

This Worldly Life versus the Best Return (An explanation of Quran 3:14 - 18) (part 1 of 2)

Description: An introduction to five inspiring verses of Quran and a deeper discussion of verse 3:14.

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The Quran is the book that Muslims believe to be the direct and literal words of God and it is God's greatest gift to humanity. It is a book like no other book; it is not a history book or a story book or a scientific manual but it does contain all of those genres. The Quran and its amazing ability to speak to the heart of any human being is a beautiful phenomenon. It seems to understand a person's inner most thoughts and can even



answer questions only half formulated by the reader. In the second verse of the second chapter of the Quran, God describes the Quran by calling it a book whereof there is no doubt, guidance to those who are pious, righteous, and fear God (Quran 2:2). A person asks or even thinks the question and Quran offers guidance. Come with me on a journey of discovery it seems to say. It beckons the reader to delve deeply into the heart of humanity and see the world through God's eyes.

In this article we are going to examine and discuss five verses from the third chapter of the Quran. This chapter is called 'The Family of Imran' (*Aali Imran*). Quran tells us that Imran is the father of Mary, the mother of Jesus. This whole family which includes Prophet Zachariah and the man Christians know as John the Baptist, is one held in high regard. This chapter speaks particularly to the Christians and exhorts them to worship One God, however contained in this chapter are some beautiful pieces of prose that describe the nature of humankind. And who is better to describe and give us an insight into our complicated nature other than our Creator - God?

The following verses begin by describing our desire to be surrounded by beauty and our natural inclination to gather worldly things, hold on to them and take pleasure in them. They then remind us that life everlasting in Paradise is worth more than this world and all that is in it and then also show us how we can achieve this ultimate goal.

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, cattle and well-tilled land. This is the pleasure of the present world's life, but God has with Him the best return (Paradise).

Say, "Shall I inform you of something better than that? For those who fear God will be gardens in the presence of their Lord beneath which rivers flow, wherein they abide eternally, and purified spouses and approval from God. And God is Seeing (i.e. aware) of (His) slaves."

Those who say: "Our Lord! We have indeed believed, so forgive us our sins and save us from the punishment of the Fire."

(They are) those who are patient, those who are true (in Faith, words, and deeds), and obedient with sincere devotion in worship. Those who spend (in the way of God) and those who pray and beg God's Pardon in the last hours of the night.

God bears witness that none has the right to be worshipped but He, and the angels, and those having knowledge (also give this witness); (He always) maintains His creation in Justice. None has the right to be worshipped but He, the All-Mighty, the All-Wise. (Quran 3:14 - 18)

The first sentence tells us that God has filled the earth with beauty and that he has deliberately beautified those things which we desire, those things we naturally covet. This life is a delight. There are many traditions from the life of Prophet Muhammad that testify to this.

Life is a delight, and the best delight is a righteous wife. [1]

Indeed the world is moist and green, and Allah has made you succeeding generations in it to watch how you will act, so beware of the world... [2]

Women and fragrance have been made dear to my affections, but prayer was made the sweetness of my eyes. [3]

No one will enter Paradise who has an atom's weight of arrogance in his heart." A man said, "What if a man likes his clothes to look good and his shoes to look good?" He said, "Allah is beautiful and loves beauty. Arrogance means denying the truth and looking down on people." [4]

3:14 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, cattle and well-tilled land. This is the pleasure of the present world's life, but God has with Him the best return (Paradise).

Here God reminds us that it is perfectly natural to desire the good things that He has provided for us. Not only is it natural but it is acceptable to find joy in the delights of this life, provided you remember that the joys of this world fade and its delights are perishable. Life on earth can be filled with beauty, our surroundings can be magnificent, weather can give us a sense of awe and the things we love can make us feel happy.

However but God asks us to remember that this life is fleeting and tells us that the return or Paradise is better.

This is emphasized in **Quran 57:20**. **Know that the life of this world is only play and amusement, pomp and mutual boasting among you, and rivalry in respect of wealth and children. (It is) as the likeness of vegetation after rain, thereof the growth is pleasing to the tiller; afterwards it dries up and you see it turning yellow; then it becomes straw...**

We desire a partner of the opposite sex and a family but must remember that the loving and wanting to please our family might sometimes lead us to commit sins. The pursuit of wealth is a perfectly natural and admirable thing especially if we want to spend that wealth on being kind to family, friends, or neighbors, and by doing various acts of righteousness and obedience. However if the pursuit of wealth results in arrogance and domineering behaviour towards those less wealthy it is no longer admirable but a cause of sin. It is interesting to note that God does not mention that human beings desire just gold and silver alone but that we desire heaped up or hoarded amounts of wealth, indicating our desire to accumulate more and more wealth. This desire is deep within us and we must take care to control it rather than let it control us.

Do not let your innate love of beautiful things distance you from God. There is a place for the good things in this world, they were created for us to enjoy but they must stay in their place, they should not be raised above obedience to God. Prophet Muhammad also reminded us of this when he compared the life of this world to a place in Paradise. He said, "A place in Paradise the size of the space found between a bow and the attached string is better than the whole earth on which the sun rises and sets."[\[5\]](#)

We will continue our discussion, beginning with verse 3:15 in part 2.

Endnotes:

[\[1\]](#) *Saheeh Muslim*

[\[2\]](#) *Saheeh Muslim*

[\[3\]](#) *Imam Ahmad*

[\[4\]](#) *Saheeh Muslim*

[\[5\]](#) *Saheeh Al-Bukhari*

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