

## Remembrance of Death During your Life

DISCLAIMER: This reminder was originally delivered in Arabic on Friday, 14 March 2008. Any meanings lost in translation are not to be attributed to the speaker as reminders are translated by volunteers. The mosque has no official translator and volunteers often have no formal qualifications to translate on the day. Please forgive any errors as they are from our human weakness and any right guidance is from God.

God, Glory be to Him, Most High, says in Chapter Luqman 34 of the Qur'an:

*"No soul knows what will happen to it tomorrow, and no one knows in which land he or she will die. God is Knowing, All-Aware"*

We do not know whether when we wake in the morning, we will live to see the evening? Nor should we reach the evening, if we will make it to the next morning. The matter is not for us to decide, it is not in our hands but God's. The time of His decree is unknown to all of us.

All of us believe that there is an afterlife. We all believe in the day of Judgement, in the existence of Hell and Heaven, but who from amongst us remembers this on a daily basis; every morning and evening? When in private or amongst a group?

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said to Abdullah ibn Umar:

*"Be in this world as though you are a stranger or a traveller".*

Ibn 'Umar used to say: "When evening comes, do not expect (to live till) morning, and when morning comes, do not expect (to live till) evening. Take from your health (a preparation) for your illness and from your life for your death." [Al-Bukhari]

Death is sudden and takes us unawares. It does not ask for permission to enter. How many stories have we heard that tell us of this sudden event- sad stories where people - youngsters in their prime of life - meet death. In our day and age, we hear of this sudden kind of death often - whether it is through car accidents, airplane crashes, train disasters, or hearing that someone's heart just suddenly stopped beating.

The question is - have we prepared for death?

Death brings to the forefront what went before it, and is less concerned with what it leaves behind (from the remains of the body in the grave). There are many things which follow death, namely: the grave, the gathering, the standing, the account, the weighing, the scrolls, and the bridge, Heaven or Hell. Death is the most severe thing that a human is exposed to in his or her life.

The Prophet's companion Uthman ibn Affan (May God be pleased with him) would cry until he wet his beard, if he was to stand on a grave. He was told: "You mention the Heaven and the Hell- fire and you don't cry, but when you mention the grave you burst into tears!"

He said: "I heard the Prophet (pbuh) saying: The grave is the first stage of the Hereafter, whoever passes it will be at ease afterwards, and if he does not pass it he

will be in the worst of conditions.' I have also heard him (pbuh) saying; 'Never have I seen a sight more horrifying than that of a grave.'"If you are saved from the trial of the grave, then you will be relieved from a great trial; otherwise I think you will never find relief. The truth is that even here, the deeds of the deceased are what will benefit or harm him."

Imagine, O Muslim the contrast between your comfortable surroundings, your bed, surrounded by the things you possess, your nice clothes and so forth. Then think of being transported to a hole in the earth, the soil being your bed, surrounded by darkness, with no companion, nothing with you except the deeds you performed in the world.

So when a servant dies, the angels say: What has he brought forward? And the people say: What has been left behind?

Imam Shafi'ee was asked when he was about to leave this world, how do you find yourself - he said, 'I find myself a traveller in the world on the verge of leaving my friends to meet my bad deeds, drinking from the cup of death [i.e. leaving this world] and going to God. And I do not know if my soul is going to heaven so I could congratulate it or to hell so I should console it.' [poem]

O People, prepare for the Next Life, prepare for your meeting with death, prepare for the grave, the Day of Judgement, prepare to cross the bridge and have your deeds weighed out.

Our problem today is that the next life has disappeared from our thoughts, our hearts and our remembrance. If it were at the forefront of our minds and our concerns our hearts would feel this and become sound. Our state with God would improve. Our relationship with others and understanding with other people would improve, we would give people their rights, no people would not oppress, hate, deceive or steal from each other.

It is through heedlessness that we neglect the next life, and heedlessness is a disease that affects people. It is for this reason, God, Glory be to Him, Most High, says regarding the people that are fuel for the hell fire:

*"They are like animals; no, they are far worse - they are totally heedless."* (A'raf:179)

A supplication made by the devout is: O God do not make us from the heedless, do not take our souls suddenly unawares and do not make us from the neglectful.

We ask God Almighty that He does not make this world overwhelm us with its affairs and its worries. We ask that He makes the affairs of the next world a greater concern for us. Amen