

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

خطبة الجمعة

Friday Sermon

When the Soul Leaves: The Journey From Death to the Grave

DELIVERED AT

Masjid Adam



ŞİFAH

SCHOOL OF ISLAMIC
FOUNDATIONS &
ADVOCACY FOR HUMANITY

When the Soul Leaves: The Journey From Death to the Grave

The First Khutbah

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ نَحْمَدُهُ وَنَسْتَعِينُهُ وَنَسْتَغْفِرُهُ، وَنَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ شُرُورِ أَنْفُسِنَا وَمِنْ سَيِّئَاتِ أَعْمَالِنَا، مَنْ يَهْدِهِ اللَّهُ فَلَا مُضِلَّ لَهُ، وَمَنْ يَضِلَّ فَلَا هَادِيَ لَهُ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ. أَمَّا بَعْدُ: فَإِنَّ أَصْدَقَ الْحَدِيثِ كِتَابُ اللَّهِ، وَخَيْرُ الْهَدْيِ هَدْيُ مُحَمَّدٍ ﷺ، وَشَرُّ الْأُمُورِ مُحْدَثَاتُهَا، وَكُلُّ مُحْدَثَةٍ بِدْعَةٌ، وَكُلُّ بِدْعَةٍ ضَلَالَةٌ، وَكُلُّ ضَلَالَةٍ فِي النَّارِ.

All praise belongs to Allah. We praise Him, we seek His help, and we seek His forgiveness. We seek refuge in Allah from the evil within ourselves and from our sinful deeds. Whomever Allah guides, none can lead astray, and whomever He leaves astray, none can guide. I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah alone, having no partner, and I bear witness that Muḥammad is His servant and His Messenger. To proceed: the truest speech is the Book of Allah, the best guidance is the guidance of Muḥammad ﷺ, the worst of affairs are the newly invented matters, every innovation is misguidance, and every misguidance is in the Fire.

نَحْمَدُهُ وَنُصَلِّي عَلَى رَسُولِهِ الْكَرِيمِ، أَمَّا بَعْدُ: فَأَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ، بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ.

رَبِّ اشْرَحْ لِي صَدْرِي * وَيسِّرْ لِي أَمْرِي * وَاحْلُلْ عُقْدَةً مِنْ لِسَانِي * يَفْقَهُوا قَوْلِي *

We praise Him, and we send blessings upon His noble Messenger. To proceed: I seek refuge with Allah from Satan, the accursed; in the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. My Lord, expand for me my breast, and ease for me my task, and untie the knot from my tongue, that they may understand my speech.

Sūrah Ṭā Hā (20:25 to 28)

Dear brothers and sisters, **assalāmu ‘alaykum wa raḥmatullāhi wa barakātuh.**

An Appointment Already Written

Every one of us sitting here has an appointment. It is already written. We do not know the date. We do not know the time. We do not know the place. But not one of us doubts that it is coming.

We plan for things far less certain than this. We plan for holidays we may never take. We plan for a retirement we may never reach. We save for a house we may never move into. And the one thing that is guaranteed for every single person in this room is the one thing we plan for least.

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ *

Every soul will taste death.

Āl ‘Imrān (3:185)

Notice the word Allah chose. Taste. Not see it from far away. Not hear about it happening to other people. Taste it, the way you taste food, personally, with your own mouth. Every soul. No exception has ever been made for anyone.

Imām as-Sa’dī says about this verse that Allah mentions death here to loosen the grip that this world has on the heart, so that a person stops treating a temporary place as though it were permanent. That is what this khutbah is for today. Not to frighten anyone. To loosen the grip.

Because death is not the end of us. Death is the moment the curtain is lifted. What is behind the curtain, the Prophet ﷺ described to us in detail, and that description is what we are going to sit with today.

The Day the Prophet ﷺ Sat Beside a Grave

Al-Barā’ ibn ‘Āzib, may Allah be pleased with him, tells us about a day none of the companions who were there ever forgot. They went out with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to bury a man from the Anṣār. They reached the graveyard. The side niche in the grave had not been dug yet, so there was time to wait.

The Prophet ﷺ sat down. And al-Barā’ describes how they sat around him. He says it was as though there were birds sitting on their heads. That is an Arab expression for stillness. Nobody moved. Nobody spoke. Nobody adjusted his cloak. If a bird lands on your head, the smallest movement sends it away. That is how still those men were.

The Prophet ﷺ had a small stick in his hand and he was scratching at the ground with it, not looking up. Then he raised his head and he said:

اسْتَعِذُوا بِاللَّهِ مِنْ عَذَابِ الْقَبْرِ

Seek refuge with Allah from the punishment of the grave.

Source: Sunan Abī Dāwūd **Hadith No:** 4753 **Authenticity:** Ṣaḥīḥ, graded authentic by al-Albānī

He said it two times. Then he said it a third time. Brothers and sisters, when the Messenger of Allah ﷺ repeats something three times while sitting at the edge of an open grave, he is not making conversation. He is warning people he loves about something real.

And then he began to describe what actually happens to a person when he leaves this world. This is the longest and most detailed description we have from him about it. Let us walk through it slowly.

How the Believer Is Met

The Prophet ﷺ said that when the believing servant is leaving this world and turning toward the next one, angels come down to him from the sky. Their faces are white. He described their faces as though they were the sun. They bring with them a shroud from the shrouds of Paradise and perfume from the perfume of Paradise. And they sit around him, as far as the eye can see.

إِنَّ الْعَبْدَ الْمُؤْمِنَ إِذَا كَانَ فِي انْقِطَاعٍ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا وَإِقْبَالٍ مِنَ الْآخِرَةِ نَزَلَ إِلَيْهِ مَلَائِكَةٌ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ بِيضُ الْوُجُوهِ كَأَنَّ وُجُوهَهُمُ الشَّمْسُ مَعَهُمْ كَفَنٌ مِنْ أَكْفَانِ الْجَنَّةِ وَحَنُوطٌ مِنْ حَنُوطِ الْجَنَّةِ حَتَّى يَجْلِسُوا مِنْهُ مَدَّ الْبَصَرِ

When the believing servant is about to leave this world and enter the Hereafter, angels with white faces, as if their faces were the sun, descend to him from heaven. With them is a shroud from the shrouds of Paradise and perfume from the perfume of Paradise. They sit from him as far as the eye can see.

Source: Sunan Abī Dāwūd **Hadith No:** 4753 **Authenticity:** Ṣaḥīḥ

Stop and picture that room. To everyone standing in it, there is a bed, a monitor, a family crying, a nurse checking something. That is all they can see. And the room is actually full. It is full from wall to wall and beyond the wall, as far as sight reaches, with creatures of light who have come for this one person.

Then the Angel of Death comes and sits by his head. And listen to how he is spoken to.

أَيُّهَا النَّفْسُ الطَّيِّبَةُ اخْرُجِي إِلَى مَغْفِرَةٍ مِنْ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانٍ

O good soul, come out to forgiveness from Allah and to His pleasure.

Source: Sunan Abī Dāwūd **Hadith No:** 4753 **Authenticity:** Ṣaḥīḥ

He is not ordered. He is invited. He is called by a good name and told where he is going before he goes. The Prophet ﷺ said the soul then flows out the way a drop of water flows from the mouth of a waterskin. Easily. Nothing tears. Nothing fights.

And the angels do not leave it in the hand of the Angel of Death for even as long as a blink. They take it, they wrap it in that shroud and that perfume, and from it comes the best smell of musk found anywhere on the face of the earth.

A Name Nobody Knew Down Here

Then they carry the soul upward. And the Prophet ﷺ said they do not pass a gathering of angels without those angels asking, who is this good soul. And the ones carrying it answer with his name, the best of the names he was called by in this world.

Sit with that, brothers and sisters. Maybe nobody down here knew your name. Maybe you were never important. Maybe you had no title at work and nobody asked your opinion and no one followed you anywhere. And the sky knows your name. Gathering after gathering of angels is asking about you by name as you pass.

They reach the lowest heaven and ask for it to be opened, and it is opened. And from every heaven, the closest angels to Allah escort him up to the next one, until he reaches the seventh heaven. Then Allah says:

اُكْتُبُوا كِتَابَ عَبْدِي فِي عَلِيَّيْنِ وَأَعِيدُوهُ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ

Write the record of My servant in 'Ilīyīn, and return him to the earth.

Source: Sunan Abī Dāwūd **Hadith No:** 4753 **Authenticity:** Ṣaḥīḥ

'Ilīyīn. Allah names that place in the Qur'an:

كَلَّا إِنَّ كِتَابَ الْأَبْرَارِ لَفِي عَلِيَّيْنِ *

No indeed. The record of the righteous is in 'Ilīyīn.

Al-Muṭaffifin (83:18)

The commentators explain 'Illiyīn as the highest place, a register kept in the heights, guarded and witnessed. Your file is not lost in an office somewhere. It is filed upward. And then the command comes to bring him back to the earth, and Allah gives the reason:

فَإِنِّي مِّنْهَا خَلَقْتَهُمْ وَفِيهَا أُعِيدُهُمْ وَمِنْهَا أُخْرِجُهُمْ تَارَةً أُخْرَىٰ

For from it I created them, to it I return them, and from it I will bring them out one more time.

Source: Sunan Abī Dāwūd **Hadith No:** 4753 **Authenticity:** Ṣaḥīḥ

Three Questions in the Dark

The soul is returned to the body. The Prophet ﷺ said two angels come, they sit him up, and they ask him three questions. Everybody in this masjid already knows them.

Who is your Lord. He says, my Lord is Allah. What is your religion. He says, my religion is Islam. Who is this man who was sent among you. He says, he is the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. And they ask him, and what did you know. He says, I read the Book of Allah, I believed in it, and I held it to be true.

Brothers and sisters, every child in our weekend school can recite those answers today. That is not the test. The test is whether we lived them. Ibn al-Qayyim wrote that a person will only be able to answer in the grave according to what he actually was in his life, because the tongue in that moment speaks from the heart, not from memory. A man who never obeyed Allah will not suddenly find the words, and a man who lived on those answers will not lose them.

Then a voice calls out from the sky:

صَدَقَ عَبْدِي فَأَفْرِشُوهُ مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ وَالْبَسُوهُ مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ وَافْتَحُوا لَهُ بَابًا إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ

My servant has told the truth. So furnish his grave from Paradise, clothe him from Paradise, and open for him a door to Paradise.

Source: Sunan Abī Dāwūd **Hadith No:** 4753 **Authenticity:** Ṣaḥīḥ

And the Prophet ﷺ said that its breeze and its fragrance reach him, and his grave is widened for him as far as he can see. That is the believer's first night. Not darkness. Not being forgotten. A door left open, and air coming through it from Jannah.

Something Follows You In

Then the Prophet ﷺ said a man comes to him. He has a beautiful face, beautiful clothes and a good smell. And he says:

أَبَشِّرْ بِالَّذِي يَسُرُّكَ هَذَا يَوْمُكَ الَّذِي كُنْتَ تُوعَدُ

Receive good news of what will make you happy. This is your day, the one you were promised.

Source: Sunan Abī Dāwūd **Hadith No:** 4753 **Authenticity:** Ṣaḥīḥ

The man in the grave asks him, who are you. Your face is the face of someone who brings good. And he answers:

أَنَا عَمَلُكَ الصَّالِحُ

I am your righteous deeds.

Source: Sunan Abī Dāwūd **Hadith No:** 4753 **Authenticity:** Ṣaḥīḥ

Stop right here. Everyone has gone home. The people who carried you have washed their hands and driven away. Your wife or your husband is sitting in a house that suddenly has too much space in it. Your money is in an account with your name on it that somebody else will now sign for. And something walked into the grave with you and sat down.

Your deeds. The Fajr you dragged yourself out of bed for on a cold morning when nobody would have known if you had slept through it. The money you gave where no one saw you give it. The page of Qur'an you read in the car before going in to work. The thing you wanted badly and walked away from because Allah was watching. The eyes you lowered. The person you forgave when you had every right not to. The tears nobody saw. None of it went missing. It was all being kept, and now it has a face and it has come to keep you company.

He Asks for the Hour to Begin

And then the believer says something strange.

رَبِّ أَقِمِ السَّاعَةَ رَبِّ أَقِمِ السَّاعَةَ حَتَّى أَرْجِعَ إِلَى أَهْلِي وَمَالِي

My Lord, bring on the Hour. My Lord, bring on the Hour, so that I can return to my family and my wealth.

Source: Sunan Abī Dāwūd **Hadith No:** 4753 **Authenticity:** Ṣaḥīḥ

Think about how strange that is. In this life we are all afraid of the Day of Judgment. This man is asking for it to come early. Why. Because he has already been shown the first corner of what is waiting for him, and now he cannot wait for the rest of it. He wants his family with him in it.

This is the same promise Allah made in the Qur'an:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَقَامُوا تَنْزِلُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ أَلَّا تَخَافُوا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوا وَأَبْشِرُوا
بِالْجَنَّةِ الَّتِي كُنتُمْ تُوعَدُونَ *

Indeed, those who say, our Lord is Allah, and then stay straight, the angels come down upon them saying: do not be afraid and do not grieve, and receive good news of the Paradise you were promised.

Fuṣṣilat (41:30)

Ibn Kathīr mentions that many of the early scholars said these angels come down at the moment of death with exactly that greeting. Do not be afraid of what is ahead of you. Do not grieve over what you left behind. Two fears, both answered in one sentence, at the one moment a person needs it most.

And look at the condition in the verse. They said our Lord is Allah, and then they stayed straight. Saying it was the beginning. Staying straight afterwards, on ordinary days, in ordinary weeks, is what made the difference.

The Other Arrival

Now the Prophet ﷺ turned the scene around, and I want us to hear it exactly as he said it, without softening it.

He said that when the disbelieving servant is leaving this world and turning toward the next, angels come down to him too, but their faces are dark, and they carry rough sackcloth. They sit from him as far as the eye can see. And the Angel of Death sits by his head and says:

أَيُّهَا النَّفْسُ الْخَبِيثَةُ أَخْرِجِي إِلَى سَخَطٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَغَضَبٍ

O wicked soul, come out to the displeasure of Allah and to His anger.

Source: Sunan Abī Dāwūd **Hadith No:** 4753 **Authenticity:** Ṣaḥīḥ

One soul is told, come out to forgiveness and pleasure. The other is told, come out to displeasure and anger. Same moment. Same angel. Two completely different sentences. And what decided which sentence you hear was not decided in that room. It was decided over years of ordinary days before it.

The Prophet ﷺ described the soul scattering through the body and being pulled out with great difficulty. And when it is taken, the angels do not leave it in his hand for a blink either, but for the opposite reason. They put it straight into that rough cloth, and from it comes the worst smell of a rotting body found anywhere on earth. They go up with it, and no gathering of angels is passed

without them asking, who is this wicked soul. And the answer comes back with the worst of the names he was called by in the world.

They reach the lowest sky and ask for it to be opened. It is not opened. And then the Prophet ﷺ recited this verse:

لَا تَفْتَحُ لَهُمْ أَبْوَابُ السَّمَاءِ وَلَا يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ حَتَّى يَلْبِغَ الْجَمَلُ فِي سَمِّ الْخِيَاطِ *

The gates of heaven will not be opened for them, and they will not enter Paradise until a camel passes through the eye of a needle.

Al-A'rāf (7:40)

Then Allah orders that his record be written in Sijjīn, in the lowest earth, and his soul is thrown down. And when the two angels come and ask him the three questions, he says only one thing to all of them. Hāh, hāh, I do not know. He does not know who his Lord is. He does not know his religion. He does not know the man who was sent to his people.

Brothers and sisters, he is not being punished for failing an exam. He is being shown, in front of himself, that he lived a whole life next to the answers and never once let them into his heart.

And a voice calls from the sky, he has lied. So spread out the Fire for him and open him a door to the Fire. Its heat comes to him and his grave squeezes in on him until his ribs cross over each other. And a man comes to him with an ugly face, ugly clothes and a foul smell, and gives him the opposite news. He asks him, who are you. And he answers, I am your evil deeds. And then that man cries out, my Lord, do not bring on the Hour.

What the Companions Did With This Hadith

This description was not something the companions listened to and then filed away. It changed how they stood at a graveside.

إِنَّ الْقَبْرَ أَوَّلُ مَنَازِلِ الْآخِرَةِ فَإِنْ نَجَا مِنْهُ فَمَا بَعْدَهُ أَيْسَرُ مِنْهُ وَإِنْ لَمْ يَنْجُ مِنْهُ فَمَا بَعْدَهُ أَشَدُّ مِنْهُ

Whenever 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān stood at a grave he would weep until his beard was wet. He was asked why, and he said: the grave is the first stage of the Hereafter. Whoever is saved at it, what comes after is easier. And whoever is not saved at it, what comes after is harder.

Reported from 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān, may Allah be pleased with him; Jāmi' at-Tirmidhī 2308, graded ḥasan gharīb

He was the leader of the Muslims. He had given away more wealth for Allah than most of us will ever hold. And he stood at a hole in the ground and wept until his beard was wet. Not because he despaired of Allah's mercy. Because he understood what the first stage means.

Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī collected the reports on the grave and made a point that is worth carrying home. The grave, he said, is not a new judgement. It is the first honest reflection of the life that was already lived. Nothing is added there that the person did not bring with him.

The Prophet ﷺ at His Mother's Grave

There is a scene from the life of the Prophet ﷺ that belongs here. He came to the grave of his mother Āminah. He was the Messenger of Allah. He had faced armies. He had been driven out of his own city. And he stood at his mother's grave and he wept, and he made everyone around him weep.

زَارَ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ قَبْرَ أُمِّهِ فَبَكَى وَأَبْكَى مَنْ حَوْلَهُ

The Prophet ﷺ visited the grave of his mother, and he wept and he made those around him weep.

Source: Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim **Hadith No:** 976 **Authenticity:** Ṣaḥīḥ

And in the same narration he told the companions to visit the graves, because visiting them reminds you of death. Brothers and sisters, notice that the strongest man in faith who ever walked the earth did not consider tears at a graveside a weakness. He considered a hard heart the weakness.

And notice that he did not tell them to think about death. He told them to go and stand where it is. There is a difference between an idea and a place. An idea you can argue with. A row of graves you cannot.

Two Men, One Life Each

Let us put the two scenes side by side one last time before we finish, because the Prophet ﷺ put them side by side deliberately.

Both men died. Both were washed by people who loved them or by people paid to do it. Both were carried. Both were put in the ground and covered with the same soil, and in both cases the people walked away and went back to their lives. From the outside, from where we stand, the two funerals looked the same. You could not have told them apart.

And underneath, one of them had a door open to Jannah with the air coming through it, and his own good deeds sitting beside him with a beautiful face, and he was asking Allah to hurry the Day of Judgement. And the other had a door open to the Fire and its heat reaching him, and his own deeds beside him with an ugly face, and he was begging Allah to delay the Hour.

Nobody at either funeral knew which was which. Which means, brothers and sisters, that the funeral is not where this is decided. It is decided now, in ordinary weeks like the one you have just finished, in what you did when nobody was checking.

Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī used to say that a person is only ever the sum of the days he has been given, and every day that passes takes a part of him with it. That is not a gloomy thought. It is an accurate one, and accurate thoughts are what change behaviour.

Where This Meets Our Week

So what do we do with this on a Friday afternoon in this city, with work on Monday and bills and school runs.

Here is the first thing. Look at your phone for a moment. Not now, later, honestly. Look at where the hours went this week. Most of us will find that we gave more attention to strangers arguing about nothing than we gave to the Book of Allah. That is not a small thing anymore, after what we just heard. One of the three questions is, what did you know. And the honest answer for many of us would be, I knew what was trending.

Here is the second thing. Every one of us has a relationship in our family that is broken or cold. A brother not spoken to. A parent not called. A cousin cut off over something that, if you say it out loud now, sounds small. Brothers and sisters, none of that will be fixed after the shroud is on. It gets fixed this week or it does not get fixed.

Third. There are debts. Money we owe and have not settled, and money we hold that is not really ours. There are rights of people on our shoulders. A worker paid late. A partner short-changed. A word said about someone behind their back that spread. Those things travel with a person. They do not stay behind with the wallet.

And fourth, ask yourself simply: if the room filled up tonight, what would come and sit next to me. Would something arrive with a good face. What have I actually sent ahead. Not what do I intend to send ahead one day when life calms down, because life does not calm down. What is already there.

None of this is meant to crush anyone. Allah did not tell us about the grave to make us despair. He told us while we still have time to do something about it. The people under the ground would give everything they ever owned for one hour of what you are holding right now, sitting in a masjid, alive, able to make sajdah, able to say astaghfirullāh, able to pick up a phone and repair something.

I say these words of mine, and I seek the forgiveness of Allah for me and for you, so seek His forgiveness, for indeed He is the Most Forgiving, the Most Merciful.

أَقُولُ قَوْلِي هَذَا وَأَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ لِي وَلَكُمْ فَاسْتَغْفِرُوهُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ.

I say this statement of mine, and I seek the forgiveness of Allah for myself and for you, so seek His forgiveness, for He is the Most Forgiving, the Most Merciful.

Closing of the First Khutbah

The Second Khutbah

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ، وَالصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَى أَشْرَفِ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ وَالْمُرْسَلِينَ، نَبِيِّنَا مُحَمَّدٍ
وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَصَحْبِهِ أَجْمَعِينَ. اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ، كَمَا صَلَّيْتَ عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ
وَعَلَى آلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ مُجِيدٌ.

All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of the worlds, and may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon the noblest of the Prophets and Messengers, our Prophet Muḥammad, and upon his family and all his Companions. O Allah, send blessings upon Muḥammad and upon the family of Muḥammad as You sent blessings upon Ibrāhīm and upon the family of Ibrāhīm. Indeed, You are Praiseworthy and Glorious.

The Reminder That Puts Everything In Order

In the first khutbah we walked through what the Prophet ﷺ described at the side of that grave. Now the question is what a person is supposed to do with it on Monday morning.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ gave us the instruction himself, and it is short.

أَكْثَرُوا ذِكْرَ هَازِمِ اللَّذَاتِ

Remember often the destroyer of pleasures.

Source: Jāmi‘ at-Tirmidhī **Hadith No:** 2307 **Authenticity:** Ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ

He meant death. Remember it often. Not once a year at a janāzah. Often.

Now be careful with this, because people misunderstand it in two directions. Some hear it and become miserable and think that enjoying anything halal is a sin. That is not what he ﷺ taught, and he was the most cheerful of people with his family. Others hear it and get frightened for an afternoon and then forget it completely by the evening.

What remembering death actually does is much simpler. It puts things back into their real size. That argument you have been carrying for three weeks shrinks. The grudge you have held against a relative for five years suddenly looks ridiculous. The sin you kept telling yourself you would deal with later stops feeling manageable. The prayer you keep pushing to the last ten minutes of its time starts to feel urgent. The parent you have not called becomes the most important thing on your list. Nothing new was added to your life. Everything just moved into the right order.

Two Go Back and One Stays

The Prophet ﷺ told us exactly what happens at the graveside, and it is worth hearing plainly.

يَتَّبِعُ الْمَيِّتَ ثَلَاثَةٌ فَيَرْجِعُ اثْنَانِ وَيَبْقَى مَعَهُ وَاحِدٌ يَتَّبِعُهُ أَهْلُهُ وَمَالُهُ وَعَمَلُهُ فَيَرْجِعُ أَهْلُهُ وَمَالُهُ وَيَبْقَى عَمَلُهُ

Three things follow the deceased. Two of them come back and one stays with him. His family, his wealth and his deeds follow him. His family and his wealth come back, and his deeds stay.

Source: Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 6514 and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim **Hadith No:** 2960 **Authenticity:** Muttafaqun ‘alayh

Your family walk with you to the edge and then they walk back to the cars. Your money goes as far as the cost of the shroud and then it stops. Someone else will drive the car you were paying for. Someone else will sleep in your bedroom. Somebody will sit at your desk within a fortnight and answer your emails.

One thing goes in with you and does not come back out. Brothers and sisters, everything we are told to do in this religion is really about making sure that one thing is good company.

The Door That Stays Open

There is something else he ﷺ told us, and this one is full of hope.

إِذَا مَاتَ الْإِنْسَانُ انْقَطَعَ عَنْهُ عَمَلُهُ إِلَّا مِنْ ثَلَاثَةٍ إِلَّا مِنْ صَدَقَةٍ جَارِيَةٍ أَوْ عِلْمٍ يُنْتَفَعُ بِهِ أَوْ وَلَدٍ صَالِحٍ يَدْعُو لَهُ

When a person dies his deeds come to an end, except for three: an ongoing charity, knowledge that people benefit from, or a righteous child who prays for him.

Source: Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim **Hadith No:** 1631 **Authenticity:** Ṣaḥīḥ

Everything stops at death except three doors that stay open. Think about what that means practically. A water pump you paid for keeps giving you reward every time somebody drinks. A copy of the Qur'an you left in a masjid keeps giving while people read from it. A child you raised to pray keeps sending you something every time they raise their hands.

And notice the third one especially, because it costs no money at all. A righteous child. Which means the hours you spend teaching your children, sitting with them, correcting them gently, taking them to

the masjid when it would be easier to leave them at home, that is not just parenting. That is an investment that pays after you are gone.

So if anyone here is sitting with an empty bank account thinking there is nothing they can leave behind, you are wrong. Teach someone one sūrah properly. Raise one child who prays. That is a door that does not close.

Send Me Back

Allah tells us what a person asks for at that moment, and it is not what most of us spend our lives chasing.

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَ أَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ رَبِّ ارْجِعُونِ * لَعَلِّي أَعْمَلُ صَالِحًا فِيمَا تَرَكْتُ *

Until, when death comes to one of them, he says: my Lord, send me back, so that I may do righteousness in what I left behind.

Al-Mu'minūn (23:99 to 100)

Look at what he does not say. He does not say, send me back so I can buy the bigger house. He does not say, send me back so I can make another million. He does not say, send me back so I can finish that argument or scroll for another hour. He says, send me back so that I can do something righteous.

Al-Qurṭubī notes that this request is refused, and that the refusal itself is part of the lesson for the living: the door for action is on this side only. Everyone in that position wants exactly what you have right now and cannot have it. You are holding the thing they are begging for.

And nobody gets an extension.

وَلَنْ يُؤَخِّرَ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِذَا جَاءَ أَجَلُهَا *

And Allah will never delay a soul when its appointed time has come.

Al-Munāfiqūn (63:11)

No five extra minutes. No, let me just finish this one thing first. When the appointment arrives it arrives, and it will find us wherever we are, even if we were inside towers built of stone, as Allah says in Sūrah an-Nisā'.

A Plan You Can Actually Keep

So let us be practical, because a khutbah that only makes people feel something and does not change anything has wasted your Friday.

Start with the five prayers. Not extra prayers yet. The five, on time, properly, this week. If a man guards those, he has guarded the thing he will be asked about first.

Then take one page of Qur'an a day. One page. Some of us have not opened it since Ramaḍān. One page after Fajr or after 'Ishā', every day, no exceptions, is more than most people manage in a year of good intentions.

Then istighfār. Fix a number and keep to it. A hundred times a day, quietly, in the car, walking, waiting for the kettle. There is no sin you are carrying that Allah is not more willing to forgive than you are to ask.

Then something for someone else, every single week, that nobody finds out about. A little money. A lift given. A bill paid quietly. A person defended when they were not in the room.

And then the repairs. Pick the relationship that is broken and make the first move this week, even if you were the one who was wronged. Pay back what you owe or agree a plan with the person you owe it to. Return what is not yours.

Keep it small, and keep it every day, because that is what he ﷺ told us Allah loves.

أَحَبُّ الْعَمَلِ إِلَى اللَّهِ أَدْوَمُهُ وَإِنْ قَلَّ

The most beloved deed to Allah is the one done most consistently, even if it is small.

Source: Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim **Hadith No:** 783 **Authenticity:** Ṣaḥīḥ

Brothers and sisters, nobody is asking you to become a different person by tonight. A small thing you keep for a year will do more for you in the grave than a huge thing you did once and abandoned.

Go and Stand There

One more instruction, and it is the one people skip. Go to a graveyard. Not for a funeral. Just go, on a normal day, and stand there for ten minutes with your phone in your pocket.

Every person under that ground had plans. They had things in the diary. They had a message they had not replied to and a job half finished and a conversation they meant to have. They fully expected another morning. And their book has closed, and not one line can be added to it now.

And then look down at your own feet, standing on top of the soil. Your book is still open. That is the whole difference between you and them, and it is a difference that will not last.

One Day It Is Our Turn

One day people will wash our bodies. One day somebody will wrap us in the kafan. One day people we know will carry us on their shoulders and feel the weight of us. One day the imām will stand in front

of our body in this masjid and say Allāhu akbar, and the rows behind him will be people who are sitting here right now.

Then we will be lowered into the ground. People will put the soil back. And then they will leave, and the sound of their footsteps will fade, and our first night will begin.

That night is coming for every person in this room. The only question in front of us is what we are sending ahead for it.

And there is no better ending to hope for than the words Allah Himself has already written:

يَا أَيَّتُهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ * ارْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً * فَادْخُلِي فِي عِبَادِي *
وَادْخُلِي جَنَّتِي *

O tranquil soul, return to your Lord, pleased and pleasing. So enter among My servants, and enter My Paradise.

Al-Fajr (89:27 to 30)

We do not choose when we go. By the mercy of Allah, while we are still breathing, we do choose how we prepare to meet Him. So before the Angel of Death sits by our heads, let us come back to Allah. Before the book closes, let us put something good in it. While we can still make sajdah, let us make it. While we can still say astaghfirullāh, let us say it.

Between Fear and Hope

Somebody here is listening to all of this and is frightened, because of things in his past that he has never told anyone. I want to speak to that person directly.

Allah does not describe the grave to us in order to close the door on anyone. He describes it while the door is still wide open. The same Prophet ﷺ who told us to seek refuge from the punishment of the grave is the one who told us that Allah is happier at the repentance of His servant than a man who lost his camel in the desert with all his food and water on it, gave up, lay down to die, and then opened his eyes and found it standing there.

That is the mercy you are dealing with. Not a judge waiting for you to slip. A Lord who is delighted when you come back.

‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, may Allah be pleased with him, used to say: take account of yourselves before you are taken to account, and weigh your deeds before they are weighed for you. He was not saying it to torment himself. He was saying it because a small reckoning now saves a heavy one later.

حَاسِبُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ قَبْلَ أَنْ تُحَاسَبُوا وَزِنُوا أَعْمَالَكُمْ قَبْلَ أَنْ تُوزَنَ عَلَيْكُمْ

Take account of yourselves before you are brought to account, and weigh your deeds before they are weighed for you.

‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, may Allah be pleased with him, as transmitted in the books of zuhd

So do it tonight, before you sleep. Five minutes. What did I do today that I would be happy to see again. What did I do that I would not want shown to anyone. Ask Allah's forgiveness for the second list, thank Him for the first, and go to sleep having settled the day.

And do not let anyone tell you it is too late. Nothing is too late while you can still speak. The man who had killed ninety nine people was told there was nothing between him and Allah's mercy except the direction he chose to walk in. That is in the ṣaḥīḥ, and it was recorded for people exactly like us.

Du‘ā’

O Allah, we ask You for a good ending. O Allah, make the best of our deeds the last of them, and make the best of our days the day we meet You.

O Allah, protect us from the punishment of the grave, and make our graves gardens from the gardens of Paradise, and not pits from the pits of the Fire.

O Allah, when the two angels come to us, make our tongues firm with the truth. O Allah, let us answer that our Lord is Allah, that our religion is Islam, and that Muḥammad ﷺ is Your Messenger.

O Allah, forgive our parents as they raised us when we were small. O Allah, have mercy on those of our families and our community who have already gone ahead of us, widen their graves, light them, and join us with them in Your Paradise.

O Allah, relieve the suffering of the oppressed everywhere, feed those who are hungry, shelter those who have lost their homes, and heal our sick.

O Allah, accept from us our prayers, our fasting, our charity and our standing here today. O Allah, teach us what benefits us, benefit us by what You have taught us, and increase us in knowledge.

رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ. Our Lord, give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter, and protect us from the punishment of the Fire.

The Final Reminder

Remember the command of your Lord, the same command with which we opened and with which Allah closes the affair, the command of justice and excellence.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَاءِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ
يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ *

Indeed, Allah commands justice, excellence, and giving to relatives, and He forbids immorality, wrongdoing, and oppression. He admonishes you that you may take heed.

Sūrah an-Naḥl (16:90)

So remember Allah, the Most Great, and He will remember you. Thank Him for His favours and He will increase you. And establish the prayer.

وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ