quran is the sign of true sincerity towards the book of Allah, the Exalted. This is the tradition of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, which is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 1342.

The next thing mentioned in the main Hadith under discussion is sincerity towards the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This includes striving to acquire knowledge in order to act on his traditions. These traditions include the ones related to Allah, the Exalted, in the form of worship, and his blessed noble character towards the creation. Chapter 68 Al Qalam, verse 4:

"And indeed, you are of a great moral character."

It includes to accept his commands and prohibitions at all times. This has been made a duty by Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 59 Al Hashr, verse 7:

"...And whatever the Messenger has given you - take; and what he has forbidden you - refrain from..."

Sincerity includes to give priority to his traditions over the actions of anyone else as all paths to Allah, the Exalted, are closed except the path of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 31:

"Say, [Prophet Muḥammad, peace and blessings be upon him], "If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins..."

One must love all those who supported him during his life and after his passing, whether they are from his Family or his Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all. Supporting those who walk on his path and teach his traditions is a duty on those who desire to be sincere to him. Sincerity also includes loving those who love him and disliking those who criticise him irrespective, of one's relationship with these people. This is all summarised in a single Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 16. It advises that a person cannot have true faith until they love Allah, the Exalted, and the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, more than the entire creation. This love must be shown through actions not just words.

“It is You we worship and You we ask for help.”

The plural form is used in this supplication in order to indicate that the correct worship of Allah, the Exalted, and therefore obtaining His aid will not be possible without following in the footsteps of the guides of mankind namely, the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them. Meaning, religion is not about charting one’s own course, rather it is to adhere to the path of those who have correctly worshipped Allah, the Exalted, and been granted His support.

This verse therefore indicates the importance of sincerely obeying and following the two sources of guidance namely, the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

In a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4606, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that any matter which is not based on Islam will be rejected.

If muslims desire lasting success in both worldly and religious matters they must strictly adhere to the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Even though, certain actions which are not directly taken from these two sources of guidance can still be considered a righteous deed it is important to prioritize these two sources of guidance over all else. Because the fact is that the more one acts on things which are not taken from these two sources

even if it is a righteous deed the less they will act on these two sources of guidance. An obvious example is how many muslims have adopted cultural practices into their lives which do not have a foundation in these two sources of guidance. Even if these cultural practices are not sins they have preoccupied muslims from learning and acting on these two sources of guidance as they feel satisfied with their behaviour. This leads to ignorance of the two sources of guidance which in turn will only lead to misguidance.

This is why a muslim must learn and act on these two sources of guidance which have been established by the leaders of guidance and only then act on other voluntary righteous deeds if they have the time and energy to do so. But if they choose ignorance and made up practices even if they are not sins over learning and acting on these two sources of guidance they will not achieve success.

“It is You we worship and You we ask for help.”

The plural form is used in this supplication in order to indicate that the correct worship of Allah, the Exalted, and therefore obtaining His aid will not be possible without following in the footsteps of the guides of mankind namely, the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them. Meaning, religion is not about charting one's own course, rather it is to adhere to the path of those who have correctly worshipped Allah, the Exalted, and been granted His support.

This verse therefore indicates the importance of sincerely obeying and following the two sources of guidance namely, the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

Muslims should not follow and adopt the customary practices of non-muslims. The more muslims do this the less they will follow the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This is quite evident in this day and age as many muslims have adopted the cultural practices of other nations which has caused them to become distant from the teachings of Islam. For example, one only needs to observe the modern muslim wedding to observe how many non-muslim cultural practices have been adopted by muslims. What makes this worse is that many muslims cannot differentiate between Islamic practices based on the Holy Quran and traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and the cultural practices of non-muslims. Because of this non-muslims cannot differentiate between them either which has caused great problems for Islam. For example, honour killings is a cultural practice which has nothing to do with Islam yet because

of the ignorance of muslims and their habit of adopting non-muslim cultural practices Islam is blamed every time an honour killing occurs in society. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, removed the social barriers in the form of casts and brotherhoods in order to unite people yet ignorant muslims have resurrected them by adopting the cultural practices of non-muslims. Simply put, the more cultural practices muslims adopt the less they will act on the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

“It is You we worship and You we ask for help.”

As people need the constant aid of Allah, the Exalted, they must therefore sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, constantly. This reminds muslims to avoid adopting a cherry-picking attitude whereby they pick and choose when to obey Allah, the Exalted, and when not to.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 159, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, gave a short but far reaching piece of advice. He advised people to sincerely declare their belief in Allah, the Exalted, and then remain steadfast on it.

Remaining steadfast on one’s faith means that they must strive in the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in all aspects of their life. It consists of fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, which relate to Him, such as the obligatory fasts and those which relate to people, such as treating others kindly. It includes refraining from all the prohibitions of Islam which are between a person and Allah, the Exalted, and those involving others. A muslim must also face destiny with patience truly believing Allah, the Exalted, chooses what is best for His servants. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

Steadfastness can include refraining from both types of polytheism. The major type is when one worships something other than Allah, the Exalted. The minor type is when one shows off their good deeds to others. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3989. Therefore, an aspect of steadfastness is to always act for the sake of Allah, the Exalted.

It includes obeying Allah, the Exalted, at all times instead of obeying and pleasing oneself or others. If a Muslim disobeys Allah, the Exalted, by pleasing themselves or others they should know neither their desires nor people will protect them from Allah, the Exalted. On the other hand, the one who is sincerely obedient to Allah, the Exalted, will be protected from all things by Him even if this protection is not apparent to them.

Remaining steadfast on one's faith includes following the path set out by the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and not adopting a path which deviates from this. The one who strives to adopt this path will not need anything else as this is enough to keep them steadfast on their faith.

As people are not perfect they will undoubtedly make mistakes and commit sins. So being steadfast in matters of faith does not mean one has to be perfect but it means they must strive to adhere strictly to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, as outlined earlier, and to sincerely repent if they commit a sin. This has been indicated in chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 6:

“...so take a straight course to Him and seek His forgiveness...”

This is further supported by a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1987, which advises to fear Allah, the Exalted, and to erase a (minor) sin which has occurred by performing a righteous deed. In another Hadith found in Imam Malik's Muwatta, book 2, Hadith number 37, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised muslims to try their best to remain steadfast on the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, even though they will not be able to do it perfectly. Therefore, a muslim's duty is to fulfil the potential they have been given through their intention and physical actions in the steadfast obedience of Allah, the Exalted. They have not been commanded to achieve perfection as this is not possible.

It is important to note, that one cannot remain steadfast in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, through their physical actions without purifying their heart first. As indicated in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3984, the limbs of the body will only act in a pure way if the spiritual heart is pure. Purity of heart is only achieved by gaining and acting on the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

Steadfast obedience requires one to control their tongue as it expresses the heart. Without controlling the tongue steadfast obedience to Allah, the Exalted, is not possible. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2407.

Finally, if any deficiency in the steadfast obedience of Allah, the Exalted, occurs one must make sincere repentance to Allah, the Exalted, and seek the forgiveness of people if it involves their rights. Chapter 46 Al Ahqaf, verse 13:

“Indeed, those who have said, “Our Lord is Allah,” and then remained on a right course - there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve.”

“It is You we worship and You we ask for help.”

Just like a person does not worship something else in order to please Allah, the Exalted, like some of the non-muslims of Mecca used to do, similarly, a muslim must seek the aid of Allah, the Exalted, directly. This does not mean one should chart they own course to Allah, the Exalted, as the plural used in this verse indicates that they must journey down the path chosen by Allah, the Exalted, in order to reach Him safely. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 31:

“Say, [Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him], "If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins...””

One must understand that Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, and the true guides of mankind do not act as barriers between a person and Allah, the Exalted. A barrier which must be pleased in order to gain access to Allah, the Exalted. Instead, these guides show a person the path which leads to Allah, the Exalted. Therefore, one must be cautious of those who behave as barriers between people and Allah, the Exalted, and expect people to kiss their hands, bow to them and become enslaved to them so that they can put in a good word on their behalf to Allah, the Exalted. This reality is destroyed by the main verse under discussion.

Chapter 1 - Al Fatihah, Verse 6

أَهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ﴿٦﴾

“Guide us to the straight path.”

“Guide us to the straight path.”

This is a supplication asking Allah, the Exalted, to guide one down the path which is pleasing to Him namely, Islam. This path has also been mentioned in another verse of the Holy Quran. Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 69:

“And whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger - those will be with the ones upon whom Allah has bestowed favour of the prophets, the steadfast affirmers of truth, the martyrs and the righteous...”

This path is none other than the way of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. All other paths to Allah, the Exalted, are closed except his path. In fact, the forgiveness and love of Allah, the Exalted, is not possible to obtain without following the way of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 31:

“Say, [O Muhammad], “If you should love Allah then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins...”

It is important to note, in order to follow someone down a path one must first obtain knowledge of the guide’s journey, for example which direction they are travelling in. Without this information it is not possible to follow them.

Similarly, one can only follow the path of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, after obtaining knowledge and acting on his traditions. It is the reason why obtaining this type of beneficial knowledge has been made a duty on all Muslims. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224.

This verse encompasses three requests. The first is for Allah, the Exalted, to show one the correct path. The second is for Allah, the Exalted, to provide them with the strength to journey down the path. And finally, it requests the protection of Allah, the Exalted, from straying off the path after setting down it. All three are important as one may discover the path but not journey down it. The one who journeys down it may eventually stray from it. Only the person who fulfils all three elements, through the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, will obtain success in both this world and the next.

This verse also reminds Muslims not to become proud of any success they achieve as it is clear that this is only possible through the guidance and mercy of Allah, the Exalted. This guidance is needed with every breath as it only takes one moment to fall into perdition. This is why it is important to recite this chapter and specifically this verse often. In fact, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has declared the prayer to be defective if Chapter 1 Al Fatihah is not recited in it. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 756. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 8:

"[Who say], "Our Lord, let not our hearts deviate after You have guided us and grant us from Yourself mercy. Indeed, You are the Bestower."

The straight path is sincerely obeying Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience. The one who strays off this straight path through disobedience must swiftly sincerely repent and re-join the righteous on their journey towards the presence of Allah, the Exalted, in the everlasting abode of peace and comfort. Chapter 54 Al Qamar, verse 55:

“In a seat of honour near a Sovereign, Perfect in Ability.”

“Guide us to the straight path.”

This verse indicates the greatest thing which one should seek help from Allah, the Exalted, for which has been mentioned in the previous verse. Chapter 1 Al Fatihah, verse 5:

“...You we ask for help.”

This should remind Muslims that the very purpose of them being on Earth is to find and practically journey down the straight path in order to reach Allah, the Exalted, in the hereafter safely. The Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, teach mankind the simple way of achieving this namely, using the blessings and resources they have been provided in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. Whoever does this has found and is journeying down the straight path.

In reality, in most cases nothing in this material world in itself is good or bad, such as wealth. What makes a thing good or bad is the way it is used. It is important to understand that the very purpose of everything which was created by Allah, the Exalted, was for it to be used correctly according to the teachings of Islam. When something is not used correctly it in reality becomes useless. For example, wealth is useful in both worlds when it is used correctly such as being spent on the necessities of a person and their dependents. But it can become useless and even a curse for its bearer if it

is not used correctly, such as being hoarded or spent on sinful things. Simply hoarding wealth causes wealth to lose value. How can paper and metal coins one tucks away be useful? In this respect, there is no difference between a blank piece of paper and a note of money. It is only useful when it is used correctly.

So if a Muslim desires all their worldly possessions to become a blessing for them in both worlds all they have to do is use them correctly according to the teachings found in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. But if they use them incorrectly then the same blessing will become a burden and curse for them in both worlds. It is as simple as that.

“Guide us to the straight path.”

This verse indicates the greatest thing which one should seek help from Allah, the Exalted, for which has been mentioned in the previous verse. Chapter 1 Al Fatihah, verse 5:

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Every worldly blessing a Muslim possesses is only a means which should aid them in reaching the hereafter safely. It is not an end in itself. For example, wealth is a means one should use in order to obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, fulfilling their necessities and the necessities of their dependents. It is not an end or an ultimate goal in itself.

This not only aids a Muslim in maintaining their focus on the hereafter but it also aids them whenever they lose worldly blessings. When a Muslim treats each worldly blessing, such as a child, as a means to please Allah, the Exalted, and reach the hereafter safely then losing it will not have such a detrimental impact on them. They may become sad, which is an acceptable emotion, but they will not become grieved which leads to impatience and other mental problems, such as depression. This is because they firmly believe the worldly blessing they possessed was only a means so losing it does not cause a loss in the ultimate goal namely, Paradise, the loss of which is disastrous. Therefore, still possessing and concentrating on the ultimate goal will prevent them from becoming grieved.

In addition, they will understand that just like the thing they lost was only a means they firmly believe they will be provided with another means to reach and fulfil their ultimate goal by Allah, the Exalted. This will also prevent them from grieving. Whereas, the one who believes their worldly blessing is the end instead of a means will experience severe grief when losing it as their whole purpose and objective has been lost. This grief will lead to depression and other mental issues.

To conclude, Muslims should treat each blessing they possess as a means to reach the hereafter safely not as an end in itself. This is how one can possess things without being possessed by them. This is how they can keep worldly things in their hands and not in their hearts.

“Guide us to the straight path.”

The straight path is learning and acting on the teachings of the Holy Quran and traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. In a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4606, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that any matter which is not based on Islam will be rejected.

If Muslims desire lasting success in both worldly and religious matters they must strictly adhere to the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Even though, certain actions which are not directly taken from these two sources of guidance can still be considered a righteous deed it is important to prioritize these two sources of guidance over all else. Because the fact is that the more one acts on things which are not taken from these two sources even if it is a righteous deed the less they will act on these two sources of guidance. An obvious example is how many Muslims have adopted cultural practices into their lives which do not have a foundation in these two sources of guidance. Even if these cultural practices are not sins they have preoccupied Muslims from learning and acting on these two sources of guidance as they feel satisfied with their behaviour. This leads to ignorance of the two sources of guidance which in turn will only lead to misguidance.

This is why a Muslim must learn and act on these two sources of guidance which have been established by the leaders of guidance and only then act on other voluntary righteous deeds if they have the time and energy to do so. But if they choose ignorance and made up practices even if they are not

sins over learning and acting on these two sources of guidance they will not achieve success.

“Guide us to the straight path.”

Journeying down the straight path consists of sincerely obeying and following the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This is supported by the fact that this verse is found in the first chapter of the Holy Quran and leads on to the rest of the Holy Quran thereby indicating that the straight path is the Holy Quran. In addition, the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, are needed to correctly understand and act on the Holy Quran. Therefore, sincerely obeying and following these two sources of guidance is the straight path.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim number 196, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that Islam is sincerity towards the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

Sincerity towards the Holy Quran includes having deep respect and love for the words of Allah, the Exalted. This sincerity is proven when one fulfils the three aspects of the Holy Quran. The first is to recite it correctly and regularly. The second is to understand its teachings through a reliable source and teacher. The final aspect is to act on the teachings of the Holy Quran with the aim of pleasing Allah, the Exalted. The sincere Muslim gives priority to acting on its teachings over acting on their desires which contradict the Holy Quran. Modelling one’s character on the Holy Quran is the sign of true sincerity towards the book of Allah, the Exalted. This is the tradition of the

Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, which is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 1342.

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"And indeed, you are of a great moral character."

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Sincerity includes to give priority to his traditions over the actions of anyone else as all paths to Allah, the Exalted, are closed except the path of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 31:

“Say, [Prophet Muḥammad, peace and blessings be upon him], “If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins...”

One must love all those who supported him during his life and after his passing, whether they are from his Family or his Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all. Supporting those who walk on his path and teach his traditions is a duty on those who desire to be sincere to him. Sincerity also includes loving those who love him and disliking those who criticise him irrespective, of one’s relationship with these people. This is all summarised in a single Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 16. It advises that a person cannot have true faith until they love Allah, the Exalted, and the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, more than the entire creation. This love must be shown through actions not just words.

“Guide us to the straight path.”

The straight path is a balanced life whereby a Muslim fulfils their necessities and responsibilities in this world, prepares adequately for the hereafter and occasionally enjoys lawful pleasures. Even though, this is the best approach it is very difficult to fulfil just like walking a tight rope whereby a person can easily fall into either of the two extremes. One side is when one is too focused on the material world which prevents them from striving in preparing for the hereafter correctly. The other side is where one strives hard in preparing for the hereafter but struggles and even fails to fulfil their worldly duties. But it is important to note, that even though a perfect balance is best it is far better to incline towards the hereafter than this material world. As the one who favours the hereafter might find this world difficult but they are more likely to achieve eternal success in the hereafter. On the other hand, the one who inclines to the world more may find success therein but they are more likely to fail in the hereafter. In other words, inclining towards the hereafter is the safer option compared to inclining towards the material world. So if a Muslim struggles to find the perfect balance, which the vast majority do, they should be kind to themselves and incline more towards the hereafter so that they can obtain eternal success instead of temporary worldly success. Chapter 87 Al A'la, verses 16-17:

“But you prefer the worldly life, While the Hereafter is better and more enduring.”

“Guide us to the straight path.”

People will be commanded to cross the Bridge which will be placed over Hell on the Day of Judgment. This has been discussed extensively in Islamic teachings, such as the Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6573. It warns that extremely large hooks will be on the Bridge which will affect people according to their deeds. Some will be flung into Hell by them, some will be subjected to great torture before they cross the Bridge, others will only face minimal injury from them and finally the righteous will not be harmed by them. Another Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 455, warns that the Bridge is narrower than a strand of hair and sharper than a sword.

The important thing to learn from this is that each person will cross the Bridge according to their deeds. So it is important for Muslims not to neglect any duties if they desire to cross the Bridge safely. They must fulfil the commands of Allah, the Exalted, and refrain from His prohibitions. These include duties in respect to Allah, the Exalted, and people. One should not neglect this and simply hope they will magically cross the Bridge unaffected.

In addition, the ease at which a person will cross this Bridge will be a mirror of how much they remained steadfast on the straight path of Islam in this world. This straight path is the path of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 31:

“Say, [O Muhammad], “If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins...”

Anyone who abandons this path will not successfully cross this Bridge. Simply put, the more one remains steadfast on the straight path in this world the easier they will cross the Bridge over Hell on Judgment Day. The straight path has been made clear in this world so Muslims are left with no excuses from following it thereby ensuring they safely cross the Bridge on Judgment Day.

“Guide us to the straight path.”

A Muslim who is fulfilling their duties to Allah, the Exalted, and the creation is still commanded to continuously and persistently supplicate for guidance on the straight path. This indicates the importance of certainty of faith meaning, a Muslim should always struggle to improve their sincere obedience to Allah, the Exalted, through gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge.

All Muslims have faith in Islam but the strength of their faith varies from person to person. For example, the one who follows the teachings of Islam because their family told them to is not the same as the one who believes in it through evidence. A person who has heard about something will not believe in it in the same way as the one who has witnessed the thing with their own eyes.

As confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224, gaining useful knowledge is a duty on all Muslims. One of the reasons for this is that it is the best way a Muslim can strengthen their faith in Islam. This is important to pursue as the stronger one's certainty of faith the greater the chance they will remain steadfast on the correct path, especially when facing difficulties. In addition, having certainty of faith has been described as one of the best things one can possess in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3849. This knowledge should be obtained by studying the Holy Quran and the Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, through a reliable source.

Allah, the Exalted, did not only declare a truth in the Holy Quran but He also provided evidence for it through examples. Not only examples which are to be found in the past nations but examples which have been placed in one's very own life. For example, in the Holy Quran Allah, the Exalted, advises that sometimes a person loves a thing even though it will cause them trouble if they obtained it. Similarly, they might hate a thing while there is much hidden good in it for them. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

There are many examples of this truth in history such as the Pact of Hudaiba. Some Muslims believed this pact, which was made with the non-Muslims of Mecca, would completely favour the latter group. Yet, history clearly shows that it favoured Islam and the Muslims. This event is discussed in the Hadiths found in Sahih Bukhari, numbers 2731 and 2732.

If one reflects on their own life they will find many examples when they believed something was good when it was actually bad for them and vice versa. These examples prove the authenticity of this verse and help one's faith strengthen.

Another example is found in chapter 79 An Naziat, verse 46:

“It will be, on the Day they see it (Judgement Day) as though they had not remained [in the world] except for an afternoon or a morning thereof.”

If one turns the pages of history they will clearly observe how great empires came and went. But when they left they passed away in such a way as if they were only on Earth for a moment. All but a few of their signs have faded away as if they were never present on Earth in the first place. Similarly, when one reflects on their own life they will realise that no matter how old they are and no matter how slow certain days might have felt overall their life so far has passed in a flash. Understanding the truthfulness of this verse strengthens one's certainty of faith and this inspires them to prepare for the hereafter before their time runs out.

The Holy Quran and the Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, are full of such examples. Therefore, one should strive to learn and act on these divine teachings so that they adopt certainty of faith. The one who achieves this will not be shaken by any difficulty they face and will remain steadfast on the path which leads to the gates of Paradise. Chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 53:

“We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth...”

“Guide us to the straight path.”

This verse uses the plural form instead of the singular form. One of the possible reasons for this is that it should remind Muslims to not only worry about themselves but to also show concern, through their speech and actions, for others, such as those under their care e.g. children. Just like one loves to be rightly guided in this world they should desire this for others also.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, once advised in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 13, that a person cannot become a true believer until they love for others what they love for themselves.

This does not mean a Muslim will lose their faith if they fail to adopt this characteristic. It means that a Muslim's faith will not be complete until they act on this advice. This Hadith also indicates that a Muslim will not perfect their faith until they also dislike for others what they dislike for themselves. This is supported by another Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6586. It advises that the Muslim nation is like one body. If one part of the body is in pain the rest of the body shares the pain. This mutual feeling includes loving and hating for others what one loves and hates for themselves.

A Muslim can only achieve this status when their heart is free from evil traits, such as envy. These evil traits will always cause one to desire better for themselves. So in reality, this Hadith is an indication that one should purify their

heart by adopting good characteristics, such as being forgiving, and eliminate evil traits, such as envy. This is only possible through learning and acting on the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

It is important for Muslims to understand that desiring good for others will cause them to lose out on good things. The treasury of Allah, the Exalted, has no limits so there is no need to adopt a selfish and greedy mentality.

Desiring good for others includes striving to aid others in anyway one can, such as financial or emotional support, in the same way a person would desire others to aid them in their moment of need. Therefore, this love must be shown through actions not just words. Even when a Muslim forbids evil and offers advice which contradicts the desire of others they should do so gently just like they would want others to advise them kindly.

As mentioned earlier, the main Hadith under discussion indicates the importance of eliminating all bad characteristics which contradict mutual love and care, such as envy. Envy is when a person desires to possess a specific blessing which is only obtainable when it is taken away from someone else. This attitude is a direct challenge to the distribution of blessings chosen by Allah, the Exalted. This is why it is a major sin and leads to the destruction of the envier's good deeds. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4903. If a Muslim must desire the lawful things others possess they should wish and supplicate to Allah, the Exalted, to grant them the same or similar thing without the other person losing the blessing. This type of jealousy is lawful and is praiseworthy in aspects of religion. This has

been advised in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 1896. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that Muslims should only be jealous of a wealthy person who uses their wealth correctly. And be jealous of a knowledgeable person who uses their knowledge to benefit themselves and others.

A Muslim should not only love for others to obtain lawful worldly blessings but also for them to gain religious blessings in both worlds. In fact, when one wishes this for others it encourages them to strive harder in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience. This type of healthy competition is welcomed in Islam. Chapter 83 Al Mutaffifin, verse 26:

“...So for this let the competitors compete.”

This encouragement will also inspire a Muslim to assess themselves in order to find and eliminate any faults in their character. When these two elements combine meaning, striving in sincere obedience to Allah, the Exalted, and purifying one's character, it leads to success in both worlds.

A Muslim must therefore not only claim to love for others what they desire for themselves verbally but show it through their actions. It is hoped that the one who is concerned for others in this way will receive the concern of Allah, the

Exalted, in both worlds. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1930.

“Guide us to the straight path.”

This verse uses the plural form instead of the singular form. One of the possible reasons for this is that it should remind Muslims to not only worry about themselves but to also show concern, through their speech and actions, for others, such as those under their care e.g. children. Chapter 66 At Tahrim, verse 6:

“O you who have believed, protect yourselves and your families from a Fire...”

Therefore, Muslims must actively help those under their care in achieving this right guidance according to the teachings of Islam. For example, in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1952, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that the most virtuous gift a parent can give their child is to teach them good character.

This Hadith reminds Muslims to be more concerned about the faith of their relatives, such as their children, over acquiring and imparting wealth and properties to them. It is important to understand, worldly legacies come and go. How many rich and powerful people have built massive empires only for them to be torn apart and forgotten shortly after their death? The few signs left behind from some of these legacies only endure in order to warn people not to follow in their footsteps. An example is the great empire of Pharaoh.

Unfortunately, many Muslims are so concerned about teaching their children how to build an empire and acquire much wealth and properties that they neglect teaching them the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted, which involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience. This includes good manners towards Allah, the Exalted, and the creation. A Muslim should not be fooled into believing they have plenty of time for teaching their children good manners as their moment of death is unknown and often pounces on people unexpectedly.

In addition, it is extremely difficult to teach good manners to children when they get older and become set in their ways. Today is the day a Muslim should truly reflect on the gift they wish to impart to their children and relatives. This is how a Muslim sends forward good to the hereafter but also leaves good behind as a righteous child which supplicates for their deceased parent benefits them. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1376. It is hoped that the one who is surrounded by good in this way will be forgiven by Allah, the Exalted.

“Guide us to the straight path.”

This verse uses the plural form instead of the singular form. One of the possible reasons for this is that it should remind Muslims that people very rarely live in this world alone meaning, socialising with others is almost unavoidable. Therefore, one should be concerned about the company they keep as a misguided person can easily misguide their companion. If a Muslim desires to be rightly guided they should accompany those who also desire and actively strive for right guidance.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 5534, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, described the difference between a good and bad companion. The good companion is like a person who sells perfume. Their companion will either obtain some perfume or at least be affected by the pleasant smell. Whereas, a bad companion is like a blacksmith, if their companion does not burn their clothes they will certainly be affected by the smoke.

Muslims must understand that the people they accompany will have an effect on them whether this affect is positive or negative, obvious or subtle. It is not possible to accompany someone and not be affected by it. A Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4833, confirms that a person is on their companion's religion. Meaning, a person adopts the characteristics of their companion. It is therefore important for Muslims to always accompany the righteous as they will undoubtedly affect them in a positive way meaning, they will inspire them to obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience.

Whereas, bad companions will either inspire one to disobey Allah, the Exalted, or they will encourage a Muslim to concentrate on the material world over preparing for the hereafter. This attitude will become a great regret for them on Judgment Day even if the things they strive for are lawful but beyond their needs.

Finally, as a person will end up with those they love in the hereafter according to the Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 3688, a Muslim must practically show they love for the righteous by accompanying them in this world. But if they accompany bad or heedless people then it proves and indicates they love for them and their ultimate destination in the hereafter. Chapter 43 Az Zukhruf, verse 67:

“Close friends, that Day, will be enemies to each other, except for the righteous.”

“Guide us to the straight path.”

It is important to note that Allah, the Exalted, guides the entire mankind to the straight path by giving them the ability to learn, understand and act on the straight path. Chapter 20 Taha, verse 50:

“He said, “Our Lord is He who gave each thing its form and then guided [it].””

But a person can be deprived of the ability to follow the straight path even if they recognise it due to certain characteristics they have adopted. For example, persisting on sins. Chapter 5 Al Ma'idah, verse 51:

“...Indeed, Allah guides not the wrongdoing people.”

This indicates the importance of striving to gain and act on Islamic knowledge in order to purify one's behaviour towards Allah, the Exalted, and the creation as the one who fails to do this is less likely to benefit from supplicating for right guidance. In other words, a Muslim must not only accept Islam and supplicate for right guidance but they must also strive to purify their obedience to Allah, the Exalted, and their behaviour towards the creation through gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge. Simply accepting faith is not good enough.

Disbelief can be a literal rejecting of Islam or through actions, which involves disobeying Allah, the Exalted, even though one believes in Him. This can be clearly understood by an example. If an unaware person is warned by another of an approaching lion and the unaware person takes practical steps to obtain safety they will be considered someone who believed in the warning given to them as they adapted their behaviour based on the warning. Whereas, if the unaware person does not practically change their behaviour after being warned, people will suspect that they do not believe in the warning given to them even if the unaware person verbally claims belief in the warning given to them.

Some people claim that their belief and obedience to their God is in their hearts and they therefore do not need to demonstrate it practically. Unfortunately, this foolish mentality has infected many Muslims who believe they possess a pure faithful heart even though they fail to fulfil the obligatory duties of Islam. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has clearly declared in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3984, that when one's heart is pure the body becomes pure which means their actions become correct. But if one's heart is corrupt the body becomes corrupt which means their actions will be corrupt and incorrect. Therefore, the one who does not obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling their duties practically can never have a pure heart.

In addition, demonstrating one's faith in Allah, the Exalted, practically is their proof and evidence which is required on Judgment Day in order to be granted Paradise. Not having this practical evidence is as silly as a student who

hands back a blank exam paper to their teacher claiming their knowledge is in their mind so they therefore do not need to write it down by answering the exam questions. The same way this student would undoubtedly fail so will a person who reaches Judgment Day without the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in the form of fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience, even if they possess faith in their heart.

“Guide us to the straight path.”

In a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 910, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has strongly encouraged this chapter to be recited in every cycle of the prayer. The fact this verse is within this recitation indicates that a person must constantly remind themselves of their purpose on this Earth namely, to find and journey down this straight path so that they safely reach Allah, the Exalted, in the hereafter. Just like a student must repeatedly revise their notes when revising for a test, a muslim must repeatedly revise Islamic knowledge in order to ensure they remain firmly on the straight path. A muslim must therefore dedicate some time everyday in order to fulfill this important task. The more one does this the stronger their faith will become. This will allow them to remain firm on the straight path in all situations.

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 159, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, gave a short but far reaching piece of advice. He advised people to sincerely declare their belief in Allah, the Exalted, and then remain steadfast on it.

Remaining steadfast on one's faith means that they must strive in the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in all aspects of their life. It consists of fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, which relate to Him, such as the obligatory fasts and those which relate to people, such as treating others kindly. It includes refraining from all the prohibitions of Islam which are between a person and Allah, the Exalted, and those involving others. A

muslim must also face destiny with patience truly believing Allah, the Exalted, chooses what is best for His servants. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

Steadfastness can include refraining from both types of polytheism. The major type is when one worships something other than Allah, the Exalted. The minor type is when one shows off their good deeds to others. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3989. Therefore, an aspect of steadfastness is to always act for the sake of Allah, the Exalted.

It includes obeying Allah, the Exalted, at all times instead of obeying and pleasing oneself or others. If a Muslim disobeys Allah, the Exalted, by pleasing themselves or others they should know neither their desires nor people will protect them from Allah, the Exalted. On the other hand, the one who is sincerely obedient to Allah, the Exalted, will be protected from all things by Him even if this protection is not apparent to them.

Remaining steadfast on one's faith includes following the path set out by the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and not adopting a path which deviates from this. The one who strives to adopt this path will not need anything else as this is enough to keep them steadfast on their faith.

As people are not perfect they will undoubtedly make mistakes and commit sins. So being steadfast in matters of faith does not mean one has to be perfect but it means they must strive to adhere strictly to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, as outlined earlier, and to sincerely repent if they commit a sin. This has been indicated in chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 6:

“...so take a straight course to Him and seek His forgiveness...”

This is further supported by a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1987, which advises to fear Allah, the Exalted, and to erase a (minor) sin which has occurred by performing a righteous deed. In another Hadith found in Imam Malik's Muwatta, book 2, Hadith number 37, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised muslims to try their best to remain steadfast on the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, even though they will not be able to do it perfectly. Therefore, a muslim's duty is to fulfil the potential they have been given through their intention and physical actions in the steadfast obedience of Allah, the Exalted. They have not been commanded to achieve perfection as this is not possible.

It is important to note, that one cannot remain steadfast in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, through their physical actions without purifying their heart first. As indicated in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3984, the limbs of the body will only act in a pure way if the spiritual heart is pure. Purity of heart is only achieved by gaining and acting on the teachings of the Holy

Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

Steadfast obedience requires one to control their tongue as it expresses the heart. Without controlling the tongue steadfast obedience to Allah, the Exalted, is not possible. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2407.

Finally, if any deficiency in the steadfast obedience of Allah, the Exalted, occurs one must make sincere repentance to Allah, the Exalted, and seek the forgiveness of people if it involves their rights. Chapter 46 Al Ahqaf, verse 13:

“Indeed, those who have said, “Our Lord is Allah,” and then remained on a right course - there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve.”

“Guide us to the straight path.”

As the correct path is one and involves sincerely obeying and following the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, a person should not be fooled into believing that they will succeed in this world or in the next if they choose a different path. There is a massive difference between the one who tries to adhere to the straight path and then hopes for the forgiveness and mercy of Allah, the Exalted, and the one who intentionally chooses a different path and still expects Allah, the Exalted, to grant them peace in both worlds. The former is true hope in Allah, the Exalted, while the latter is nothing but wishful thinking.

Even though there is no doubt that the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, is infinite and can overcome all sins. And giving up hope in the infinite mercy of Allah, the Exalted, is defined as unbelief in chapter 12 Yusuf, verse 87:

“...Indeed, no one despairs of relief from Allah except the disbelieving people.”

Yet, none the less it is extremely important for muslims to understand a fact. Namely, a muslim has not been guaranteed to leave this world with their faith meaning, a muslim is in danger of dying as a non-muslim. This is the greatest loss. If this happens it does not take a scholar to conclude where this person will reside in the hereafter. This can occur when a muslim persists on sins

especially, major sins, such as drinking alcohol and failing to offer their obligatory prayers and reaches their end without sincerely repenting from their sins. This is the reason why muslims must sincerely repent from all their sins and strive to fulfil all their obligatory duties as this is a task they can undoubtedly fulfil. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 286:

“Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity...”

They should not be fooled into believing they possess hope in the mercy of Allah, the Exalted. As true hope in the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, is supported by obedience to Allah, the Exalted, through actions. This involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience. Failing to do this and then expecting the mercy and forgiveness of Allah, the Exalted, is not hope in His mercy it is merely wishful thinking which has no weight or significance. This has been clearly warned by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2459.

Chapter 1 - Al Fatihah, Verse 7 of 7

صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ ﴿٧﴾

“The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favour, not of those who have earned [Your] anger or of those who are astray.”

“The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favour...”

In the previous verse a Muslim requests Allah, the Exalted, to guide them on the straight path which leads to Paradise. Chapter 1 Al Fatihah, verse 6:

“Guide us to the straight path.”

Verse 7 further explains the straight path and mentions the incorrect paths which were taken by the previous nations. The interpretation of the first part of this verse is done by another verse of the Holy Quran; chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 69:

“And whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger - those will be with the ones upon whom Allah has bestowed favor of the prophets, the steadfast affirmers of truth, the martyrs and the righteous...”

Verse 7 highlights an important reality namely, one can only find and journey down the correct path, without straying off course, through the mercy and guidance of Allah, the Exalted. Those who have been rightly guided are the ones who strive in obedience to Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience. This is in fact the path of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and

blessings be upon him. So it is clear that a Muslim cannot be one of the rightly guided, mentioned in this verse, without practically following the footsteps of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 31:

“Say, [O Muhammad], “If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins...”

“The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favour...”

This supplication makes it clear that the sincere obedient servants such as the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, are the ones that must be followed. This indicates the importance of studying and acting on the teachings found within the lives of the righteous servants of Allah, the Exalted. The Holy Quran itself does this by mentioning many Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, and some of the important lessons one can learn from their behaviour and lives. But an important thing must be noted namely, a Muslim should not study the lives of the righteous servants of Allah, the Exalted, only to learn about fascinating stories about them. Unfortunately, this attitude has become extremely popular among Muslims and even scholars who only study the lives of the righteous servants of Allah, the Exalted, in order to entertain themselves and others with fascinating stories connected to them. Their aim is to entertain and be entertained whereas their intention should be to learn about the noble character of the righteous servants of Allah, the Exalted, which includes their behaviour and obedience to Allah, the Exalted, and their good conduct towards the creation. When one increases their sincere obedience to Allah, the Exalted, by studying and following in the footsteps of the righteous servants of Allah, the Exalted, then, and only then, have their fulfilled the supplication mentioned in this verse.

“The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favour...”

Understanding that right guidance is a favour of Allah, the Exalted, encourages humility.

The servants of Allah, the Exalted, have understood that anything good they possess is solely because Allah, the Exalted, granted it to them. And any evil they are saved from is because Allah, the Exalted, protected them. Is it not foolish to be proud of something that does not belong to someone? Just like a person does not boast about a sports car which does not belong to them muslims must realize nothing in reality belongs to them. This attitude ensures one remains humble at all times. The humble servants of Allah, the Exalted, fully believe in the Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, found in Sahih Bukhari, number 5673, which declares that the righteous deeds of a person will not take them to Paradise. Only the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, can cause this to occur. This is because every righteous deed is only possible when Allah, the Exalted, provides one with the knowledge, strength, opportunity and inspiration to perform it. Even the acceptance of the deed is dependent on the mercy of Allah, the Exalted. When one bares this in mind it saves them from pride and inspires them to adopt humility. One should always remember that being humble is not a sign of weakness as Islam has encouraged one to defend themselves if necessary. In other words, Islam teaches muslims to be humble without weakness. In fact, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2029, that whoever humbles themselves before Allah, the Exalted, will be raised by Him. So in reality, humility leads to honor in both worlds. One only needs to reflect on the most humble of the creation to understand this fact namely, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Allah, the Exalted,

has clearly ordered people by ordering the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, to adopt this important quality. Chapter 26 Ash Shu'ara, verse 215:

“And lower your wing [i.e., show kindness] to those who follow you of the believers.”

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, led a humble life. For example, he happily carried out the domestic duties at home thereby proving these chores are gender-neutral. This is confirmed in Imam Bukhari's, Adab Al Mufrad, number 538.

Humility is an inner characteristic that manifests outwards such as the way one walks. This is discussed in another verse chapter 31 Luqman, verse 18:

“And do not turn your cheek [in contempt] toward people and do not walk through the earth exultantly...”

Allah, the Exalted, has made it clear that Paradise is for the humble servants who possess no trace of pride. Chapter 28 Al Qasas, verse 83:

“That home of the Hereafter We assign to those who do not desire exaltedness upon the earth or corruption. And the [best] outcome is for the righteous.”

In fact, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1998, that whoever possesses an atom’s worth of pride will not enter Paradise. Only Allah, the Exalted, has the right to be proud as He is the Creator, Sustainer and Owner of the entire universe.

It is important to note, pride is when one believes they are superior to others and rejects the truth when it is presented to them as they dislike accepting the truth when it comes from other than them. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4092.

“The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favour...”

This verse also indicates that the real favour of Allah, the Exalted, is only obtained when one sincerely obeys Him. This involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Him. Real favour is therefore not determined by the amount of worldly blessings one obtains. Failing to understand this reality can lead to misguidance.

Greatness and true success is not connected to worldly things, such as wealth or fame. A person may obtain some worldly success through these things but it is quite obvious if one turns the pages of history that this type of success is very temporary and it eventually becomes a burden and regret for a person. A muslim should never believe that superiority lies in these things thereby dedicating themselves to obtaining them while neglecting their duties to Allah, the Exalted, and the creation. Nor should they look down at others who do not possess these worldly things believing they have no value or significance as this attitude contradicts the teachings of Islam. In fact, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has advised in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6071, that the people of Paradise are those who are considered insignificant by society and concluded that if they took an oath on something Allah, the Exalted, would fulfil it for them.

True honour, success and greatness in this world and the next only lies in piety. So the more one sincerely strives to fulfil the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refrain from His prohibitions and faces destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and

blessings be upon him, the greater they are even if they appear insignificant to society. Chapter 49 Al Hujurat verse 13:

“...Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you...”

A muslim should therefore search for true success in this and not waste their time and efforts in searching for it in worldly things otherwise they may well reach the hereafter a great loser. Chapter 18 Al Kahf, verses 103-104:

“Say, “Shall we [believers] inform you of the greatest losers as to [their] deeds? [They are] those whose effort is lost in worldly life, while they think that they are doing well in work.””

“The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favour...”

This verse also indicates that the real favour of Allah, the Exalted, is only obtained when one sincerely obeys Him. This involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Him. Real favour is therefore not determined by the amount of worldly blessings one obtains. Failing to understand this reality can lead to misguidance.

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2322, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that everything in this material world is cursed except the remembrance of Allah, the Exalted, what is connected to it, the knowledgeable person and the student of knowledge.

The remembrance of Allah, the Exalted, encompasses all the levels of remembrance. Namely, internal silent remembrance, which includes correcting one’s intention so that they only act for the sake of Allah, the Exalted. Remembering Allah, the Exalted, via the tongue and the most important is practically remembering Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience.

Anything which leads to the remembrance of Allah, the Exalted, includes the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, such as striving in the material world in order

to fulfill one's necessities and the necessities of their dependents according to the teachings of Islam without waste, excessiveness or extravagance. In reality, this includes any action which appears worldly or religious as long as it involves the obedience of Allah, the Exalted.

Both the knowledgeable person and the student of knowledge are the only people in reality who will obey Allah, the Exalted, correctly as this is not possible to achieve without knowledge. An ignorant person disobeys Allah, the Exalted, without even realizing it as they are unaware of what counts as a sin or a righteous deed. In some cases, one may even believe they are strictly obeying Him even though they are far from it.

To conclude, in reality nothing is really cursed in the material world in itself. It is how a thing is used which determines if it is cursed or not. For example, if wealth is used correctly according to the teachings of Islam then it is a great blessing in both worlds. But if it is misused or hoarded then it will become a curse for its owner in both worlds. This can be applied to all things in this world.

“The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favour...”

This verse also indicates that the real favour of Allah, the Exalted, is only obtained when one sincerely obeys Him. This involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Him. Real favour is therefore not determined by the amount of worldly blessings one obtains. Failing to understand this reality can lead to misguidance.

It is important for muslims to understand that they should not define a situation as good or bad according to worldly definitions. For example, according to a worldly definition being wealthy is good whereas being poor is bad. Instead, muslims should ascribe good and bad to events and things according to the teachings of Islam. Meaning, anything which takes one closer to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in the form of fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience, is good even if it is seen as bad from a worldly point of view. And anything which takes one away from the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, is bad even if it appears good.

There are many examples throughout the teachings of Islam which demonstrate this. For example, Qarun was an extremely wealthy person who lived in the time of the Holy Prophet Mosa, peace be upon him. Many people then and now may consider his wealth to be a good thing but as it led him to pride it became a means of his destruction. So in his case being wealthy was a bad thing. Chapter 28 Al Qasas, verses 79-81.

“So he came out before his people in his adornment. Those who desired the worldly life said, “Oh, would that we had like what was given to Qārūn. Indeed, he is one of great fortune. But those who had been given knowledge said, “Woe to you! The reward of Allah is better for he who believes and does righteousness. And none are granted it except the patient.” And We caused the earth to swallow him and his home. And there was for him no company to aid him other than Allah, nor was he of those who [could] defend themselves.”

On the other hand, the third rightly guided Caliph of Islam, Usman Bin Affan, may Allah be pleased with him, was also wealthy yet he used his wealth in the correct way. In fact, once after donating a large amount of wealth he was told by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, that nothing could harm his faith after that day. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3701. So in his case wealth was a good thing.

To conclude, a muslim should remember that every difficulty they face has wisdoms behind it even if they do not observe them. So they should not believe something is good or bad from a worldly point of view. Meaning, if the thing encourages them towards the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, then it is good even if it looks bad. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

“...You have bestowed favour...”

Allah, the Exalted, is the One who is infinitely bountiful and bestows favours and blessings without recompense or external cause. He gives generously without being asked.

The Muslim who understands this divine name will always seek bounty and blessings from Allah, the Exalted, as they know the Bestower loves to be asked. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3571. But it is important to note, the one who seeks bounty from the Bestower should know it is not gained through His disobedience. Any worldly blessings obtained through the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted, will only become a burden for its possessor in both worlds. A Muslim should instead strive to obtain beneficial blessings from the Bestower by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience. When a Muslim truly understands that all blessings have been given by the Bestower they will show true gratitude to Him. This is when one uses all the blessings they possess according to the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted. This leads to an increase in blessings. Chapter 14 Ibrahim, verse 7:

“And [remember] when your Lord proclaimed, 'If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favor]...”

A Muslim should act on this divine name by bestowing the blessings they have been given to others for the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted. The one who gives to others will be given more than they could have ever imagined. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 245:

“Who is it that would loan Allah a goodly loan so He may multiply it for him many times over? And it is Allah who withholds and grants abundance, and to Him you will be returned.”

“...not of those who have earned [Your] anger...”

This verse concludes with a Muslim requesting Allah, the Exalted, to protect them from straying off course and becoming one of those He is angry with. These are the people who know the truth yet turn away from it. They are the people who possess corrupt intentions meaning, those who perform righteous deeds for the sake of the creation. In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3154, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that those who perform deeds for the sake of people, such as showing off, instead of doing them for the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted, will be told to gain their reward on Judgment Day from the people they acted for which in reality is not possible to do.

These people possess the correct knowledge but fail to act on it. Some people claim that their belief and obedience to their God is in their hearts and they therefore do not need to demonstrate it practically. Unfortunately, this foolish mentality has infected many Muslims who believe they possess a pure faithful heart even though they fail to fulfil the obligatory duties of Islam. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has clearly declared in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3984, that when one's heart is pure the body becomes pure which means their actions become correct. But if one's heart is corrupt the body becomes corrupt which means their actions will be corrupt and incorrect. Therefore, the one who does not obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling their duties practically can never have a pure heart.

In addition, demonstrating one's faith in Allah, the Exalted, practically is their proof and evidence which is required on Judgment Day in order to be granted Paradise. Not having this practical evidence is as silly as a student who hands back a blank exam paper to their teacher claiming their knowledge is in their mind so they therefore do not need to write it down by answering the exam questions. The same way this student would undoubtedly fail so will a person who reaches Judgment Day without the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in the form of fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience, even if they possess faith in their heart.

“...or of those who are astray.”

A Muslim also seeks the refuge of Allah, the Exalted, from the path of those who went astray. These are the people who do not search for the truth and instead wonder blindly and aimlessly in this world. Their ignorance is the source of their misguidance as one can only be rightly guided through knowledge and acting on it.

A great distraction which prevents one from submitting to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, is ignorance. It can be argued that it is the origin of every sin as the one who truly knows the consequences of sins would never commit them. This refers to true beneficial knowledge which is knowledge that is acted upon. In reality, all knowledge which is not acted on is not beneficial knowledge. The example of the one who behaves in this manner is described in the Holy Quran as a donkey which carries books of knowledge which do not benefit it. Chapter 62 Al Jumu'ah, verse 5:

“...and then did not take it on (did not act upon knowledge) is like that of a donkey who carries volumes [of books]...”

A person who acts on their knowledge rarely slips up and commits sins intentionally. In fact, when this occurs it is only caused by a moment of ignorance where a person forgets to act on their knowledge which results in them sinning.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, once highlighted the seriousness of ignorance in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2322. He declared that everything in the material world is cursed except for the remembrance of Allah, the Exalted, whatever is connected to this remembrance, the scholar and the student of knowledge. This means that all the blessings in the material world will become a curse for the one who is ignorant as they will misuse them thereby committing sins.

In fact, ignorance can be considered a person's worse enemy as it prevents them from protecting themselves from harm and gaining benefit all of which can only be achieved through acting on knowledge. The ignorant commits sins without being aware of them. How can one avoid a sin if they do not know what is considered a sin? Ignorance causes one to neglect their obligatory duties. How can one fulfil their duties if they are unaware of what their duties are?

It is therefore a duty on all Muslims to gain enough knowledge to fulfil all their obligatory duties and avoid sins. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224.

“...or of those who are astray.”

A Muslim also seeks the refuge of Allah, the Exalted, from the path of those who went astray. These are the people who do not search for the truth and instead wonder blindly and aimlessly in this world. Instead of learning and acting on Islamic knowledge they prefer to follow made up practices believing that they can carve their own path to the proximity of Allah, the Exalted.

In a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4606, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that any matter which is not based on Islam will be rejected.

If Muslims desire lasting success in both worldly and religious matters they must strictly adhere to the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Even though, certain actions which are not directly taken from these two sources of guidance can still be considered a righteous deed it is important to prioritize these two sources of guidance over all else. Because the fact is that the more one acts on things which are not taken from these two sources even if it is a righteous deed the less they will act on these two sources of guidance. An obvious example is how many Muslims have adopted cultural practices into their lives which do not have a foundation in these two sources of guidance. Even if these cultural practices are not sins they have preoccupied Muslims from learning and acting on these two sources of guidance as they feel satisfied with their behaviour. This leads to ignorance of the two sources of guidance which in turn will only lead to misguidance.

This is why a Muslim must learn and act on these two sources of guidance which have been established by the leaders of guidance and only then act on other voluntary righteous deeds if they have the time and energy to do so. But if they choose ignorance and made up practices even if they are not sins over learning and acting on these two sources of guidance they will not achieve success.

“The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favour, not of those who have earned [Your] anger or of those who are astray.”

The path one is on in life is determined by the company they keep. So if one desires to journey down the straight path they must accompany those who actively strive for the straight path and avoid those who desire and journey down different paths.

In a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4031, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that a person who imitates a people is counted as one of them.

All Muslims irrespective of the strength of their faith desire to be counted and end up with the righteous in the next world. But this Hadith clearly warns that a Muslim will only be considered a righteous person and end up with them if they imitate the righteous. This imitation is a practical thing not only a declaration through words. This imitation is correctly done by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

But those who verbally declare their love for the righteous and fail to imitate them and instead imitate the characteristics found in hypocrites and the sinful will be considered and judged as one of them. This does not mean they will

lose their faith but it means they will be judged as disobedient Muslims. How can a disobedient Muslim be counted as an obedient Muslim and end up with the righteous? This is only wishful thinking which has no value in Islam. Chapter 59 Al Hashr, verse 20:

“Not equal are the companions of the Fire and the companions of Paradise. The companions of Paradise - they are the attainers [of success].”

“The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favour, not of those who have earned [Your] anger or of those who are astray.”

If one observes history and even the present time one clear distinction between the rightly guided and misguided groups is how each group used the resources and blessings they were given. Meaning, the rightly guided achieved right guidance as they used the blessings they were granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. Whereas, the misguided misused the blessings they were given and therefore they received the anger of Allah, the Exalted, and missed the straight path. Understanding this difference is the key to success in both worlds.

Every worldly blessing a Muslim possesses is only a means which should aid them in reaching the hereafter safely. It is not an end in itself. For example, wealth is a means one should use in order to obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, fulfilling their necessities and the necessities of their dependents. It is not an end or an ultimate goal in itself.

This not only aids a Muslim in maintaining their focus on the hereafter but it also aids them whenever they lose worldly blessings. When a Muslim treats each worldly blessing, such as a child, as a means to please Allah, the Exalted, and reach the hereafter safely then losing it will not have such a detrimental impact on them. They may become sad, which is an acceptable emotion, but they will not become grieved which leads to impatience and other mental problems, such as depression. This is because they firmly believe the worldly blessing they possessed was only a means so losing it

does not cause a loss in the ultimate goal namely, Paradise, the loss of which is disastrous. Therefore, still possessing and concentrating on the ultimate goal will prevent them from becoming grieved.

In addition, they will understand that just like the thing they lost was only a means they firmly believe they will be provided with another means to reach and fulfil their ultimate goal by Allah, the Exalted. This will also prevent them from grieving. Whereas, the one who believes their worldly blessing is the end instead of a means will experience severe grief when losing it as their whole purpose and objective has been lost. This grief will lead to depression and other mental issues.

To conclude, Muslims should treat each blessing they possess as a means to reach the hereafter safely not as an end in itself. This is how one can possess things without being possessed by them. This is how they can keep worldly things in their hands and not in their hearts.

A Muslim should not be fooled by the luxurious lifestyles of the misguided as in reality the person who is truly successful is the one rightly guided by Allah, the Exalted. And right guidance is directly linked to His sincere obedience. This is the party that will obtain ultimate and eternal success while the worldly success of the misguided will fade away and mean nothing on the Day of Judgment. Chapter 58 Al Mujadila, verse 22:

“...Unquestionably, the party of Allah - they are the successful.”

“The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favour, not of those who have earned [Your] anger or of those who are astray.”

This supplication creates both hope and fear in a Muslim. It creates hope as the Muslim who fulfils the first part of this supplication by practically following the righteous servants of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, will be protected from both the anger of Allah, the Exalted, and misguidance. This will ensure that they are rightly guided in all of their affairs in both worlds. They will be aided in overcoming all difficulties they may encounter in this world so that they reach the hereafter with countless reward and blessings.

On the other hand this supplication creates fear in a Muslim as the one who fails to practically follow the righteous servants of Allah, the Exalted, will not be protected from the anger of Allah, the Exalted, or misguidance. This will cause them to become impatient whenever they face difficulties. They will move from one stressful situation to the next until they reach the hereafter devoid of the mercy of Allah, the Exalted.

This balance between fear and hope has been mentioned throughout the entire Holy Quran. Hope encourages one to sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, and fear prevents one from becoming a wishful thinker. This occurs when one fails to sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, and still believes they will somehow obtain success in both worlds.

Muslims should seal the recitation of chapter 1 Al Fatihah with the word ameen. This is a request to Allah, the Exalted, to accept the supplications mentioned in it. The one whose seal corresponds with an Angel's seal will be forgiven their minor sins. This is advised in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari number 782.

All praise is due to Allah, Lord of the worlds and may peace and blessings be upon His final Messenger, Muhammad, his noble Family and Companions.

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