

THE TRUE RICHNESS (PART 2 OF 2)

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No matter how much money a person earns, in reality he only utilizes a very small fraction of it. Ponder over the wise reminder from the Prophet, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him. Abdullah ibn al-Shakhr reported,

“I entered upon the Prophet and he was reciting ‘Alhakum al-takathur’:

“Competition in [worldly] increase diverts you.” (Quran 102:1)

He said,

‘The son of Adam would say: ‘My money! My money!’ But do you have, O son of Adam, anything of your money, except that which you ate, and it was put to waste, or that which you wore, till it wore out, or that which you gave in charity, so you have sent it forth (to get its rewards in the Hereafter)?’” (Saheeh Muslim)

In this hadith, the Prophet reminded us that, in reality, all of our money is utilized in only three ways. Firstly, the food that we eat, and this eventually is transformed into waste. Secondly, the clothes that we wear, and this eventually wears out such that it is unusable. Thirdly, the money that has been given out for the sake of God, and this is the only part whose benefit remains and returns to us. So of what benefit is it for a person to gloat over ‘his money’, and boast about it, and be eager for it, when in reality so little of it is actually spent in such a way as to provide eternal benefit?

Because of these factors, the Prophet Muhammad reminded mankind that wealth is not proportionate to the amount of material possessions a person owns. True wealth is to be content with what one has, and then to use it to strive for the everlasting reward of the Hereafter. The Prophet said,

“Richness is not in the quantity of possessions (that one has); rather, true richness is the richness of one’s self (or contentment).” (Saheeh Al-Bukhari)

He also stated,

“That which is little yet sufficient is better than that which is much but distracts.”[1]

And in a third hadith,

“He is indeed successful who has been guided to Islam, and his sustenance was sufficient for him, and he was content with it.” (Saheeh Muslim)

Lastly,

“The best sustenance that you are given is that which is sufficient.”[2]

From this, we can clearly see that true success and wealth is found in the peace and satisfaction which results from sincerity in faith and practice. The contentment of the heart is what makes a person realize and appreciate this true richness. The Prophet described this richness in another hadith, where he said,

“Whoever amongst you wakes up, secure in his home, healthy in his body, having the bare amount of food that he requires for the day, then it is as if the entire world has been captured for him, with all that it contains!”[3]

This hadith has many benefits that can be obtained from it. ‘Whoever amongst you...,’ means the Muslims, indicating the first and greatest blessing, namely, that of Islam; ‘...wakes up...,’ means that one has been blessed with life; ‘..secure in his house..,’ means without fear of attack upon one’s safety or the safety of one’s family; ‘...healthy in his body...,’ means that God has saved him or her from diseases and sicknesses; ‘...having the bare amount of food that he requires for the day...’ indicates that even the minimal amount of sustenance is a great blessing from God, for this is what the body and health requires, and many people do not even have this amount; and lastly, ‘.. it is as if the entire world has been captured for him, with all that it contains,’ indicating that this is all that a person needs of this life, and everything that is in addition to this bare minimum is an unnecessary luxury. Contentment with God’s provision, whether large or small, is contentment with life, and hence, the best wealth that a person can have. The Prophet stated,

“Verily God tests His slave with what He has given him. So whoever is content with whatever he has been assigned, then God will bless him in it, and give him more! But whoever is not content (with what he has been given), then he will not be blessed in it.”[4]

Those who are content with their own provision and lot in life will lose concern over the wealth and status of others. Such people have no concern as to how much money others have, what types of cars they drive, or the size of the houses they live in. Those with pure hearts in this respect love God, and are grateful to Him, knowing that the

goods of this world cannot buy happiness, or the blessings of faith and contentment. In return, they are loved by God, and by fellow men and women. This principle is so clearly outlined in the noble Prophetic tradition:

“Give up (hope of attaining) this world, God will love you. And give up (hope of) whatever is in the possession of other people, and the people will love you.”^[5]

In another narration, a person came to the Prophet and asked him, “O Messenger of God! Narrate to me a hadith, and make it short!” So he replied,

“Pray your prayer as if it is your last, as if you are looking at Him (God), for even if you do not see Him then He sees you. And give up hope (of obtaining) what other’s possess and you will live a wholesome life. And beware of anything that you might (later) have to make an excuse for.”^[6]

So whoever sets as a primary goal the pleasure of God and the rewards of the Hereafter will be loved by God, and whoever avoids competing with fellow Muslims concerning worldly matters will be loved by the people. And this wealth - the love of God and that of mankind — is far greater than any richness that money can buy.

The pious predecessors of this nation also realized this principle. Awn ibn Abdillah^[7] said, “The greatest blessing is that — when things become difficult for you — you appreciate what you have been given of the blessings of Islam.”^[8] So next time you are in severe financial circumstances, instead of looking at the material and temporary pleasures that you are not able to acquire, ponder instead over the “treasure of Iman (Faith)” that God has blessed you with, and appreciate the great fortune of being a Muslim! Likewise, when you are overjoyed or distressed due to some monetary gain or loss, remember the statement of Muhammad ibn Suqah, who said,

“There are two characteristics which, even though God does not punish us for them, are reason enough for our punishment: we are overjoyed at a small gain that we receive from this world, and yet God has never seen us so happy for a good deed that we do, and we are so worried about a small matter that has missed us concerning this world, and yet God has never seen us so worried about a sin that we commit.”^[9]

I will conclude this article by quoting the verse in which God reminded the Prophet and the believers to not long for the wealth of this world — wealth that has been given to those that have rejected submission to God - but rather to strive for the richness of the Hereafter:

“And do not look towards that by which We have given enjoyment to [some] categories of them, [its being but] the splendor of worldly life by which We test them. And the provision of your Lord is better and more lasting.” (Quran 20:131)

comment

Footnotes:

- [1] Abu Ya'la, Ibn Adi and al-Albani authenticated it in al-Sahihah,
- [2] Ibn Hibban. See al-Silsilah al-Sahihah
- [3] Al-Tirmidhi, Saheeh Al-Bukhari, Ibn Hibban. Al-Albani agreed with al-Tirmidhi in his Silsilah
- [4] Reported by Ahmad as mentioned in al-Sahihah.
- [5] *Ibn Majah, Al-Hakim*. Al-Albani also graded it as authentic in al-Silsilah,
- [6] *Saheeh Al-Bukhari, Al-Tabarani*.
- [7] Abdullah ibn Masud. When he used to narrate hadith, his beard would become wet with tears. He died around 115 A.H.
- [8] Ibn Abi al-Dunya, al-Qana ah wa al-Ta afuf.
- [9] ibid

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