

Fast 21: Charity — How to give

- The first part of verse 2:264 has been quoted at the end of the last study: “O you who believe, do not make your charity worthless by reproach and injury, like him who spends his wealth to be seen by people and does not believe in Allah and the Last Day.” The verse continues:

“So his parable is as the parable of a smooth rock with earth upon it, then heavy rain falls upon it, so it leaves it bare!” (2:264)

فَمَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ صَفْوَانٍ عَلَيْهِ تُرَابٌ فَأَصَابَهُ
وَأَيْلٌ فَتَرَكَهُ صَلْدًا^ط

The next verse continues:

“And the parable of those who spend their wealth **to seek Allah’s pleasure and for the strengthening of their souls** is as the parable of a garden on elevated ground, upon which heavy rain falls, so it brings forth its fruit twofold; but if heavy rain does not fall on it, light rain (is sufficient).” (2:265)

وَمَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمُ ابْتِغَاءَ
مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ وَتَثْبِيْتًا مِّنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ كَمَثَلِ
جَنَّةٍ بَرِّيَّةٍ أَصَابَهَا وَابِلٌ فَآتَتْ أُكْثَهَا
ضِعْفَيْنِ^ع فَإِن لَّمْ يُصِبْهَا وَابِلٌ فَطَلٌّ^ط

If a person gives in charity for show, and reminds the recipients of what he has given them (as stated in the first part of 2:264), it does him no good for his spiritual development. His soul is like a rock, on which rainfall does not produce any growth and it only washes it bare, exposing it. But if the intention of the donor is to give only for the sake of Allah (so that only Allah knows it) and to make himself a better person, then his soul is like a garden in which growth takes place, even with light rain. So if only a small amount is given in charity, **but with good intent**, even that amount brings about positive character growth in the donor.

- Love of God should be the motive in all charitable deeds, so that the very doing of them fosters the feeling that all mankind is but a single family. As the Quran says:

“...(but righteous is the one who)...
gives away wealth **out of love for Him**
to the near of kin and the orphans and
the needy and the traveller and to those
who ask and to set slaves free.” (2:177)

وَأَتَى الْمَالَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَ
الْمَسْكِينِ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ^ل وَالسَّائِلِينَ وَفِي
الرِّقَابِ^ع

“And they give food, **out of love for Him**, to the poor and the orphan and the captive. We feed you, for Allah’s pleasure only — we desire from you neither reward nor thanks.” (76:8–9)

وَيُطْعَمُونَ الطَّعَامَ عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِ مِسْكِينًا وَ
يَتِيمًا وَأَسِيرًا ﴿٨﴾ إِنَّمَا نُطْعِمُكُمْ لِوَجْهِ اللَّهِ لَا
نُرِيدُ مِنْكُمْ جَزَاءً وَلَا شُكْرًا ﴿٩﴾

The words “out of love for Him” can also be translated as “despite love (or want) for it”. So their meaning in the first verse then becomes: “gives away wealth despite (his own) love for it”, and in the second verse it becomes: “they give food despite (their own) want for it”.

- Only good things, and wealth earned by lawful and moral means, should be given in charity. In that same set of verses in ch. 2, it goes on to say:

“O you who believe, spend out of the good things that you earn and of what We bring forth for you from the earth, and do not aim at the bad to spend from it, while you would not take it yourselves unless you turned a blind eye to it.” (2:267)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْفِقُوا مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ مَا
كَسَبْتُمْ وَمِمَّا أَخْرَجْنَا لَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ
وَلَا تَيَسَّمُوا الْخَبِيثَ مِنْهُ تُنْفِقُونَ وَلَسْتُمْ
بِأَخْيَارٍ إِلَّا أَنْ تُغِيضُوا فِيهِ ط

We can certainly give in charity something which is not needed by us, and is surplus to our requirements, instead of throwing it away, and it still benefits the recipient and involves some effort by us. What is condemned here is to give something with the condescending attitude that it is not good enough for us but good enough for the recipient. But the real charity **which benefits the giver** is given out of what he would have liked to keep for himself.

- Charitable deeds may be done openly or secretly. Again, it goes on in ch. 2 to say:

“If you manifest charity, how excellent it is! And if you hide it and give it to the poor, it is good for you. And it will do away with some of your evil deeds; and Allah is Aware of what you do.” (2:271)

إِنْ تُبْدُوا الصَّدَقَاتِ فَبِعَمَاءٍ وَإِنْ تُخْفُوهَا وَ
تُؤْتُوهَا الْفُقَرَاءَ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ وَيُكَفِّرُ
عَنْكُمْ مِنْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ
خَبِيرٌ ﴿٢٧١﴾

By the giving of charity *openly* is meant the giving of subscriptions for the advancement of national or public welfare. The rule laid down here instructs us to do public as well as private acts of charity, and it mentions public charity first, as that is of greatest

importance. In Islam both open and secret charity are equally valuable. By giving openly, a person encourages others to give as well by setting an example. Giving secretly is described here as being “good for you”, i.e. good for your soul because you eliminate all possibility of any motive of giving for show.