

## *Humans are accountable to God for their actions*

**Friday Khutba by Dr Zahid Aziz, for Lahore Ahmadiyya UK, 7 January 2022**

وَكُلِّ انْسَانٍ اَلزَّمْنَهُ طَيْرُهُ فِي عُنُقِهِ ط وَنُخْرِجُ لَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ كِتَابًا يَلْقَاهُ مَنشُورًا ﴿١٣﴾ اِقْرَأْ كِتَابَكَ ط  
كَفَىٰ بِنَفْسِكَ الْيَوْمَ عَلَيْكَ حَسِيبًا ط ﴿١٤﴾

“And We have made every human being’s actions to cling to his neck, and We shall bring forth to him on the day of Resurrection a book which he will find wide open. Read your book. Your own soul is sufficient as a reckoner against you this day.” — ch. 17, v. 13–14.

These verses convey to us that every person’s actions stick to his soul. They leave a permanent impression on him or her. Then a time for judgment will come after death when a person will see a book or record of his actions done during his life. He will be asked to read that book and pass judgment on himself. Of course, it is not a book written on paper which a person will be asked to read. After all, when this verse was revealed the vast majority of people in the world could not read. Among the people to whom the Holy Prophet recited these verses, only very few could read a book. So this will not be a book of written words, but the pages of a person’s own self on which his actions will have been inscribed.

In another place in the Quran, this book is mentioned as follows: “And the book is placed, and you see the guilty fearing for what is in it, and they say: O woe to us! what a book is this! It leaves out neither a small thing nor a great one, but numbers them (all), and they find what they did confronting them. And your Lord does not wrong anyone” (18:49). God will not be treating anyone wrongly with unjust blame. People will find confronting them a record of their own deeds done during this life.

In yet another place in the Quran, we are told: “And the judging on that day will be just; so as for those whose good deeds are heavy, they are the successful. And as for those whose good deeds are light, those are they who ruined their souls because they disbelieved in Our messages” (7:8–9).

The Quran also says: “And We will set up a just balance on the day of Resurrection, so no soul will be wronged in the least. And if there were the weight of a grain of mustard seed, We will bring it. And Sufficient are We to take account.” (21:47).

These and numerous other passages of the Quran make it abundantly clear that it is a fundamental teaching of Islam that human beings will be held accountable by God for their actions, large or small, in an entirely just manner. We often see some Muslims justifying some act of theirs by claiming that God had ordained for them to do it, and in fact they even justify their actions throughout their whole lives by this claim. For example, a singer in Pakistan said in a television interview that the entire course of her performing career had been determined by Allah. Is she suggesting that her own desires, ambitions and choices played no part in her career, and that all decisions she made were dictated by Allah? Perhaps what a person means by such a comment is that their talents and skills were God-given and God also gave them certain opportunities in their life which they could not have obtained by their own efforts. But that person is still responsible before God for what they did with these God-given skills and how they used their God-given opportunities. A person, especially in some type of public life such as show business or politics, can have reached the top by using unfair means, even immoral means, lying, jealousy, trampling on the rights of others etc. God gave him the skills and the opportunities but God did not prescribe this behaviour.

Once there was an internationally-known celebrity from a Muslim country. He had promised his countrymen that he was so devoted and loyal to his country that he would only ever marry someone from his own country. But his fame on the international stage led him to marry someone from abroad. He then explained it to his countrymen by saying that it was his firm intention to stick by his promise, but God had planned something different for him. The question is: How could God force him to enter into a marriage which involved breaking his promise? If it was his firm intention to keep his promise, why did he not simply refuse to marry anyone which involved going against his promise? This is just a case of doing something *that you want to*, something that there is actually nothing wrong with, but instead of admitting

that it was your desire and your decision to do it, you call it a decree ordained by God, over which you have no control. So you cannot be held accountable for it!

We wonder whether such Muslims, and there are many, who consider all their own life decisions to be directly guided by Allah, ever do what is called *istighfar* in Islam, that is, the seeking of Allah's forgiveness for wrongs and sins committed. How could they have ever committed any sin when they were following God's bidding to the letter in each and every affair of their lives!

If their views and attitudes are right, then the passages of the Holy Quran quoted above become meaningless. Why will Allah confront individuals with all their deeds written in a book and ask them to judge for themselves, if it is Allah Who is responsible for those deeds? Why will a person be afraid to face his book of deeds, as stated in 18:49, if all he needs to do is to reply that God made me do all this? The idea of judging with a just balance and taking into account even the smallest of deeds also becomes purposeless, if in the important areas of their lives what they have done was what was decided by God.

In the Quran, God reminds human beings as follows: "Did I not charge you, O children of Adam, not to serve the devil? Surely he is your open enemy. And that you serve Me. This is the right way. And certainly he led astray numerous people from among you. Could you not then understand?" (36:60–62). In this passage those people are addressed who would be adjudged guilty in the after-life. It tells us that Allah directed all human beings not to follow the devil, but many of them paid no heed to this advice even after seeing the fate of others who had been led astray by the devil. They are, therefore, treated by God as responsible for their actions. They have no cause for suggesting that it was God Who decided the actions they committed. They failed to use their reason and understanding to see the right way from the wrong way.

According to the Quran, the idol-worshippers of the Holy Prophet's time put forward the argument that "if Allah had pleased we would not have set up partners with Him" (6:148). They attributed their own action of worshipping idols to the will of Allah. The reply given to them is: "Have you any knowledge so you would bring it forth to us? You only follow a conjecture and you only tell lies. ... if He had pleased

He would have guided you all” (6:148–149). Just because people are **able** to do something, for example worshipping idols, it does not mean that their act is approved by God, since He did not act to stop them. This is mere conjecture by them, their own baseless ideas, not supported by knowledge or truth. It says here at the end that what pleases God is for people to be rightly guided.

The greatest of Muslims who ever lived, that is the Companions of the Holy Prophet, were always deeply conscious that they would be held to account by Allah for any wrong they committed, however trivial it might have been. They also wanted to be held to account in this life by anyone whose rights they may have infringed. I now refer to some incidents relating to *Hazrat Umar* while he was the second Caliph of Islam, which provide examples of this deeply-felt sense of responsibility. These are taken from the classical book *Tarikh-ul-Khulufa* (History of the Caliphs), written five or six centuries ago, by Allama Jalal-ud-Din Suyuti.

1. Ans was a companion of the Holy Prophet Muhammad and his servant. He relates that while he was standing in a garden on one side of a wall, Hazrat Umar was alone by himself on the other side, and he was saying to himself: “O Umar! what are you as compared to the high rank that the chief of the Muslims should have? Fear God or he will punish you severely.”

2. Umar used to say: “The person whom I love most is the one who lets me know of my faults.”

3. Among the instructions that Umar gave, as he lay dying from his wounds, was: “When you carry my body out of the house for burial, walk fast, for if I am a good person in the sight of God then I should be taken to Him as quickly as possible, and if I am a bad person then you would be relieved of the burden upon your shoulders as quickly as possible.”

4. Once Umar was unwell and people told him that he should take honey for his complaint. There was a bowl full of honey available but it belonged to the national treasury. Umar said to people: “If you allow me to use it then I will take it; otherwise

it is unlawful for me.” So people allowed him to take it for his use. Thus Umar showed how responsible he was to the people whom he served.

5. When Umar was on his death-bed, a man started praising him and said: “You are aware of the high place which you hold in Islam.” Umar replied: “I wish all these achievements of mine would balance out my shortcomings, so that overall there is nothing against me and nothing in my favour” (Bukhari, hadith 1392).

In the same book *Tarikh-ul-Khulufa*, it is also reported about Hazrat Abu Bakr that whenever anyone praised him, he would pray to God saying: “O God, you know me better than I do, and I know myself better than these people know me. O God, make me to be as good as these people think that I am. Forgive those sins of mine about which these people don’t know.”

Abu Bakr and Umar were among the ten companions of the Holy Prophet about whom the Holy Prophet had given the good news that they would enter paradise. Yet they still considered themselves as accountable for their deeds and were anxious in case they transgressed some teaching of Islam. We cannot reach their standard by far but may Allah enable us to keep it in view as our goal, Ameen.

بَارِكْ اللَّهُ لَنَا وَكُفِّرْ فِي الْقُرْآنِ الْعَظِيمِ، وَنَفَعْنَا وَإِيَّاكُمْ بِالْآيَاتِ وَالذِّكْرِ الْحَكِيمِ، إِنَّهُ تَعَالَى جَوَادٌ كَرِيمٌ  
مَلِكٌ بَرٌّ رَوْفٌ رَحِيمٌ-