

## Craving for Wealth and Status

The Messenger of Allah (saw) used to say: **«اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ لَا يَنْفَعُ، وَدُعَاءٍ لَا يُسْمَعُ، وَقَلْبٍ لَا يَخْشَعُ، وَنَفْسٍ لَا تَشْبَعُ، اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ هَوْلَاءِ الْأَرْبَعِ»** **“O Allah I seek refuge with you from knowledge that does not benefit, from a du’aa which is not answered, from a heart that does not fear, and from a self that that is not satisfied. O Allah I seek refuge with you from these four.”**

We live in a time where wealth and status are seen to define man and to give him any position in society as wealth and status are the measure of success in this society.

In Islam, craving for wealth and status is not seen as glorious and something to pursue with this type of craving. We have our own idea of wealth and status, but they are with Allah; the ranks that are raised with Allah; the yearning for the angels to mention us to our Lord; the wealth that we gain in the Akhira (Hereafter), not the wealth and status of this world.

As Dawah carriers, we need to be careful about what we crave, for craving for this dunya will take away the craving for the Akhira and craving for rank and status in this life may take away our rank and position with Allah.

Al-Tabaraani reports from `Asim ibn `Adiyy (ra) who said “I bought one hundred shares from the shares of Khaybar, and that reached the Prophet (saw), so he (saw) said, **«مَا ذُنْبَانِ عَادِيَانَ أَصَابَا فَرِيْسَةَ عَنَّمِ أَضَاعَهَا رَبُّهَا بِأَفْسَدَ فِيهَا مِنْ حُبِّ الْمَالِ وَالشَّرَفِ لَدَيْهِ»** ‘Oh Asim! **Two ravenous wolves remaining amongst sheep whose owner has lost them will not be more harmful than a Muslim's seeking after wealth and status will be to his Deen’.**”

The wording of the hadeeth of Jabir (ra) is: **“Two ravenous wolves which spend the night amongst sheep whose shepherd is absent, will not cause more havoc for the people than will love of status and wealth to a Believer’s Deen.”**

As is obvious, none but a small number of these sheep would escape from the havoc caused by these hungry wolves – and the Prophet (saw) informed us that a person’s craving after wealth and status does not cause less harm than these two hungry wolves amongst the sheep. Rather, either it will be the same or worse. This shows that hardly any of a Muslim’s Deen remains secure if he craves after wealth and status in this world – just as hardly any of the sheep will be saved from hungry wolves. This great similitude contains a severe warning against the evil of craving after wealth and status in the world.

The first type of craving for wealth is that a person has extreme love for wealth and also relentlessly exerts efforts to attain it – via means which are lawful – being excessive in that, striving hard and making painstaking efforts and toiling in order to attain it.

Ibn Rajab said: “The people who have the greatest degree of restlessness are the envious. Those who have the greatest degree of happiness are the contented. Those who persevere most through suffering are those who are covetous. Those who have the simplest and most pleasant life are those who most strongly refuse this world. The one who will suffer the greatest regret is the scholar whose actions contradict his knowledge.”

It is reported in Saheeh Muslim from Jabir (ra), that the Prophet (saw) said, **«وَاتَّقُوا الشُّحَّ، فَإِنَّهُ أَهْلَكَ مَنْ كَانَ قَبْلَكُمْ، وَحَمَلَهُمْ عَلَى أَنْ سَفَكُوا دِمَاءَهُمْ، وَاسْتَحَلُّوا مَحَارِمَهُمْ»** **“Fear avarice. It destroyed those before you and caused them to shed one another's blood and to make lawful what was unlawful.”**

He also reported that the Prophet (saw) said, «ولا يجتمع الشُّحُّ والإيمانُ في قلبِ عبدٍ أبداً» **“Avarice (shuhh) and Emaan will not combine in the heart of a Believer.”**

Know that craving after status and position inevitably causes great harm before its attainment due to the striving necessary to attain it, and also afterwards due to the person’s strong desire to hold onto it which produces injustice, haughtiness and other evils.

Remember Pharaohs and how they built their pyramids, and buried themselves with all their wealthy goods, and even their slaves!!! What happened to firawn? He drowned and what is left of him?

The people of Aad and Thamud thought they were strong and great on this earth and not in need of Allah. They were destroyed.

Again, in this day and age, we can see that people are building the grandest and greatest of buildings and are always comparing who has the highest, the biggest and the greatest.

Ibn Rajab continues:

So woe to the one whose knowledge which the Prophet (saw) sought refuge from and ordered us to seek refuge from. This is the knowledge which the Prophet (saw) mentioned, saying, «إن أشدَّ الناس عذاباً يوم القيامةَ عالمٌ لم ينفعه الله بعلمه» **“Those amongst the people receiving the severest punishment on the Day of Resurrection is the one who has knowledge, but is not given benefit through his knowledge by Allah.”**

Hassan al-Basri was raised in the house of the Prophet. His mother was a freed slave of one of the Prophet’s wives, and his father was the son of Yasar the slave of Zaid ibn Thabit, the freed slave of Rasool Allah (saw). His mother was so close to Umm Salamah that she used to live with her.

He said: “If the knowledge does not produce taqwa, then it is just like anything else” – i.e. of no value

So what did wealth and status mean to our predecessors the tabi’een?

Hassan al-Basri was asked about the dunya. He replied: “How can you ask me about the Dunya and the Akhira?!! The example of the Dunya and the Akhira is like the East and the West. The closer you go to one, the further you go from the other.”

Whilst dawah carriers have the best awareness of the Ummah’s problem and its solution, that knowledge must never lead us to claim any status for ourselves.

Hassan al-Basri was asked about at-Tawaadu’ (humility). He said, “It is to never meet a Muslim except seeing that they are better than yourself.”

As Carriers of the Dawah, we must be careful not to think that we have the correct concepts that can win each argument for the sake of winning the argument, as this can lead to arrogance and pursuit of status, rather, it should be to uphold the Haq and speak the word of truth.

Seeking positions of responsibility for status or power, wanting people to notice that you are great in the dawah, or thinking that you have seniority due to long service, or superiority because you understand things quickly are all dangerous manifestations of losing your humility.

Whilst we have this knowledge, we pray that it is beneficial knowledge – as Rasool Allah (saw) prayed: «اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ لَا يَنْفَعُ» **“O Allah I seek refuge with you from knowledge that does not benefit.”**

Hassan al-Basri was present in Basra when al-Hajjaj, the tyrant governor who had killed Ibn az-Zubair, built his grand palace and called all the people to witness it. Hassan knew that this was a great opportunity to remind the people about the place of wealth and status in this life. He said: "We looked at what the filthiest of filth built, and we found that Firawn built greater than what he built and higher than what he built, then Allah destroyed Firawn and what he build. Hajjaj should know that the inhabitants of the sky hate him and the people of the earth only deceive him!" It was said to Hassan "be careful O Abu Saeed!" Hassan replied, "Allah has taken a covenant from the people of knowledge to explain it to the people and not to be silent!"

Such are the examples of the dawah carriers before us.

Al-Hajaj was inviting people to look at his wealth and his status. The Tabi'i, Hassan al-Basri, wanted to bring the people back to what is more important, the worship of Allah.

Another example of how status was viewed by our pious predecessors:

Khalifah Sulayman bin Abdul Malik on his death bed wrote a secret letter appointing the next Khalifah. He did not let anyone know what was written inside this note and ordered the guards to put the letter in the pocket of Umar ibn Abdul Aziz (his nephew) and ordered for it to be read it out publically after his death.

This letter was read out and he had chosen Umar ibn Abdul Aziz as the next Khalifah.

Umar was burying his uncle and after this came a procession of horses to take him (as he was the Khalifah). His response was 'what do I want with all that decoration? My donkey is enough'.

Then the guards and soldiers came. They said we will walk in front. Umar ibn Abdul Aziz said: "I am just one of the Muslims, I go as they go".

He then called people to the Masjid, praised Allah, prayed on the Prophet (saw) and said: "O people, I have been afflicted with this matter against my wishes and without my request, and without consultation of people. I renounce this Bay'ah and you can choose whom you want".

The people chose Umar ibn Abdul Aziz. On his appointment he said:

"Whosoever obeys Allah, obedience to him is waajib, but who disobeys Allah, there is no obedience to him. O people obey me in what I obey of Allah, and if I disobey Allah, then there is no obedience to me."

He was Khalifah for two and a half years and he is considered as the fifth rightly guided Khalifah and after the Sahabah is considered one of the best times in the Khilafah.

We should reflect on the attitude and the understanding that the righteous had about status and wealth, and consider this when taking on positions of responsibility.

Finally, look at this great Tabi'i Salamah ibn Dinar and his attitude to status and wealth.

In 97 AH, Khalifah Sulaiman ibn Abdul Malik came to Medina on the way to Makkah for Hajj.

The reciters, hadith scholars, Ulema and Amirs came to meet the Khalifah. Yet Salamah ibn Dinar, Qadi of Medina, was not there.

When Abdul Malik bin Sulaiman finished welcoming people, he said to the people, "Truly souls can become rusty, as metal becomes rusty if he does not find someone who can remind him from time to time and remove its rust."

"Yes, O Amir ul-Mo'mineen" they replied.

He said: "Is there someone in Medina who had met with a group of Prophet Muhammad's companions who could advise us?"

They answered, "Yes, O Amir ul-Mo'mineen ... He is Abu Hazim al-A'raj."

"Who is Abu Hazim al-A'raj?" asked the Khalifah.

They said, "He is Salamah ibn Dinar, Alim of Medina, its Imam, and a tabi'i who has met a number of the Sahabah."

"Invite him to meet me and be gentle in inviting him," said the Khalifah.

When Salama came, the Khalifah said to him, "Why did you turn away indifferently, O Abu Hazim from me?"

"What indifference did you find in me, O Amir ul-Mo'mineen?" He said.

"People came to see me, but you did not!!", said the Khalifah.

He replied, "Indifference is after already knowing each other. While you have never known me before and I've never seen you, so is it indifference that is happening from me? "

The Khalifah said to his court, "The Sheikh (Abu Hazim) was right in his reason, and the Khalifah was wrong."

He then turned to Abu Hazim and said, "Surely there are things in my soul that I want to put to you, O Abu Hazim."

"Tell me, O Amir ul-Mo'mineen, and only Allah is the Helper ".

The Khalifah said, "O Abu Hazim, why do we dislike death?!"

"(That's) because we have built prosperity in this world and destroyed our Afterlife, so we hate to get out of prosperity to destruction", he said.

"You're right", said Sulaiman..., "O Abu Hazim, what shall we get with Allah tomorrow (Resurrection)? What is our place, our status and rank?"

Abu Hazim replied, "Present your deeds to the Book of Allah, surely you will find the answer."

"Where I can find it in the Book of Allah ta'ala," said the Khalifah.

Abu Hazim replied, "You can find it in His words... **﴿إِنَّ الْأَبْرَارَ لَفِي نَعِيمٍ وَإِنَّ الْفَجَّارَ لَفِي جَحِيمٍ﴾** **"Those who are devoted are in bliss. And indeed the people who are disobedient are in the Fire"** [Surat al-Infitar: 13-14].

"If so, then where is the Mercy of Allah?" asked the Khalifah again.

Abu Hazim replied, **﴿إِنَّ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ﴾** **"Verily the mercy of Allah is very close to the people who do good"** [Surat al-A'raaf: 56].

The Khalifah said, "How we will meet Allah tomorrow?"

Abu Hazim replied, "As for those who do good, as a man who returned from travelling far, coming back to his family (full of longing to see) ... As for those who sin, like a slave who escaped being dragged toward his master by force (so he was scared)."

Sulayman immediately cried, his voice rising and his cries grew louder. Then he said, "O Abu Hazim, how can we become better?"

"Leave arrogance and have good manners", he said.

The Khalifah said, "As with this wealth, what is the path to taqwa of Allah regarding it?"

Abu Hazim replied, "If you took it with the right, distributed to the correct people, you divided it evenly and you did justice in it among your people."

The Khalifah said, "O Abu Hazim, tell me who is the most noble of people?"

"They are people who have Islamic characteristics and piety," he said.

The Khalifah said, "O Abu Hazim, what is the most just word?"

"A word of truth uttered by a person before the person he feared (worst) and before the people he expected (good) from," he said.

The Khalifah asked, "What prayer is answered the fastest, O Abu Hazim?"

"That is prayers of the muhsin for the muhsin," he said.

The Khalifah said: "What is the best Sadaqah?"

He replied, "Hard work of people who have few possessions that he put it in the hands of needy people without expecting any recognition or fearing any harm."

The Khalifah asked, "Who is the most clever and ingenious, O Abu Hazim?"

"That is someone who was granted obedience to the Almighty, then he acted upon it, then he guided the people to it".

"And who is the most stupid people?" asked the Khalifah again.

"That is someone who is driven by his companion's desires, while his friend was a tyrant, so he sold the Akhirah for the price of someone else's dunya" he said.

The Khalifah said, "Would you accompany us, O Abu Hazim, so you can benefit from us and we can benefit from you."

He replied, "No, O Amir ul-Mo'mineen."

"Why?" asked the Khalifah.

Salamah said, "I worry about leaning on you a little bit, so that Allah will afflict me with the weakness of the dunya and the weakness of death."

The Khalifah said, "Request from us your need, O Abu Hazim."

He paused and did not answer.

The Khalifah then repeated the words, "Request from us your need, O Abu Hazim, we shall grant for you, whatever it is."

He replied, "My need is that you save me from the fire and put me in heaven."

"That's not my authority," said the Khalifah.

Abu Hazim said, "Then, I have no need from you."

So the Khalifah said, "Pray for me, O Abu Hazim."

He also prayed, "O Allah, if your servant Sulaiman is from your awliyaa', then make easy for him the goodness of the world and the Hereafter ... And if he is one of your enemies, then straighten him and guide him to what You love and are pleased with."

So, someone among the audience there said, "How bad is what you said since you came to see the Amir ul-Mo'mineen... You have made the Muslim Khalifah among the enemies of Allah, you have harmed him."

Abu Hazim said, "Indeed, evil is what you say, truly Allah has taken a covenant from the knowledgeable, that they always say *kalimatul haq* (word of truth), Allah says, ﴿وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ﴾

﴿الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ لَتُبَيِّنُنَّهُ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَكْتُمُونَهُ﴾ **“And remember Allah took a covenant from the People of the Book, to make it known and clear to mankind, and not to hide it”** [Surah Ali Imran: 187]

Then he turned to the Khalifah, and said, "O Amir ul-Mo'mineen, indeed the people before us from the previous nations were always in good and safety as long as their leaders

came to their scholars seeking that which is in them (knowledge and advice). Then they found some of the ignorant people who study *Ilm*, and they went to the leaders expecting to obtain something of the dunya, so the leaders did not need the scholars, so they become crushed and helpless, and fell from the regard of Allah.

If scholars distance themselves from what the leaders have (property), the leaders will love to have their knowledge. However, they desired what was with the leaders, so they (the leaders) distanced themselves from their knowledge and under valued them.”

The Khalifah said, "You're right ... give me more of your advice, O Abu Hazim. I never saw anyone whose words are so wise as yours. “

He replied, "If you are from the people who take heed, then it is enough for you what I have already said. But if you are not from among them, it is not appropriate for me to be shooting arrows from a bow with no strings."

The Khalifah said, "I resolved that you will advise me, O Abu Hazim."

He replied, "Yes ... I will give you advice...Magnify your Lord, and avoid Him seeing you where He has forbidden ... and Him not finding you where He has ordered you."

Then he excused himself as he said salaam.

The Khalifah said, "Jazak Allahu Khairan, O scholar who can give advice."

When Abu Hazim came to his house, he found that Sulayman had sent a bag full of dinars, accompanied by a letter that read, "Spend it, and for you there is much more like it"

So he returned the money and sent a letter that read, "O Amir ul-Mo'mineen, I seek refuge in Allah from your questions to me being only in jest, and my answers to you were useless. By Allah, I do not desire that for you, so could I desire it for myself? O Amir ul-Mo'mineen if these dinars are in exchange for what I said and my advice to you, then carrion and pork at the time of necessity are more Halal than them, but if they are my right from the Baitul Mal, then have you given equal to me and the people in this right?"

Abu Umamah (ra) narrated that the Prophet (saw) said:

«إن أعبط أوليائي عندي لمؤمن خفيف الحاذ ذو حظ من الصلاة، أحسن عبادة ربه، وأطاعه في السر، وكان غامضاً في الناس لا يشار إليه بالأصابع، وكان رزقه كفافاً فصبر على ذلك، ثم نفض بيده فقال عجلت منيته قلت بواكيه قل تراثه»

**“The most envied person in my sight among my friends (awliyyaa’) is that believer who has little wealth, a good share (concentration) in Salah, worships Allah well and obeys Him in secret, and he is not popular among people and fingers are not pointed towards him (he has little status among the people), and his sustenance is sufficient and he is patient (content) on that. Then Allah’s Messenger (saw) flipped his finger and said, ‘(the above referred person) passed away quickly (went in his life quickly), there are few to mourn his death and he left little wealth behind.”**

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**“O Allah I seek refuge with you from knowledge that does not benefit, from a du’aa which is not answered, from a heart that does not fear, and from a self that that is not satisfied. O Allah I seek refuge with you from these four.”**

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