

CLASS 1

PARADISE, ITS GATES & LEVELS

What is Success?

Unlike other faiths that have messages that are limited to what is spiritual in this life, Islam is comprehensive in its teachings. It offers guidance to people of all backgrounds, languages, cultures and skills.

The ultimate goal, or true success in Islam is to bring humans to a close personal relationship in this life with their creator. Allah has created each and every one of us to live our lives on this earth for a time, but after that, it has been ordained by Allah that we return to Him. And Allah (swt) says (interpretation of the meaning is):

"....Only he who is saved far from the Fire and admitted to the Garden, will have indeed have been successful " (Aale-Imran 3:185)

The Ultimate Result is The Criterion

Not alike are the inmates of the fire and the dwellers of the garden (jannah): the dwellers of the garden (jannah) are they that are the achievers. (Surah Al Hashr 59:20)

So, success and failure is based on the 'ultimate' result. If we are a millionaire or a king in this finite world but end up in hell-fire in the infinite life, then we are a loser. Also, the finite success here as compared to the infinite failure in the next world is negligible. This is similar to division by infinity in mathematics.

Imam Al-Hasan Al-Basri- Describes The Situation of the Sahaba

He, Allah have mercy on him, said: "By Allah, I have met some people and I accompanied a group of them. They never rejoiced at any worldly thing they attained and were never saddened by anything of the world that they missed. To them, all of the things of the world are far less valuable than this dust. One of them would live for fifty years and never had sufficient cloth (to wear). They would not set up any pot on fire for cooking ru1d there used not to be anything between them and the ground (when they slept). They never ordered for food to be cooked in their homes. When it was night, they would stand on their limbs and prostrate on their faces, tears streaming down their cheeks calling their Lord to ransom their necks (from punishment).

"When they did any good deed, they would persist in thanking Allah for it and ask Him to accept it from them. When they committed any wrong, it would grieve them and they would beg Allah to forgive them and they never ceased to do that. By Allah they were not free of sin and they did not succeed except through seeking forgiveness.

"As for you people, you are waking up to find your lifespan depreciating, your deeds recorded and death, by Allah, is hanging on your neck. The Fire (of Hell) is in front of you. So, expect the decree of Allah, every day and night."

These were the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ. Who can ever come close to their faith and who can ever match their sincerity?

They were people: "Who paid attention to the reality of this world when others paid attention to its superficiality. They paid attention to the Hereafter while others paid attention to this world.

They stymied (of the world) what would sully them. They abandoned (from the world) what they knew will eventually leave them. What they sought from it was indeed very little and their mentioning of it (the world) was only in passing. The (love of the) world faded in their hearts and they never renewed it. It died in their hearts and they never revived it after its death. Rather, they demolished it and built with it their Hereafter. They sold it and bought with it what will remain for them (in the Hereafter). They rejected it and they rejoiced at that. They love Allah and they love His remembrance. They sought illumination by the light of Allah and they illuminated with it. They had wonderful stories (about them) and their experiences were amazing.

"By them the Book (of Allah) was established and by it they stood. By them the Book of Allah spoke and by it they also spoke. By them the Book was known and by it they worked. They never saw anything (of the world) greater than what they achieved. (To them) there was no security in anything greater than what they hoped for and they had no fear in anything greater than what they were afraid of (in the Hereafter)."

They were the proofs of Allah against His creations. He clothed them in the glowing light of His love. He raised for them the banner of guidance to draw near (to Him). He showered on them patience (to avoid) going against the guidance (of Allah). He purified their bodies by their constant watch (of the rights of Allah). He enrobed them with His love, then He deposited in their hearts, treasures of the unseen which are tied to drawing near to Him. Their understanding propels them toward Him. Their attention, in their solitude, is focused on Him. He placed them upon the door of observation close to Him. He placed them on the seats of those who recognize Him.



The great things mentioned above started with the Believe and Love for the Hereafter over this world.

In a hadeeth recorded by Bukhari, Ayesha R.A. said, the first thing that was revealed was about Paradise and the Fire. When the people embraced Islam, the Verses regarding legal and illegal things were revealed. If the first thing to be revealed was: 'Do not drink alcoholic drinks.' people would have said, 'We will never leave alcoholic drinks,' and if there had been revealed, 'Do not commit illegal sexual intercourse,' they would have said, 'We will never give up illegal sexual intercourse.'

From this we understand that the Love of Paradise, the Fear of Hell Fire and the thought of the Day of Judgement is what will keep us away from sins and motivate us to do more righteous deeds. Hence we are gathered here together to learn about the Description of Heaven & Hell based on Quran & Sunnah.

PARADISE

There is Nothing Like It

The delights of Paradise surpass the imagination and defy description. They are like nothing known to the people of this world; no matter how advanced we may become, what we achieve is as nothing in comparison with the joys of the Hereafter.

Paradise is the tremendous reward which Allaah (swt) has prepared for His beloved and those who obey Him. It is complete joy and pleasure, where nothing is lacking and nothing can disturb its purity. What Allaah (swt) and His Messenger have told us about it makes our heads spin because our minds are not able to comprehend the greatness of such blessings.

As is mentioned in several reports, there is nothing like Paradise. In a hadith qudsi it is narrated *"I have prepared for My righteous slaves that which no eye has seen, no ear has heard and has never crossed the mind of any human being"*.

Then the Prophet ﷺ said, *"Recite, if you wish: "No person knows what is kept hidden for them of joy as a reward for what they used to do". (32:17)*

The joys of Paradise are far greater than the pleasures of this world, which pale into insignificance in comparison. al-Bukhaari reports from Sahl ibn Sa'd as-Sa'idee that the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ said: *"A space the size of a whip in Paradise is better than this world and all that is in it"*. (Fath al-Baari, 6/319, an-Nawawi's commentary on Muslim 17/166)

"It is sparkling light, aromatic plants, a lofty palace, a flowing river, ripe fruit, a beautiful wife and abundant clothing, in an eternal abode of radiant joy, in beautiful soundly-constructed high houses". [Ibn Maajah, Ibn Hibbaan]

The Sahabah asked the Prophet ﷺ about the buildings of Paradise and he replied with a wonderful description: *"Bricks of gold and silver, and mortar of fragrant musk, pebbles of pearl and sapphire, and soil of saffron. Whoever enters it is filled with joy and will never feel miserable; he will live there forever and never die; their clothes will never wear out and their youth will never fade."* [Ahmad, at-Tirmidhi].

Allaah (swt) indeed spoke the truth when He (swt) said: *"And when you look there [in Paradise] you will see a delight [that cannot be imagined]. and a great dominion"* [76:20]

Because admittance to Paradise and salvation from the Fire are according to Allaah's will and judgement, it is a great victory and tremendous success, as Allaah (swt) says:

· *"Only he who is saved far from the Fire and admitted to the Garden, will have indeed attained the object of life [or: been successful]"* (3:185)

· *"Allaah has promised to believers - men and women - Gardens under which rivers flow, to dwell therein [forever], and beautiful mansions in Gardens of everlasting bliss. But the greatest bliss is the Good Pleasure of Allaah. That is the supreme felicity [or success]"*. (9:72)

· *"...and those who obey Allaah and His Messenger will be admitted to Gardens with rivers flowing underneath, to abide therein [forever] and that will be the supreme achievement"*. (4:13)

Admittance to Paradise

There is no doubt that the joy of the believers will be incomparable when they are led, group by honourable group, to the blessed Gardens of Paradise.

When they reach Paradise its gates will be opened for them, and they will be welcomed by noble angels congratulating them on their safe arrival after suffering so much hardship and witnessing so much horror:

"And those who feared their Rabb will be led to the garden in crowds, until, behold, they arrive there; its gates will be opened and its keepers will say "Peace be upon you! Well have you done! Enter here, to dwell therein". (39:73)

In other words, your words, thoughts and deeds were good so your hearts and souls became pure and for that you deserve Paradise.

The Believers Will Be Purified Before They Enter Paradise

After the Believers have passed over as-Siraat (the bridge over Hell), they will be kept on a bridge between Paradise and Hell, where they will be purified by means of their settling any wrongs that existed between any of them in this world. Then when they enter paradise they will be pure and clean, none of them bearing any ill-will towards another or demanding anything of another. al-Bukhaari

reported from Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri (RA) that the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ said: *"The believers will be saved from the Fire then they will be kept on a bridge between Paradise and Hell. They will settle their accounts with one another for any wrongs that existed between them in this world, until they are purified and cleansed, and will be permitted to enter Paradise. By the One in Whose hand is the soul of Muhammad, each of them will know his dwelling in Paradise better than he knew his dwelling in this world"*. (Sahih al-Bukhaari, Kitaab ar-Riqaq, Baab al-Qisas Yawm al-Qiyamah, Fath al-Baari, 11/395)

Our Prophet ﷺ will be the first to ask for the gates of paradise to be opened.

The Gates of Paradise

Paradise has gates through which the believers, like the angels, will enter:

- *"Adn [Eden - everlasting gardens] of Paradise, whose doors will open for them"* [38:50]
- *"...And angels shall enter unto them from every gate [with the salutation]: 'Peace be unto you for that you persevered in patience! How excellent is the final home!'"* [13:23-24]

Allaah (swt) has told us that these gates will be opened when the believers reach them, and they will be welcomed by the angels with greetings of peace: *"...til, when they reach it, its gates will be opened, and its keepers will say, 'Salaamun 'alaykum! You have done well, so enter here to abide therein.'" [39:73]*

The number of gates in Paradise is eight, one of which is called ar-Rayyaan, which is exclusively for those who fast.

Al-Bukhaari and Muslim report from Sahl ibn Sa'eedi that the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ said, *"In Paradise there are eight gates, one of which is called ar-Rayyaan. No one will enter it except those who fast, and when they have entered it will be locked behind them and no one else will enter it"*. [Ibn Katheer, an-Nihaayah, 2/214]

In addition to ar-Rayyaan, there are also gates for those who pray much, those who give in charity and those who fight in jihaad; Abu Hurayrah (ra) reported that the Prophet ﷺ said, *"Whoever spends a pair [of anything] from his wealth for the sake of Allaah (swt) will be called from the gates of Paradise, and Paradise has eight gates. Whoever used to pray [regularly and properly] will be called from the gate of prayer; whoever used to give in charity will be called from the gate of charity; whoever used to fight in jihaad will be called from the gate of jihaad, and whoever used to fast [regularly] will be called from the gate of fasting"*. Abu Bakr (ra) said, *"By Allaah, it would not matter if a person was called from any of them but will anyone be called from all of them, O Messenger of Allaah ﷺ?"* He said, *"Yes, and I hope that you will be one of them"*. [Saheeh, Ibn Katheer, an-Nihaayah, 2/214]



The Levels of Paradise

Paradise consists of levels, some of which are above others, and its people will be of differing levels and categories according to their position in Paradise.

The Prophet ﷺ explained that the people will be in different levels in Paradise according to their status. al-Bukhaari and Muslim report from Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri that the Prophet ﷺ said,

"The people of Paradise will look at the people dwelling in the chambers above them in the same way that people look at a brilliant star shining far away on the horizon, in the East or West, because of their superiority [in reward] over them." The people asked, "O Messenger of Allaah, are these the dwellings of the Prophets which no one else can attain?" He replied, "No by the One in Whose Hand is my soul, they are for the men who believed in Allaah, and also in His Messengers." [Saheeh al-Bukhaari, Kitaab Bid' al-Khalq, Baab Sifaat al-Jannah wan-Naar, Fath al-Baari, 6/220; Saheeh Muslim Kitaab al-Jannah, Baab tara'i Ahl al-Jannah Ahl al-Ghuraf, 4/2177, no. 2831]

The last man to enter Paradise

`Abdullah bin Mas`ud (May Allah be pleased with him) reported: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said,

"I know of the last of the inhabitants of the Hell to be taken out from there and the last one to enter Jannah. He is a man who will come out of the Fire, crawling on all fours. Allah, the Rubb of glory and honour will say to him: 'Go and enter Jannah.' He will go to it and think that it is full up. He will then come back and say: 'O my Rubb, it is full up.' Allah will say to him: 'Go and enter Jannah.' He will again go to it and think that it is full up. So he will turn back. Allah will again say: 'Go and enter Jannah. For you have what is equal to ten times the world.' He will say: 'Are You making fun of me while You are the King?' At this I (i.e., the narrator) saw the Messenger of Allah ﷺ laugh till his premolars were visible and he said, "Such man will be the last dweller of Jannah in its lowest rank." [Al-Bukhari and Muslim].

In another hadeeth mentioned by Muslim after the question asked above it is said,

".....He will say: I will be content, my Rubb. Allah will say: For you is that, and like that and like that and like that and like that. He will say at the fifth time: I am well-pleased, my Rubb. Allah will say: It is for you and ten times more like it. You will have whatever your soul desires and whatever your eyes could delight in. He will say: I am well-pleased, my Rubb.'



Those Who Take their Positions in the Highest Levels

Among those who will occupy the highest levels in Paradise are the shuhaadaa, the best of whom are those who fight in the front ranks and never turn away until they are killed.

The one who helps widows and the destitute will have the status of a mujaahid in Paradise. Muslim reports from Abu Hurayrah that the Prophet ﷺ said, "*The one who helps widows and the destitute is like one who fights in g haad for the sake of Allaah (swt).*" I [the narrator] think he said, "*And he is like the one who stands all night in prayer and never sleeps, and like the one who fasts continually and never breaks his fast*". [Saheeh Muslim,]

The one who sponsors an orphan will be close to the Prophet ﷺ in Paradise. Muslim reports from Abu Hurayrah (ra) that the Prophet ﷺ said, "*The one who sponsors an orphan, whether from his own wealth or from the orphan's wealth, I and he will be like these two in Paradise,*" - and Maalik [the narrator] gestured with his forefinger and middle finger. [Saheeh Muslim, Kitaab az-Zuhd, 2/2286, no. 2982]

Ahmad reports from Abu Hurayrah (ra) that the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ said, "*Allaah (swt) will raise the status of His righteous slave in Paradise, and he will say, 'O my Rabb, how could I deserve this?' He will say, 'Because your child sought forgiveness for you'.*"