

A New Year Gained Or A New Year Lost?

Before we knew it, last year passed by like a flash and the New Year is here...whether it is 2015 CE or 1435 of the Hijri Calendar.

For some people, the beginning of the New Year is marked by excited countdowns, popping of firecrackers, partying till the wee hours of the morning and dancing.

And for some, it is a time for somber thoughtfulness and self-accountability.

Instead of celebrating, they are worried and scared.

Instead of partying, they think and reflect.

Their hearts tremble and their skins shiver.

Because each year that passes, means a year LESS from their lifetime.....

Each year that passes by is bringing them closer to their death....

Because, they know that with each passing year....each passing month....each passing day.....and each passing second...they are that much closer to that inevitable event when they meet their end,

that much closer to their meeting with their Lord, when they will have to stand in front of Him and answer regarding all that they did.

They are aware that whatever time has passed will never come back.

They know that if they did not make the most of their time, and if they did not use their time wisely, in the obedience of Allāh ﷻ, then surely, they are the losers.

That is because, the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

“On the Day of Resurrection the feet of the son of Adam (man) will not move till he is questioned about four things: How he spent his lifetime, how he spent his youth, from where he acquired his wealth and how he spent it, and what he did with his knowledge.” (Tirmidhi)

So they take account of themselves and their deeds at the end of a year....and at the end of a month.....and at the end of a day. They are not heedless of the passage of time or day. They are conscious of every second of their lives and how important it is to spend it usefully.

You see, your life is like the pages of a calendar. As the months go by, you flip its pages, never to flip the pages back. Those months that have passed will never come back. Similarly, as the days and weeks and months of your life go by, they too, will never come back. What is gone is gone.

That is why the righteous Salaf were so careful about their time and how they spent it. They made sure that no time, however short it was, passed without doing something useful, like acquiring useful knowledge, doing good deeds, helping others, or advising the Ummah.

Describing the Salaf's care for time, Hasan al-Basri رضي الله عنه said: "I saw those people and how they were more careful about their time than about their Dirhams and Dinars (meaning, their money).

Regarding Imaam Hammad ibn Salamah رضي الله عنه, someone said: "It is unbelievable! I have never seen Hammad laugh at all. He was always busy explaining hadeeth, praying, reading or praising the Lord. This is how he spent his day." And: "If you were to tell Hammad, 'You are going to die tomorrow', there would be nothing he could add to what he is already doing."

Subhaan Allāh! What consciousness of the value of time!

Ibn al-Qayyim says: *"The year is like a tree, months are its branches, days are the branch sticks, hours are its leaves, and the breaths are its fruits. Therefore, if one's breaths are in obedience [to Allāh and His Messenger], the fruits of his tree are good. If they are in disobedience, his fruits are bitter. The harvest is on the Appointed Day, when one's fruits are found out to be either good or bitter."*

The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said:

"Make the most of five things before five others: life before death, health before sickness, free time before becoming busy, youth before old age, and wealth before poverty." (Saheeh al-Jaami')

This Hadeeth, like so many other ahaadeeth of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم), is brief, yet it is so comprehensive and loaded with meaning. Not only does it point out the value of time, but it also points out the importance of its proper utilization during our youth, and health. It urges us to take the initiative, and not to delay good deeds.

The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) also said:

"Lose no time to do good deeds before you are caught up by one of seven calamities awaiting you: a starvation which may impair your wisdom; a prosperity which may mislead you; an ailment which may damage your health; an old age which may harm your senses; a sudden death; the Dajjal; or Doomsday, which is indeed the hardest and most bitter." [at-Tirmidhi]

In fact, we see that the Sahaabah were not only careful about wasting their time; rather they would compete with one another in good deeds. The noble and commendable competitions that occurred between Aboo Bakr and Umar رضي الله عنه is well-known to all.

"Umar saw that as an opportunity to outstrip Aboo Bakr and he said: 'Today, I am going to surpass Aboo Bakr.' He said: 'So I came with half of my property. The Messenger of Allāh ,

asked: 'What have you left for your family?' I answered: 'As much as this.' Then Aboo Bakr came with all that he has and the Messenger of Allāh , said: 'What have you left for your family?' He replied: 'I left for them Allāh, and his Messenger.' It is then that I said: 'I shall never compete with him on anything again.' (At-Tirmidhee).

And Allāh ﷻ says: "So race in goodness." (Surah Baqarah: 148)

Some 'Ulamaa while commenting on the above verse said: "Whoever beats others to the righteous deeds in this world will be the foremost on the Last Day and the foremost people are the highest in position."

Dear brothers and sisters, man's life is not free from impediments, obstacles and calamities, which can prevent him from accomplishing what could have been done earlier. Wise are those who grab available opportunities before being handicapped by obstacles.

Let us leave those people moving aimlessly in their fake pleasures and ponder over a better and sublime competition..... a competition that is encouraged by the Glorious Qur'aan.

It is a race towards the Pleasure of Allāh ﷻ, and the Paradise....a competition in the field of righteous deeds.

It is a competition in which the participants are wise people who are aware that this live is short hence they compete with one another in investing their lives in acts of obedience to Allāh ﷻ,

"Therefore, race for forgiveness from your Lord, and for a Garden as wide as heaven and earth, prepared for those who believe in Allāh and His Messengers. Such is the Favor of Allāh; He gives it to whom He will. Allāh is the Owner of great favor." (Surah Hadeed: 21)