

Chapter Four

HASTENING IN ALL GOOD DEEDS

Hastening in good deeds is a characteristic of those who believe, because they understand their accountability to Allah and know what is expected of them.

We will discuss the following concepts:

- 1- The Qur'an orders the believers to hasten in all good deeds and to be foremost in doing good**
- 2- It is better to do good and help others than to be acquiring material wealth, for doing good leads to a better society**
- 3- Hastening in good deeds is a characteristic of the believers**
- 4- God's prophets serve as our example in doing good**
- 5- Allah rewards those who hasten in good deeds**

The Qur'an orders the believers to hasten in all good deeds

The good deeds that we do in our life are what counts in our favor on the Day of Judgment. The Qur'an reminds us that we will be tested and tried, and that it is our duty to do good and compete in righteous deeds:

﴿ لِكُلِّ جَعَلْنَا مِنْكُمْ شِرْعَةً وَمِنْهَاجًا ۚ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَٰكِن لِّيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَآءَاتِكُمْ ۗ فَأَسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرَاتِ ۗ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴾ [المائدة: ٤٨]

To each among you have We prescribed a Law and an Open Way. If Allah had so willed, He would have made you a single People, but (His plan is) to test you in what He hath given you; so strive as in a race in all virtues. The goal of you all is to Allah; it is He that will show you the truth of the matters in which ye dispute;

Al-Maeda 5 : 48

What we should really compete in and hasten in doing are the good deeds that allow us to achieve God's forgiveness and His good pleasure. Such a reward is attained only by those who are righteous and sincere:

﴿ سَابِقُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا عَرْضُ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ أُعِدَّتْ لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ ۗ ذَٰلِكُمْ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَن يَشَاءُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴾ [الحديد: ٢١]

Be ye foremost (in seeking) Forgiveness from your Lord, and a Garden (of Bliss), the width whereof is as the width of heaven and earth, prepared for those who believe in Allah and His Messengers: that is the Grace of Allah, which He bestows on whom He pleases: and Allah is the Lord of Grace abounding.

Al-Hadeed 57 : 21

The Qur'an stresses the importance of safeguarding our prayers, especially the middle prayer, which most scholars consider it to be the Asr prayer (afternoon prayer):

﴿ حَافِظُوا عَلَى الصَّلَوَاتِ وَالصَّلَاةِ الْوُسْطَىٰ وَقُومُوا لِلَّهِ قَانِتِينَ ﴾ [البقرة: ٢٣٨]

Guard strictly your (habit of) prayers, especially the Middle Prayer; and stand before Allah in a devout (frame of mind).

Al-Baqara 2 : 238

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) stressed the importance of praying early and not delaying our prayers:

(Whoever leaves the Asr (afternoon) prayer exposes himself to the loss and failure of his deeds)

Narrated by Bokhari.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also explained that our reward for attending Jumu'a prayer on Friday depends in part on how early or how late we go to the mosque. When we go early we get a better reward compared to going late after the Imam (leader in prayer) stands up to give his sermon (narrated by Bokhari).

It is better to do good and help others than to acquire material wealth for our good deeds lead to a better society

Man by nature loves to accumulate wealth and to have power. Sometimes he feels invincible and that his power will last for ever. He judges his success according to material standards, and tends to forget his accountability to Allah. Man forgets that his wealth and power will not help him unless he does good and uses his influence to help others and improve things.

In contrast, those who understand that this life is a test and trial keep this goal in focus and hasten in all good deeds. They understand the importance of doing good and of being grateful to God for His blessings by using God's blessings properly. The Qur'an orders prophet Dawood (David) and his descendants to use God's blessings properly and concludes that few understand their responsibility and obligation:

﴿وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا دَاوُدَ مِنَّا فَضْلًا ۖ يٰجِبَالُ اُوبِى مَعَهُ وَالطَّيْرُ ۗ وَالنَّا لَهُ الْحَدِيدَ ۗ﴾

[سبأ: ١٠]

We bestowed Grace aforetime on David from Ourselves: "O ye Mountains! sing ye back the Praises of Allah with him! and ye birds (also)! and We made the iron soft for him;

Sa Ba 34 : 10

﴿اِنَّ اَعْمَل سَنِيَعَتٍ وَقَدِرٍ فِي السَّرْدِ ۗ وَاَعْمَلُوا صٰلِحًا ۗ اِنِّى بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيْرٌ ۗ﴾

[سبأ: ١١]

(Commanding), "Make thou coats of mail, balancing well the rings of chain armour, and work ye righteousness; for be sure I see (clearly) all that ye do."

SA Ba 34 : 11

﴿وَلَسَلِمْنَ الرِّيحَ غُدُوها شَهْرٌ وَرَوَاحُها شَهْرٌ وَأَسَلْنَا لَهُ عَيْنَ القِطْرِ وَمِنَ الْجِنِّ مَن يَعْمَلُ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ بإِذْنِ رَبِّهٖ وَمَن يَزِغْ مِنْهُم عَن أَمْرِنَا نُذِقْهُ مِن عَذَابِ السَّعِيرِ ﴿١٢﴾﴾

[سبأ: ١٢]

And to Solomon (We made) the Wind (obedient): its early morning (stride) was a month's (journey), and its evening (stride) was a month's (journey); and We made a Font of molten brass to flow for him; and there were Jinns that worked in front of him, by the leave of his Lord, and if any of them turned aside from Our command, We made him taste of the Penalty of the Blazing Fire.

Sa Ba 34 : 12

﴿يَعْمَلُونَ لَهُ مَا يَشَاءُ مِن مَّحْتَرِبٍ وَتَمَثِيلٌ وَّحِفَانٍ كَالْجَوَابِ وَقُدُورٍ رَّاسِيَتٍ أَعْمَلُوا ءَالَ دَاوُدَ شُكْرًا وَقَلِيلٌ مِّنْ عِبَادِيَ الشَّاكِرُ ﴿١٣﴾﴾ [سبأ: ١٣]

They worked for him as he desired, (making) Arches, Images, Basins, as large as Reservoirs, and (cooking) Cauldrons fixed (in their places): "Work ye, Sons of David, with thanks! but few of My servants are grateful!"

SA Ba 34 : 13

We are encouraged to do good and help those who are poor and needy and those who need our help. When we see someone whom Allah has blessed with money or knowledge our reaction should not be that of envy or ill feelings or wishing that Allah may deprive him of such blessings. Rather our reaction should be one of gratitude to Allah and praying to Him to guide this person to use his wealth and knowledge appropriately in doing good. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) told us:

(You should not wish for Allah's blessings or compete with others except in two situations: One situation is a man whom Allah taught the Qur'an and he recites it during the day and night and applies its guidelines in his life. Another man said: "If Allah gives me the same blessing that He gave to this person I will do the same good that he is doing". The second situation is a man whom Allah provided with wealth and he is spending it in charity.

Another man said: "If Allah gives me what He gave this person, I will use my money in charity" Narrated by Ahmad, Bokhari & Muslim.

We learn from this Hadeeth (saying of the prophet):

- The blessing of learning the Qur'an is a great blessing as long as we apply the guidelines of the Qur'an in our life
- Wealth is another blessing from Allah if it is used properly to help the poor and needy and help support worthy causes
- Competition in the Muslim community should be in righteous deeds and not in showing off our wealth or our knowledge. If our aim is to help others with our money and knowledge then our good deeds are acceptable and we get our due rewards from Allah. But if our motive is rivalry and boasting then our deeds are not accepted by Allah and we earn no reward. On the contrary, we earn the sins of our arrogance and false pride. The Qur'an tells us:

﴿ أَعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَلَهُمْ زِينَةٌ وَتَفَاخُرٌ بَيْنَكُمْ وَتَكَاثُرٌ فِي الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ
كَمَثَلٍ غَيْثٍ أَعْجَبَ الْكُفَّارَ نَبَاتُهُ ثُمَّ يَهِيجُ فَتَرَاهُ مُصْفَرًّا ثُمَّ يَكُونُ حُطَمًا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ
عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانٌ وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْعُرُورِ ﴾

[الحديد: ٢٠]

Know ye (all), that the life of this world is but play and amusement, pomp and mutual boasting and multiplying, (in rivalry) among yourselves, riches and children. Here is a similitude; how rain and the growth which it brings forth, delight (the hearts of) the tillers; soon it withers; thou wilt see it grow yellow; then it becomes dry and crumbles away. But in the Hereafter is a Penalty severe (for the devotees of wrong). And Forgiveness from Allah and (His) Good Pleasure (for the devotees of Allah). And what is the life of this world, but goods and chattels of deception?

Al-Hadeed 57 : 20

The pleasures of this worldly life are transient and do not have any lasting value. What endures and is better are the good deeds that we do with good intention and proper motivation. Such deeds are handsomely rewarded by God:

﴿ الْمَالُ وَالْبَنُونَ زِينَةُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَالْبَاقِيَاتُ الصَّالِحَاتُ خَيْرٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ثَوَابًا

وَحَيْرٌ أَمَلًا ﴾ [الكهف: ٤٦]

Wealth and sons are allurements of the life of this world; but the things that endure, Good Deeds, are best in the sight of thy Lord, as rewards, and best as (the foundation for) hopes.

Al-Kahf 18 : 46

Hastening in good deeds is a characteristic of the believers

Those who understand their accountability to Allah understand the importance of good deeds. Therefore, they are foremost in doing good. Their hope is to gain the pleasure of Allah and that their good deeds are acceptable to Him and will count in their favor. The Qur'an explains:

﴿ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ هُمْ مِّنْ خَشْيَةِ رَبِّهِمْ مُّشْفِقُونَ ﴾ [المؤمنون: ٥٧]

Verily those who live in awe for fear of their Lord;

Al-Mumenoun 23 : 57

﴿ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴾ [المؤمنون: ٥٨]

Those who believe in the Signs of their Lord;

Al-Mumenoun 23 : 58

﴿ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِرَبِّهِمْ لَا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴾ [المؤمنون: ٥٩]

Those who join not (in worship) partners with their Lord;

Al-Mumenoun 23 : 59

﴿ وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْتُونَ مَا آتَوْا وَقُلُوبُهُمْ وَجَلَةٌ أَنَّهُمْ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ رَاجِعُونَ ﴾ [المؤمنون: ٦٠]

And those who dispense their charity with their hearts full of fear, because they will return to their Lord;

Al-Mumenoun 23 : 60

﴿ أُولَٰئِكَ يُسْرِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ وَهُمْ هَاهَا سَارِعُونَ ﴾ [المؤمنون: ٦١]

It is these who hasten in every good work, and these who are foremost in them.

Al-Mumenoun 23 : 61

We learn from these verses:

- Those who fear their Lord understand their accountability to Him and are motivated to hasten in all good deeds. In contrast, those who deny their accountability do not see any urgent need to do good
- Those who are righteous seize every opportunity to thank God for His blessings and express their gratitude to Him. They try their best, yet they are fearful that their deeds may not be accepted because they may have shortcomings or their intentions may not have been pure.

Allah's prophets serve as examples for us in hastening in all good deeds

Allah's prophets applied God's message in their life and serve as our example of righteous behavior and good deeds. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) never saved anything for himself or his family. He spent whatever he had in charity and to help other Muslims. He was most generous during the month of Ramadan. He is our example of devotion and service to God. His prayer is legendary and his noble character, morals and righteous behavior sets the standard for us in our life. The Qur'an praises his character and morals:

﴿ وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿٤﴾ [القلم: ٤] ﴾

And thou (standest) on an exalted standard of character.

Al-Qalam 68 : 4

The Qur'an praises other prophets. An example is Zakareyya and Yahya:

﴿ وَزَكَرِيَّا إِذْ نَادَىٰ رَبَّهُ، رَبِّ لَا تَذَرْنِي فَرْدًا وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْوَارِثِينَ ﴿٨٩﴾ ﴾

[الأنبياء: ٨٩]

And (remember) Zakariya, when he cried to his Lord: "O my Lord! leave me not without offspring, though Thou art the best of inheritors."

Al-Anbia'a 21 : 89

﴿ فَأَسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ، وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ، يَحْيَىٰ وَأَصْلَحْنَا لَهُ، زَوْجَهُ، إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يُسْرِعُونَ ﴿٩٠﴾ ﴾

﴿ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ وَيَدْعُونَنَا رَغَبًا وَرَهَبًا ۗ وَكَانُوا لَنَا خَشِيعِينَ ﴿٩٠﴾ [الأنبياء: ٩٠] ﴾

So We listened to him: and We granted him Yahya: We cured his wife's (barrenness) for him. These (three) were ever quick in emulation in good works; they used to call on Us with love and reverence, and humble themselves before Us.

Al-Anbia'a 21 : 90

Our reward for hastening in good deeds

Allah promises those who do good and hasten in all good deeds His forgiveness and His paradise:

﴿ وَسَارِعُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا السَّمَوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴾ [آل عمران: ١٣٣]

Be quick in the race for forgiveness from your Lord, and for a Garden whose width is that (of the whole) of the heavens and of the earth, prepared for the righteous.

Al-Imran 3 : 133

﴿ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ فِي السَّرَّاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَالْكَبِيرِ وَالصَّغِيرِ وَالْعَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴾ [آل عمران: ١٣٤]

Those who spend (freely), whether in prosperity, or in adversity; who restrain anger, and pardon (all) men; for Allah loves those who do good.

Al-Imran 3 : 134

﴿ وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا فَعَلُوا فَحِشَةً أَوْ ظَلَمُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا لِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَمَن يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَلَمْ يُصِرُّوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلُوا وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴾ [آل عمران: ١٣٥]

And those who, having done something to be ashamed of, or wronged their own souls, earnestly bring Allah to mind, and ask for forgiveness for their sins; and who can forgive sins except Allah? And are never obstinate in persisting knowingly in (the wrong) they have done.

Al-Imran 3 : 135

﴿ أُولَٰئِكَ جَزَاؤُهُم مَّغْفِرَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَجَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَنِعْمَ أَجْرُ الْعَامِلِينَ ﴾ [آل عمران: ١٣٦]

For such the reward is forgiveness from their Lord, and Gardens with rivers flowing underneath; an eternal dwelling: how excellent a recompense for those who work (and strive)!

Al-Imran 3 : 136

Those who do good, and who will receive God's forgiveness and enter His paradise possess the following characteristics:

- They control their anger and emotions
- They pardon and forgive the mistakes and shortcomings of others
- They seek God's forgiveness for their own mistakes
- They are not arrogant, nor persist in their wrong-doing after they realize their mistakes
- They spend in charity when times are good and when it is difficult to do so
- They hasten in all good deeds and are foremost in doing good

Their reward is forgiveness of their sins and God's paradise

People behave differently depending on the strength of their faith and commitment and how they understand their accountability to God. Some are devoted and committed, and spare no effort in doing all kinds of good deeds. Others will do a good deed every now and then. Still, others do not care and let many opportunities slip past them. They fail to understand the importance of helping others who need their help for the sake of God. They only help if it means a certain material gain for them. The Qur'an describes these three different types of people:

﴿ ثُمَّ أَوْرَثْنَا الْكِتَابَ الَّذِينَ اصْطَفَيْنَا مِنْ عِبَادِنَا فَمِنْهُمْ ظَالِمٌ لِنَفْسِهِ وَمِنْهُمْ مُقْتَصِدٌ

وَمِنْهُمْ سَابِقٌ بِالْخَيْرَاتِ إِذْنِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَضْلُ الْكَبِيرُ ﴿۳۲﴾ [فاطر: ۳۲]

Then We have given the Book for inheritance to such of Our servants as We have chosen: but there are among them some who wrong their own souls; some who follow a middle course; and some who are, by Allah's leave, foremost in good deeds; that is the highest Grace.

Fatir 35 : 32

Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) said: (This group of (righteous) people who are foremost in good deeds will enter paradise with no accountability).

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