

## The Trial of the Grave

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By Abu Khalid Al-Muwahhid

**Until when death comes to one of them (those who join partners with Allah), he says: “My Lord! Send me back, So that I may do good in that which I have left behind!” No! It is but a word that he speaks; and the behind them is *Barzakh* (a barrier) until the Day when they will be resurrected. ( The Noble Qur’an 23:99-100)**

The *barzakh* is the barrier between this life and the abode of the hereafter. Allah (swt) has informed us that once the soul is in the *barzakh*, there can be no return to the life of the dunyaa. Those who disbelieved in Allah will plead to be sent back to obey His commandments but in reality, they are but empty words. The abode of the grave is a place where we all are destined to reside. Whether this residence is one of ease and comfort or severe torment depends on our adherence to the proper belief in Allah (swt) and the fulfillment of the orders that He has given us. For indeed, death is inescapable as Allah (swt) has stated, **“Every soul shall taste death...” (3:185)**. The knowledge of the journey of the soul is one of the blessings that Allah has favored this Ummah with through the Qur’an and the words of the Prophet (sallallahu’alayhiwa sallam). We have been informed of these matters of the unseen and it is this extremely important matter that we should make preparations for as well as warn the people about in calling them to Tawheed. In the famous hadeeth narrated by Ibn ‘Azib and recorded by Bukhari, Ahmad and others, The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu’alayhiwa sallam) describes vividly the journey of the soul after death. He (sallallahu’alayhiwa sallam) mentions that the soul of the righteous believer is gently extracted by the Angel of Death as He (the Angel) says, *‘O good, secure soul, come out to the forgiveness and pleasure of Allah!’* The soul of the believer is described coming out of the body as easily and as gently as water dripping from a water skin. The soul then ascends to the seventh heaven accompanied by angels after being shrouded in a shroud with the fragrance of that which smells like the finest musk in all of the Earth. Once the soul reaches the seventh heaven, Allah (swt) will command that his servants book be registered in *‘Illiyoon* and the soul is returned to the body in the grave. As for the evil soul of the disbeliever, the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu’alayhiwa sallam) described in detail that horrible looking angels descend upon the body and that the angel of death tears his soul out with skewers and his soul is placed in a crude sackcloth with the foulest odor ever smelled in the dunyaa and is cursed by the angels as he ascends to the seventh heaven. His book is then recorded in *Sijjeen* and the soul is flung back to his body. Abu Hurayrah and Anas (may Allah be pleased with them both) narrated similar ahaadeeth found in Ahmad, Ibn Majah, Tirmidhi, Ibn Hibban and others. At this point, the trial of the grave begins. The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu’alayhiwa sallam) has unquestionably told us that the trial of the grave is true. Are we prepared for this trial? Have we reflected and pondered over the consequences of being ill-prepared for what awaits us in the grave and the day of *Qiyamah* that follows it? Yes, before the punishments and rewards of the Day of Resurrection, know for sure that there is a trial followed by punishments and rewards in the grave. Allah, Mighty and Majestic, says in Suratut-Tawbah, **‘...We shall punish them *murratain* (twice) *thumma* (then) they shall be brought back to *‘adhaabin ‘adheem* (a great torment)’ (9:101)** Allah tabaraka wa ta’ala also brings to our attention a second punishment in addition to the punishment of hell when He (swt) says, **‘The Day when their plotting shall not avail them at all nor will they be helped. And verily, for those who do wrong, there is a punishment *doona dhaalik* (other than that) but most of them know not. (52:46, 47)**

Imam at-Tabari and others have interpreted these ayat to allude to the trial and punishment of the grave. In a hadeeth narrated by Faatimah bint al-Mundhir and recorded by al-Bukhari, Aa’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) is quoted as saying that the Prophet (sallallahu’alayhiwa sallam) said, *‘And no doubt it has been inspired to me that you will be put to trial in your graves like or nearly like the trial of al-Maseeh ad-Dajjaal. The Angels will come to everyone of you and ask, ‘What do you know about this man [The Prophet (sallallahu’alayhiwa sallam)]?’ The faithful believer will say, ‘He is Allah’s Messenger (sallallahu’alayhiwa sallam) who came to us with clear*

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evidences and guidance. So we believed him, accepted his teachings and followed and trusted his teachings. Then the angels will tell him to sleep as they have come to know him as a believer. But the munaafiq or the doubtful person will be asked what he knew about this man [The Prophet (sallallahu'alayhiwa sallam)] and he will say, 'I do not know but I heard the people saying something (about Him) so I said the same.' Faatimah goes on to narrate that the hypocrite or the doubtful person will be punished severely. Aa'ishah (May Allah be pleased with her) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu'alayhiwa sallam) said, "And as for the tribulation of the grave; with me will people be tested and about me they will be asked. A righteous person will be made to sit in his grave and without having any fear or terror and he is asked, 'What did you used to say about Islam?' He also is asked, 'Who is that man who is among you?' He will reply, 'He is the Muhammad, Messenger of Allah, who came with clear signs from Allah and we believed in him.' An opening then appears (from his grave) to the Fire (of Hell); he observes its various sections crushing each other. He is told, 'Look at that from which Allah (swt) has saved you.' Another opening then appears (from his grave) to Jannah. He observes its grandeur and the things in it. He is told, 'This will be your place in it.' And he is told, 'You lived with certitude about Allah upon that you died – and upon it you will be raised-when Allah wills.' As for an evil person, he is made to sit in his grave in a state of fear and terror. He is asked, 'What did you use to say?' He replies, 'I heard the people say things; so I said as they said.' An opening then appears (from his grave) to Jannah. He observes its grandeur and the things in it. He is told, 'Look at that from which Allah has deprived you.' Another opening appears to the Hellfire. He observes its various sections crushing each other. He is told, 'This will be your abode in it. You lived in doubt (about Allah); upon that you died; and upon it will you be raised – when Allah wills.' He is then tortured."

Is it not a punishment in and of itself to be shown the pleasures of Jannah and to be told that Jannah is forbidden for you because of disbelief and rebelliousness? This alone, without any additional punishment, would be more painful and agonizing than anything we can ever imagine. This, however, is only the beginning. The horrors of Hell, and all of its pain, torture, and humiliation, will be viewable from the grave, and the evil person is told that this is his future residence and he will enter it when Allah (swt) so decrees at a time known only to Him. To be shown your punishment, and to be forced to agonize as to the hour when you actually receive it, is an unbearable punishment in itself. In addition to this, the evil one is tortured until the hour is brought forth. May Allah, Mighty and Most Exalted, protect us from that! In a hadeeth recorded by at-Tirmidhi, Abu Hurayrah (r.a.) narrates that Allah's Messenger (sallallahu'alayhiwa sallam) said two black and blue angels named Munkar and Nakeer come to the person in the grave and question him as to what he used to say about him (The Prophet, sallallahu'alayhiwa sallam) and that the believer answers, 'He (Muhammad, sallallahu'alayhiwa sallam) is the Messenger of Allah and the Servant of Allah and I testify that there is no deity except Allah and that Muhammad is His Messenger'. The angels then expand and illuminate his grave and tell him to sleep until Allah (swt) raises him from it. The evil ones will respond, 'I heard people say things and I said the same; but I do not know'. The angels will say, We expected you to say this and the Earth will be told to contract on him and it contracts on him until his ribs break. In the narration by Ibn 'Azib, the angels will ask the believer, 'Who is your Lord?' and the believer will respond, 'My Lord is Allah.' Then they ask, 'What is your deen (religion, way of life)?' and He replies, 'My deen is Islam.' They ask, 'Who is that man that was sent to you?' and he replies, 'He is Allah's Messenger,' and they then ask, 'What did you do?' and the believer replies, 'I read Allah's Book (AlQur'an), believed in it, and obeyed it.' The angels then shake him severely and ask, Who is your Lord? What is your Deen? Who is your Prophet? In explaining this, The Prophet (sallallahu'alayhiwa sallam) said, 'This is the last fitnah to which a believer is subjected.' He then explained, in this regard, the meaning of verse 27 from Suratul-Ibraheem;

### **Allah makes firm those who believe with firm words in the life of this world and in the hereafter (14:27)**

He replies, 'My Lord is Allah. My deen is Islam and My Prophet is Muhammad (sallallahu'alayhiwa sallam).' A voice is heard saying, 'My servant has spoken truthfully' and his grave is then furnished with the furnishings and fragrance of Jannah. The evil ones, however, will respond to the questions

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saying, 'Huh, Huh? I do not know.' He will not be able to even recall the name of the Prophet (sallallahu'alayhiwa sallam). His grave will be furnished from the fires of Hell and someone will be appointed to strike him with a hammer. With one strike, he will turn to dust but Allah will restore him and he is hit again. His shrieks will be such that everything but the Jinn and mankind will hear him.

We must note that the Trial of the Grave is from the affairs of the unseen (*al-ghaib*). In reflecting upon them we must follow the methodology of the best generations of Islam in that we do not try to interpret them as meaning anything other than what is apparent. We do not deny them nor do we distort their meaning and we do not say how these events are to occur. We simply accept them and believe in them know that Allah knows best.

The ahaadeeth about the trials of the grave should put within us the focus of what our mission is in this life. There are many lessons that can be extracted from the descriptions of these trials. The first thing is that we should always be conscious of establishing and maintaining the Tawheed of Allah in His Lordship, worship, and names and characteristics. We must be extremely careful not to fall into those things which lead to shirk and kufr by making something other than Allah our lord either knowingly or unknowingly. We must understand that Islam is the only deen excepted by Allah. As Allah (swt) says in the Qur'an, **'The Deen with Allah is Islam' (3:19)** and also, **'If anyone desires a religion other than Islam, never will it be accepted of him; and in the Hereafter He will be in the ranks of those who have lost' (3:85)**. We must study the life and example of The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu'alayhiwa sallam) and follow his example for it is his way that is the only way that leads to success in the Afterlife. This is what we should be calling to. The most important of affairs in this life are these three things so we must not waste precious time in establishing them in our lives and calling the people to them for these affairs will be presented back to us and them in the graves. Most importantly, we should beg our Lord to protect us from these *fitan* and to have mercy on us in this life, in the graves, and on the Day of Rising. We should also learn the supplication of the Prophet (sallallahu'alayhiwa sallam) who taught this du'aa like he used to teach a verse from the Qur'an and encouraged his companions to make this du'aa after every salaah;

*Allaahumma Innee a'oodhubika min 'adhaabi jahannam, wa min 'adhaabil-qabr, wa min fitnatil-maHyaa wal-mamaat, wa min sharri fitnat-il-MaseeH id-Dajjaal.*

*O, Allah, Verily I seek refuge in you from the punishment of Hell, and from the torment of the grave, and from the trials of life and death, and from the evil fitnah of the False Messiah.*

Ameen.