



TIME WITH THE GLORIOUS QUR'AN-PART ONE (1)

QUR'AN 2: 2-4

**TOPIC: Qualities of the Pious and
Righteous**



By: Dr. Mohsen Maarefi, IUCG President

In the name of Allah the Beneficent the Merciful! May Allah's salutations and peace be upon the noble prophet and his household.

We give praise to Allah for the blessing of Ramadan. We are indeed blessed to be part of the living, who by Allah's grace are not just witnessing the blessed days of this holy month but observing the thirty-day fast as well. We have not done anything special to deserve this favour from Allah. We have not been the best of people in our worship. But Allah has been ever merciful. Among his ever-abiding mercies is the blessed month of Ramadan. I congratulate myself and everyone else on this great blessing.

To announce the arrival of this blessed month to Muslims and to exhort them to take full advantage of it, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم used to deliver this beautiful sermon called the Khutbah Sha'baniyya (Sha'baniyya Sermon). At every session we shall begin our discussion with a quote from the sermon. The first paragraph reads:

“O people! Indeed ahead of you is the blessed month of Allah; A month of blessing, mercy and forgiveness. A month, which before Allah, is the best of months. Its days are the best of days. Its nights are the best of nights, and its hours are the best of hours. It is the month in which you are invited to the feast of Allah. And you have been made amongst the benignant of Allah”.

Apart from all the favours that Allah grants us in this blessed month as told us by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم in this beautiful sermon, we are also required to consciously engage ourselves in growing our spiritual selves. Let us seize the opportunity offered us and become better. Wretched indeed is he who remains deprived of the mercy of Allah in this great month. Verily, Ramadan is the month of Allah.

We shall begin our commentary of the Gracious Quran from Verse 2 of Quran Chapter 2:

ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَآرِيبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ (2) الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَ مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ (3)
وَ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَ مَا أُنزِلَ مِن قَبْلِكَ وَ بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ (4)

"This is the book (Quran) about which there is no doubt; It is a guide for the pious and righteous (2). They who believe in the unseen, and are steadfast in prayer, and of what we have blessed them with expend in charity (3). And they who believe in that which was revealed to you and that which was revealed before you, and of the hereafter are certain (4)".

These verses throw up very engaging questions that we really need to ponder over.

1. What does the Almighty Allah mean by the Holy Quran being a guide for the pious and righteous? Does it mean that the Quran does not offer guidance to them who are lost but in search of guidance? Or those who are lost yet ignorant of their being lost?
2. What does the expression “pious and righteous” mean?
3. Why "belief in the unseen", "belief in the Book" and "belief in the Hereafter" is mentioned separately?
4. Why Allah has mentioned only "prayer" and "charity" from all the worships?

In discussing the verses, we shall make an effort to answer the questions.

The Quran as a Complete Guide for the Pious

In Verse 2 above, Allah says that the Quran is a book of guidance for the pious and righteous. This, however, does not mean that the Quran does not offer guidance to them who are not pious. Allah says in Surah Baqarah, Verse 185, that the Quran is a book of guidance for all of mankind (هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ). It is clear therefrom that the Quran is a book of guidance for all people, be they pious or otherwise. Between these two verses, there is no contradiction whatsoever. It is clear that people will be able by reading the Quran to distinguish right from wrong. But there is another important point Allah wants to point out to us in this verse. What Allah seeks to do in Verse 2 is to draw our attention to the symbiotic relationship between “understanding the Quran” and “human action”.

Allah invites all of mankind to read and understand the Quran. Reading and understanding the Quran is supposed to make our actions and conduct better. This will promote one from the fold of the generality of ‘mankind’ to the fold of the ‘pious and righteous’. On the other hand, whoever applies the Quran to his life, Allah will give him more understanding and guide him the more.

The real meaning of this verse therefore is that although the Quran provides guidance for all human beings, attaining piety and righteousness is the ultimate goal. That is what makes the Quran complete. For those who learn the Quran and apply what it teaches to their lives, the Quran will guide them perfectly to become pious and righteous.

Qualities of the Pious and Righteous

Some are of the opinion that piety resides only in the heart and refers only to beliefs. It is generally believed that the pious are they who fear the Lord wholeheartedly. According to these verses however, piety is much more than that. The pious are clearly described in these verses.

Allah uses five distinguishing features to describe the pious and righteous: three of which are founded on faith, and the other two on service.

First Feature: Belief in the Unseen

The first criterion for one to be pious and righteous is that one must believe in the unseen. What this means is that Allah in his supreme majesty and wisdom has not made everything manifest. He has kept certain things hidden. Some things are

impossible to see with the eye. Among these are the essence of Allah Himself and His dominion over all things, His angels, etc.

Second Feature: Belief in Quran and other Divine Scriptures

The first item of faith as discussed above is anchored on the second; that is belief in that which Allah has sent down to His Holy Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم and all those that He has revealed to other prophets before Muhammad صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم. In this case, a vague belief in the unseen is not enough. The pious must be very clear on what particular things of the unseen Allah wants him to believe. It is the Quran that clearly states what these invisible things are. In the Quran and in the other divine scriptures, Allah properly directs and guides on what he means by belief in the unseen. This is to protect mankind from believing in things like magic, witchcraft and all other kinds of evil power which are unseen.

Belief in the Quran and other revealed books will therefore clarify to man what unseen thing he should believe in and what he should discount.

Third Feature: Belief in the Hereafter

The last condition for the attainment of piety which is founded on faith is "certainty about the Hereafter".

A question arises here: Why does Allah separate "Belief in the Hereafter" from "Belief in the Quran", when it is clear that belief in the Quran automatically means belief in the Hereafter? Obviously, the Quran affirms the truth of the hereafter.

In many other verses, Allah has listed "Belief in the Hereafter" separately. For example, Allah says in several instances in the Quran "Those who believe in Allah and believe in the Hereafter" (يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ).

Perhaps one of the reasons why this condition is usually listed separately is that belief in the hereafter has an immediate effect on our actions. One cardinal point of divine religions is belief in the hereafter. All believers must know that the world does not end with death. Life continues thereafter. As we invest in our future, we should not limit the future to this life. We must continuously be mindful of the hereafter, for the hereafter is for certain. A pious person must operate in a manner that does not jeopardize his future in the hereafter. We can therefore say that it is because of the practical effect of this condition that Allah lists it separately, and it is also to highlight its importance.

The other two criteria of piety and righteousness are hinged on service. Faith without service is hollow. Service must also be founded on strong faith, otherwise it soon loses its meaning.

Fourth feature: Maintaining prayer

The fourth condition, which also happens to be the first in terms of the two conditions that are founded on service (action-based), is maintaining prayer.

Allah says that the pious and righteous are they who are steadfast in keeping their prayers.

Fifth feature: Doing charity (Infaq)

The fifth is to do charity, show munificence and kindness to other men with the blessings that Allah has favored one with.

Relative to the fourth and fifth features, there are obvious questions. Why does Allah mention only these forms of worship out of all the other forms? Do these two (SALAT and INFAQ or ZAKAT) have any special features?

Our answer to these questions is NO. Here salat (prayer) and infaq (charity) have more meaning than we are familiar with in jurisprudence. As 'Allamah Tabatabaei explains in his precious Tafsir, in many instances in the Qur'an "observing prayers" is mentioned together with "giving Zakat or charity".

Allah uses the "observance of prayers" to represent all other acts of service to Allah. The observance of prayers used here and in a lot of other parts of Quran is therefore a synecdoche for all the other forms of service to Allah. The first act of service is for man to strive in building his relationship with Allah. This includes doing good for the sake of Allah and abstaining from evil for Allah's sake; obeying the commands of Allah not for any reason but simply because they are Allah's commands. Giving charity or Zakat is also a synecdoche for all other acts that one has to do towards building his relationship with other men especially financial sacrifices.

AllamahTabatabaei further says "If of all the forms of worship Allah has mentioned prayer (salat) and giving charity (zakat) between all the worship

PART 1: QUALITIES OF THE PIOUS AND RIGHTEOUS

(assignments) then this is because these two tasks are like pillars among all the "acts of service to Allah" and "acts of service to man, respectively."

اللَّهُمَّ نَوِّرْ قُلُوبَنَا بِالْقُرْآنِ، وَزَيِّنْ أَخْلَاقَنَا بِالْقُرْآنِ، وَأَصْلِحْ أُمُورَنَا بِالْقُرْآنِ، وَأَشْفِ مَرَضَاتَنَا بِالْقُرْآنِ، اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلِ
الْقُرْآنَ لَنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا قَرِينًا وَفِي الْقَبْرِ مُوَسِّئًا وَأَنْيَسًا

وصل اللهم على محمد وآله الأطهار