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Surah Al-‘Asr

1. By the Time.

This Surah is without a doubt one of the most powerful and comprehensive Surahs in the entire Quran. Imam Shafi (ra) is famous for having said that if only Allah (swt) had revealed this Surah in the entire Quran then it would have been sufficient for the guidance of all mankind. Look at what a powerful statement this is. He is in essence saying that this ayah has within it the guidance of the entire Quran. The entire Message of the Quran can be summarized within this one ayah. If we study this Surah Insha Allah we will see how this is so. The Quran is in essence a call to Allah (swt). A call to do the actions that are pleasing to Him (swt) and to stay away from those actions that are displeasing to Him (swt). It is also a call to invite others to Him (swt) and to be patient and steadfast in this invitation. Just like this is the essence of the Quran this is also the essence of this Surah. That is why this Surah is so comprehensive despite the fact that it is so small. With only a handful of words, Allah (swt) has summarized for us His (swt)'s Book.

Allah (swt) begins this wonderful Surah by making an oath. Whenever Allah (swt) makes an oath in the Quran, it is to bring our attention to the extreme importance of what He (swt) is making that oath to. Can you then even begin to realize how much we should pay attention to and ponder on what Allah (swt) is saying. Think about this for a moment. This is the Quran. This is the Book of Allah (swt). This is the very Speech of Allah (swt). So we should consider everything that He (swt) tells us in this Book to be of the utmost importance. But when He (swt) swears to something in this Book, when He (swt) tells us something but before He (swt) tells it to us He (swt) takes an oath, then how much greater is that which He (swt) is speaking of? How much more should we pay attention to what He (swt) says? The scholars say that the greatness of what Allah (swt) is swearing to is based on the greatness of what He (swt) is swearing by. So Insha Allah let us look now to what Allah (swt) is swearing by. Then in the next ayah Insha Allah we will see what He (swt) is swearing to.

The simple translation for the word '*Asr*' that Allah (swt) uses here would be "Time". But in reality it gives a far deeper and a far more comprehensive meaning. Not only does it mean time, but it means time that is limited and time that is fleeting. There is another word in Arabic for time which is *Dhar*. But this word means time without a specified limit. The word *Asr* on the other hand means time that is limited. Time that will soon end. This is what Allah (swt) is swearing to in this ayah. The time that will end.

But how exactly is this such a great oath? In order to understand we have to realize this oath in relation to the Message of the Quran. This Quran is addressed to the human being. It tells him about the nature of his existence. His existence on this world is one of test. Allah (swt) is testing him for every moment of his life. Now is this test finite or infinite? Is this a test with an end or without an end? Of course it is with an end. Of course it is limited. The existence of man in this world is finite. It will only be for a limited period of time. This existence. This fleeting existence. This time in which we have for our test. This is what Allah (swt) tells us about in this ayah. This is what Allah (swt) swears to here. Our time in this world. Our limited existence. These few moments in which we have to prove ourselves.

So how great is this oath for each and every one of us. This is our life. Our very existence. Our chance to strive to come closer to Allah (swt), our chance to earn for ourselves a place in the Garden. Every moment in our lives. Every moment in the life of every single human being. Think about this for a moment now. Every moment, in the life of every human being that passes by, every sorrow that they have and every happiness that they have. Every moment of pain that they have and every moment of pleasure that they have. All of this is what Allah (swt) is swearing to in this ayah. So how great is this oath for all of us. We should realize from this how great is our existence. It is so short but it is so important. In these few moments that we have. In the counted sands of this hourglass our eternity is being decided. These precious moments are all that we have to journey to our Rabb in. Allah (swt) wants to make us realize this great purpose for our existence in this ayah. In order that we would not waste this few minutes we have left. In order that we may do something with our lives. May Allah (swt) help us!

Another meaning that this word *Asr* gives is the declining day. The day that is about to end, usually around late afternoon. If we take this meaning then in addition to swearing by the moments of our lives, Allah (swt) is also swearing by this time period of the day. The late afternoon. The time when the Day is ending. Notice here the connection between these two parts of the ayah. There is nothing that better symbolizes how our time is finishing than the Day that is declining. Every day of our lives Allah (swt) causes the day to become old and He (swt) causes it to fade away to show us how our time is finishing. To show us how little time we have left. This pattern repeats every day of our lives. Every day we see the day born anew only to die once again. Does this not show us how time is fleeting? Does this not show us how the very nature of our existence in this world is that it must end?

Some scholars have said that this oath also refers to the time in which we pray our *Asr* Salah. Because of this these scholars have noted the importance of this particular Salah and the blessings of the time in which this Salah is prayed. They note the ayah in Surah Baqarah where Allah (swt) has called this the mid-most prayer, and He (swt) has commanded us to be especially careful of guarding this Salah. From this the lesson that we can take is that we must be extremely careful of making our *Asr* Salah, we must be especially careful that we do not miss this Salah, or even delay it till the last minute. Another lesson that we can take is note the special blessings of the time of this Salah. We should try to use the moments of this time of the day to increase in our worship of Allah (swt), to come even closer to Him (swt). How unfortunate is it that in today's Capitalist society most people spend these precious moments in trade and commerce. This time that could be spent in the worship of Allah (swt), in the glorification of Allah (swt), they spend it just trying to get some portion of this world. If the Islamic State returns, then the State would ensure that the Muslims can use these moments trying to get closer to their Rabb. It would bring laws that would mandate all employers to allow Muslims to make their Salah during this blessed time, it would bring laws that would allow for trade and commerce to be suspended during this time. If the Islamic State would return the Muslims would be free to engage in worship and remembrance during this blessed time.

Before we leave this ayah let us look at some of the other meanings that this word *Asr* has. At a linguistic level one of the known meanings of this word is something that is pressed or squeezed. For example like you would squeeze the juice out of grapes or like you would squeeze water out of a cloth. What then is the connection between this meaning of the word and Time? Of course it is that Allah (swt) wants us to make the most out of our time. He (swt) wants us to use every moment that we have in worship and servitude to Him (swt). He (swt) wants us to strive at every moment so that we take full advantage of it. He (swt) does not want even want us to lose one moment. The moments of your life are the lemons that Allah (swt) has given you, and He (swt) wants you to squeeze them to the best of your ability. The lemonade that comes out from this is what will fill your scale on the Last Day. So do not let one moment pass you by.

How many of us today have forgotten this, how especially our youth? How many of us allow the moments in our life to pass by and we do nothing in those moments? We only eat, defecate and sleep. We only breathe and wait. Not doing anything in that time to please our Lord. Not doing anything in that time to fill that scale. Perhaps among the greatest culprits for this is the television. How many of our youth just spend hours and hours watching the images on this box? These days we also have the internet with its online chat and online games. How many of our youth waste away their existence on these? Do they not know the true purpose of their creation? Do they not know that at every moment they are being tested? We have been given this world on a silver platter, everything that we want in life comes so easily. This has made us spoiled. This has made us to forget what life is all about. Life is first and foremost about seeking the Pleasure of Allah (swt), it is about trying to spend as many moments as possible trying to please our Rabb. At every moment we should be asking ourselves what action would be most pleasing to Allah (swt) and we should be striving to do that action. This is what life is all about. To squeeze the most out of every moment and seek the Pleasure of Allah (swt) with it. How many of us have forgotten this? Allah (swt) tells us in the next ayah what is the consequence of this forgetting.

إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ ﴿٢﴾

2. Most surely mankind is in loss.

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَتَوَّصُوا بِالحَقِّ وَتَوَّصُوا بِالصَّبْرِ

﴿٣﴾

3. Except those who believe, and do righteous deeds, and they connect on the Truth and they connect with Sabr.

In the previous ayah Allah (swt) took one of the greatest of oaths that He (swt) has ever taken in the Quran. He (swt) swore by Time itself. Not just time but the time that each and every one of us have been given. The fleeting time. The time that destroys everything. The moments in which the eternity for every single soul will be determined. This was the tremendous oath that He (swt) took in the previous ayah. Now in this ayah He (swt) tells us what that oath is to.

There are perhaps no words that have ever been spoken that have more truth than the words in these ayahs. These are among the truest of all words that have ever been spoken. Why do we say this? Firstly because of the tremendous oath that Allah (swt) took in the previous ayah. Secondly because of the language that Allah (swt) uses in these ayahs. If we look at ayah number 2 here, we see that Allah (swt) uses the Arabic words *inna* and He (swt) uses the word *la*. Both of these words are used to give the meaning of extreme emphasis and certainty. Each of these words by themselves gives the meaning of emphasis and certainty, but when they are combined like they have been here then they give the meaning of even further emphasis and certainty. You cannot possibly achieve more emphasis and certainty except with the use of these two words. Then on top of that you consider the great oath that was taken in the previous ayah. Then you will get a sense of how true is what Allah (swt) is saying here.

In the first of these two ayahs Allah (swt) tells us with utmost emphasis and certainty that mankind is in loss. The Arabic word *hasar* that Allah (swt) uses here does not just mean loss. In addition it also means destruction. In addition it also means being deceived or cheated. In addition it also means being lead astray and being misguided. All of these meanings are present in just this word. Insha Allah let us explore how each of these meanings fit for this ayah.

First Allah (swt) is telling us that all mankind is in a state of loss. Every single human being, every man, woman and child is in a state of loss. The only exception to this rule. The only ones who are not in a state of loss are those who do four things. The ones who believe, the ones who do righteous deeds, the ones who connect with others on the Truth, and the ones who connect with others on Sabr. Insha Allah we will discuss soon what each of these means, but first we must realize that all of mankind who does not fulfill each and every one of these four conditions is in a state of loss. There is not one single exception to this rule. It includes every single one from among mankind.

So what exactly has mankind lost? They have lost a great many things, but first and foremost they have lost Allah (swt). The Real and the True. The Divine. What could be a greater loss than this? There are a few among mankind today who are in the Divine Presence. Who remember Allah (swt) at every moment of their lives. There are a few more who are close to this station or who are striving to reach it. But what can we say about the rest of mankind? The ones who live in utter heedlessness of the Divine. Many of them do not even know that there is a Being as Tremendous and Glorious as He (swt). One Who is so Perfect. One Who is so Pure. One Who is so Sublime. One Who is so close to them. Others may know of Him (swt), but they have forgotten Him (swt). They fail to remember Him (swt). They allow moments and moments, hours and hours, days and days to pass them by and they will not even bring Him (swt) to their minds. What can you say about such people? What could be a more terrible loss than this? When you do not remember Allah (swt), you also tend to neglect the actions that are pleasing to Him (swt). You also do the actions that are displeasing to Him (swt). So you have also lost the Pleasure of Allah (swt), what could be a greater loss than this?

When a human being has lost his relationship with Allah (swt) and His (swt)'s contentment, can you even quantify the magnitude of such a loss? This is and of itself should make us dread this loss. This is in and of itself should make us want to do those four actions so that we can save ourselves from this loss. But is this the end of the loss? Is this all that we stand to lose? No, we also lose our place in the Garden. The Garden was created for each and every one of us. It belonged to our father Adam (as). So there is a place in it for each and every one of his children. But when any child of Adam fails to do these four actions then he loses his place in the Garden. That place in the Garden which was reserved just for him. How terrible is this loss? Just think about all the pleasure and the delights that he would be missing. Allah (swt) has told us in other ayahs of the Quran about some of these, from delicious foods to sweet drinks to pure companions to raised couches to whatsoever that one could desire. Every human being who has ever lived has their share of these delights being kept just for them in the Garden. But for those humans who choose not to fulfill their purpose of worshipping Allah (swt), for those human beings who choose to be ungrateful, for those human beings who do not perform these four actions that Allah (swt) asks of all mankind, they have lost their share of their Garden. They have lost all these pleasures and delights. Delights that would have been theirs for all eternity. Can you even begin to comprehend the magnitude of such a loss?

The next loss that is being suffered by all mankind is the loss of peace and tranquility. When one lives the life of a true believer, the life that one was created to live, then there comes to the heart a peace and tranquility like no other. Finally one knows the purpose of their existence. Finally one knows why they have been created. Finally one knows what happens after death. Finally one knows Allah (swt) and one sees Him (swt) in everything. For everything is a creation of His (swt). Can you imagine the kind of peace and solace that will surface in the heart of one who reaches this level of Iman? These are the ones whom Allah (swt) has promised us in the Quran that there will be no fear upon them and they will not grieve. Once they realize everything in this world as coming from Allah (swt) then there is nothing of this world that upsets them. For every second they are in the Divine Presence. From Him they draw comfort and peace.

But such peace and tranquility can only be promised for those who do the four actions that Allah (swt) lists in this ayah. Because to reach the Divine Presence, to reach that level where you are conscious of Allah (swt) at every moment, is by no means easy. It requires effort. It requires sacrifice. It requires that you do what Allah (swt) is asking of you in this ayah. It is not enough that you do only the first, or only the first and second, or only the first, second and third. Rather you must do all four. Only then can you get the peace and tranquility in this life, only then can you get the Garden, only these can you get the contentment of Allah (swt).

In addition to losing all of these, if you fail to do all these four actions you will also lose the Favor of Allah (swt) in this world. We know that for those whom Allah (swt) is pleased with, He (swt) will provide for them the good of this world just as He (swt) gives them the good of the Hereafter. He (swt) will give them a good and pure life in this world. He (swt) will remove their fear and their worries. He (swt) will cure them of their illnesses and sufferings. He (swt) will provide for them His (swt)'s sustenance. He (swt) will give them contentment in the heart with what He (swt) has provided them. For such people, just as they have a pleasurable life in the Hereafter they will also have a blessed life in this world. But for those who have lost. For those who have chosen to turn away from Allah (swt). They will lose happiness in this world as well. Even if they may have some material comforts and some wealth of this world, it will not bring them happiness. They will be plagued with misery and problems. The more wealth that they have the more fear they will have of losing their wealth. Their attachment to this temporary and fleeting world will grow until it consumes them. How can a heart that was created for Allah (swt) find contentment when it attaches itself to this world?

So how great then is what we all stand to lose if we do not do what our Lord requires of us? To be denied all of these is terrible enough, but that is not our situation. We have these but because of the choice that we make we are losing them. Because when we choose not to do the four actions that Allah (swt) asks of us in this ayah then we are losing all of these. The Pleasure of our Lord, our place in the Garden, peace and tranquility in this life, happiness and contentment in this life, we are losing all of this. Can you even begin to comprehend this loss?

In addition to being in a state of loss those who choose not to do these four actions are also in destruction. The most apparent meaning that we can take from this is that it is referring to their fate in the Hereafter. Once a person loses their place in the Garden, then what is the fate that awaits them? Of course it is nothing but destruction upon destruction in the Fire. The Fire is nothing less than destruction. If what happens to a person in the Fire for just a fraction of a moment were to happen to them in this world then it would completely destroy them in this world. But the Fire is not like this world. In the Fire you will be destroyed only to be created once again, only to be destroyed once again. This will be your fate if you ignore the four duties imposed on you here by your Lord.

Not only are they destroyed in the Hereafter, but they are destroyed in this world as well. When a soul is distant from Allah (swt), when a soul fails to remember Allah (swt), when a soul turns away from Allah (swt), then what kind of a life would that soul live? Imagine you are a soul to whom a Message from the Divine did reach but you turned away from it. Can you even begin to imagine the torture and the darkness of such an existence? To willfully live in heedlessness only because of pride and arrogance, only because of lusts and desires. To know Allah (swt) but to choose to be distant to Him (swt). Imagine such a heart. Would the very existence of such a soul be anything other than destruction? Anything but pain and misery. They are burning in the fire of their heedlessness and arrogance before they burn in the fires of Hell.

In addition to losing everything, and being destroyed both in this life and in the Hereafter, those who turn away from these four actions are also the deceived and the misguided. Think about this for a moment now, even though Allah (swt) speaks in this ayah of all mankind, does He (swt) really mean all mankind? Is it really every single human being who is under the threat of this punishment? Remember that Allah (swt) has told us that He (swt) will never punish a people until He (swt) sends to them a warning. Now has all of mankind received the warning, have they received the Message? Of course not. So who then should be frightened? Who is this warning really for? It is for us, it is for the Muslims. We are the ones who have the Quran. We are the ones who have received the Final Message.

So we as Muslims should always see this ayah as applying first and foremost to us. We are the ones who are in loss, we are the ones who are destroyed, we are the ones who have been deceived and sent astray. The only way to save ourselves is to do the four actions that Allah (swt) demand of us in this ayah. Otherwise we will never wake up from our slumber, otherwise the veils will never be lifted from our eyes, otherwise we will continue to be walking a path other than the path that leads to Allah (swt). It is very easy for us to look at this Surah and think that we are the saved group and that the rest of mankind are the ones in loss, destruction and deception. If that is what we think then we have forgotten that Allah (swt) will not punish a people until they receive the Message correctly. If this is what we think then we do not fully understand what are these four actions that Allah (swt) is asking of us. We are being deceived by Shaitan and our desires. By our arrogance and our sense of self-righteousness. The way that we can save ourselves is with humbleness. The way that we can save ourselves is with knowledge. The way that we can save ourselves is by striving to do what our Rabb is demanding of us.

Allah (swt) tells us in the last of these ayahs "**Except those who believe, and do righteous deeds, and they connect with others on the Truth and the connect with others on Sabr**". These are the ones who are saved. The ones who do each of these four actions. Insha Allah not let us look at each of these. First we have to believe. Actually the word *amana* gives a far deeper meaning than simply to believe. It means to believe with conviction and certainty. It means to believe in a reality that one is absolutely convinced of. If you have any doubts whatsoever about the veracity of something then you cannot use this word to describe your belief in it.

Now that we know the kind of belief that Allah (swt) expects us of, can just any Muslim be said to believe in this way? We all claim that we believe, but how many of us believe with this much certainty and conviction? How sure are we of Allah (swt)? Do we see Him (swt) before we see the world as we are supposed to? How certain are we of this Message that He (swt) has sent us? Do we believe in it more than we believe in the world around us like we are supposed to? How many of us today can be said to have this level of conviction and certainty?

So the first action that we need to do if we want to save ourselves from being among the lost and the destroyed is that we must believe. Not just believe but believe with this level of certainty and conviction. How can we do this? It is not as simple as it sounds. It is not a matter of simply turning on something in our minds. It requires effort. It requires sacrifice. It requires that we humble ourselves. Allah (swt) mentions this action of believing with certainty because it is the most important. In fact all of the other actions that we do require this action. All of the other actions that we do are based on this action. This is the foundation. So how important than is this? How important is it that we build our conviction to the best of our ability?

The first way of gaining this certainty, and the most important way, is of course by praying to Allah (swt). He (swt) is the One Who guides hearts. This Iman that we have, this certainty of faith, is a creation of His (swt). He (swt) creates it and He (swt) places it into whomever hearts that He (swt) pleases. So if we want it we have to ask Him (swt) for it. We have to ask Him (swt) to guide us. This is exactly what we do when we pray to Him (swt) seventeen times a day or more. We ask Him (swt) to create within us this certainty of faith. To create it and to increase it. To always make it strong and to never allow it deviate or weaken.

So every time that we make our Salah we have to ask of Him (swt) with utmost earnestness. We must not be timid or weak in our Salah. We must realize what it is that we are asking of Him (swt). We must realize who we are and who He (swt) IS. We are asking Him (swt) what can save us from an eternity of damnation in the Fire. We are asking Him (swt) for what will give us the eternal bliss of the Garden. We are asking Him (swt) what will give us peace and tranquility in this life. We are asking Him (swt) what will give us a sense of purpose in this life. So how earnestly should we ask of Him (swt) this guidance, this Iman? Despite the fact that we are so desperately in need of it, who are we to Him (swt) to grant it to us? We who have committed so many sins. We who have neglected so many of our obligations. We who are so disgusting and weak creatures. And He (swt) Who is so Majestic and Tremendous and Pure. Why then should He (swt) grant it to us unless we ask of Him (swt)? Unless we ask of Him (swt) with utmost sincerity and earnestness? Seventeen times and more we have to ask Him (swt).

The next way in which we can gain this certainty is by doing the actions that are pleasing to Allah (swt). We have to demonstrate our belief through our actions. First and foremost to our selves. We need to show our selves that we believe. That is why when we do the actions that are pleasing to Allah (swt), we must always remind ourselves that the reason why we are doing these actions is for Him (swt). We are not doing it for ourselves or for the people. Rather we are only doing it for Him (swt). For just the hope that He (swt) is Witnessing us and He (swt) is pleased with what He (swt) beholds. That is why the scholars have told us that our Iman increases with every good deed that we do and it weakens with every sin that we do. This is not to say that we are a people who have doubts, but the nature of Iman is such that it increases and decreases in this way. Remember that this Iman is a creation of Allah (swt), it is not something that we can directly sense or measure. So since the knowledge that we have of it is only a little, we cannot hope to comprehend it completely. What we can be certain of is that if we want it to increase then we must always be striving to do more and more of the actions that are pleasing to Allah (swt). This must be something for which we are always making a constant effort. For every moment of our lives. So whether it is giving salams to your brother, or it is making Salah in the masjid, or it is making Salah at the earliest time, or it is reading Quran, or it is behaving the best with the people, or it is being kind with your family and spending time with them, or it is teaching Islam to children, or learning the Din, or it is fasting, or praying the night, whatever it is as long as you keep the intention purely for Allah (swt), and you make the effort only for Him (swt), then Insha Allah you will feel your Iman increase as a result of it. At the same time you must also make a conscious effort to keep away from sin. To keep away from anything that may be displeasing to Allah (swt). Know that the effort that you make to avoid what is displeasing to Allah (swt) is an action that He (swt) is pleased with. Perchance He (swt) will reward you for it by granting you this Iman. For example the scholars have told us that when we see a beautiful woman on the street, or anything that our eyes are tempted to look at, but we then control our gaze for Allah (swt), then He (swt) will reward us with an Iman the sweetness of which we will taste in our hearts. May Allah (swt) grant us this!

Another way in which we can seek this conviction is by making sacrifices. We have to sacrifice what we have for Allah (swt). This is a demonstration of our belief just like our actions are. The Prophet (saw) has said that "charity is a proof", this means that when you give up something that you love for Allah (swt) it is a proof that you really do believe in Him (swt). More than anyone else you are proving it to yourself. Once you prove it to yourself that you really do believe then Insha Allah you will believe. So spend some of your money on the needy, give up some time to spend with your family, make some effort to learn Arabic. All the while keep your intention only for Allah (swt). At the same time also give up something that you may desire for Allah (swt). Perhaps you want to buy a new car or some expensive clothes. Why don't you let this go for Allah (swt) and use that money instead for charity. When you make these sacrifices and you do it only for Allah (swt) then Insha Allah you will feel your Iman increase. You will feel your certainty and conviction grow. Then you can have the kind of belief that Allah (swt) commanded you to have in this ayah. The kind of belief which can save you from being among the lost and the destroyed.

Yet another way that you can increase your Iman is by contemplation and reflection. You can contemplate on the Signs for Allah (swt) and the Signs for the proof of this Message. How many are the Signs for Allah (swt) that are present in this universe? Every single thing that we see in the world around us is a Sign for Allah (swt). Every single thing in one way or another shows us how it is the creation of a Creator. How it is being controlled by a Controller. Can you find one thing in this entire universe that does not have the attributes of creation? That is not in some way limited and dependent. Every single thing has some kind of limit imposed on it showing us that it has indeed been created. Similarly everything is also being controlled in one way or another thus showing us how it has a Controller. When it comes to the Signs which prove the Truthfulness of this Message then that is the Quran itself. Could this Book possibly be from any but Allah (swt)? Who but He (swt) could have produced a Book with such depth of meaning? A Book to this day mankind has not even been able to reproduce even a small portion of. We have to contemplate on all of this. We have to reflect on it. Insha Allah then our Iman will grow.

Yet another way through which we can build within ourselves this certainty is by having a closer relationship with the Quran. We spoke previously about how we must contemplate and reflect on the source of this Book. We have to ask ourselves how it is that this Book could be from any but Allah (swt)? However in addition to that we also have to contemplate on the meanings of the Quran. We have to ponder deeply and intently concerning what Allah (swt) is telling us in this Book. We have to make it a point to familiarize ourselves with the Arabic language so that we can know first hand what Allah (swt) is saying. We have to think deeply about the meaning of each and every ayah in this Book and how we can apply it in our lives. If we can do this then Insha Allah our Iman and our certainty will grow, the Book of our Rabb will guide us to Him (swt).

So this is the first step that we have to take if we want to be among the saved. We have to believe. We have to believe with certainty and conviction. But ultimately this Iman is a creation of Allah (swt). It is not in our hands. It is not a choice that we make. However what is upon us is that we seek it. We cannot simply do nothing and wait for Allah (swt) to guide us. We cannot persist in sin and blame Allah (swt) for not guiding us. Allah (swt) has told us that He (swt) will guide those who seek the guidance from Him (swt). If only we would walk towards Him (swt) then He (swt) will come towards us at speed. So you need to do what is required of you. You need to seek this certainty and conviction. You may use one of the paths that we have suggested here or you may seek your own path. You have to do whatever it takes. Because in the end this is all that matters. All that matters is that we find Allah (swt) and that we journey to Him (swt).

The second of the four actions that we need to do in order to be among the saved is that we must perform righteous actions. Actually the word "righteous" is really a weak translation for the Arabic word *Salah*. This word gives the meaning of setting right what was wrong. Putting back in the proper place something that was out of place. This is also what we need to do. We need to be among those who are sources of good in this world. We have to be among those from whom the people benefit. But who is it who tells us what is good? Who is it who tells us what is wrong and how it should be made right? Of course it is only Allah (swt).

So the second of the two dictates is that we have to create good in the world, we have to create order and set aright what has gone wrong. But this has to be done according to the guidance that Allah (swt) has given us in the Quran and Sunnah. It cannot be according to our own whims and desires. First and foremost when we seek to set affairs right in the world, we have to give to Allah (swt) His dues. Because there is no greater injustice that man can do in this world other than to turn away from his Creator, to be ungrateful to his Creator. So first and foremost we have to believe in Allah (swt), we have to believe in this Message that He (swt) has sent to us, and we have to believe in all that He (swt) tells us in this Message. This is the first of many rights that we owe to Him (swt). After the belief in His (swt)'s Message, we then have to do what He (swt) commands us in this Message. This includes the five daily prayers, this includes the Zakat to feed the poor, this includes fasting in Ramadan, and this includes the pilgrimage to Makkah. It also includes restraining ourselves from all that is displeasing to Him (swt). In fact what Allah (swt) truly demands from us is a life of complete servitude to Him (swt). A life where we dedicate every single action for Him (swt). Even if this is an ideal that we will never reach we must still make the effort. Insha Allah our sincere intention and our effort is what He (swt) will reward us for. May He (swt) give us the enabling grace!

As part of our servitude to Allah (swt) we have to be seeking to create good in this world. We have to be seeking to set aright what is wrong. The Prophet (saw) is reported to have said that the best of us is the one who is the most beneficial to the people. This means that in order to be the most pleasing to Allah (swt), we have to be among those who bring about good to those around us. So in whatever way that we can we have to try to bring mercy to those around us, we have to try and help those around us, we have to try and alleviate the suffering and the distress of those around us. Now if we are trying to bring benefit to the people around us then in what better way can we do this other than by inviting them to Allah (swt)? Is there any mercy that is greater than this? Just to know that there is so Majestic and so Glorious a Being. To know His (swt)'s Names and attributes. To know what is pleasing to Him (swt) and what is displeasing to Him (swt). To know how to journey to Him (swt).

So the greatest of good that we can do for all people is invite them to Allah (swt), invite them to this Message of Islam. Once we have done that then we should also try to help them in whatever other way that we can. We have to see what further benefit we can be for them. We have to see if we can improve their situation in any way. We have to ease their suffering and their distress. We have to try and bring peace and tranquility to their life. We have to make them pleased in whatever way that we can. If they are hungry then we must feed them, if they are homeless then we must provide them with a home, if they are ignorant then we must teach them, if they are in any way deprived or in need then we must try to fulfill their need to the best of our ability. After we have taken care of the people, we also have to take care of the earth and all its non-human inhabitants as well. We have to look after all the animals of this world, we must make sure that they are not made to suffer for no reason, that they are not harmed for no reason. We have to set aside a portion of this earth for the wildlife and we must make certain that their habitat is not in any destroyed. We also have to try our best to reduce pollution and waste. We have to only consume as much of the resources of this world as we need and no more. We have to try and eliminate waste and extravagance wherever possible. We have to always remember that we are on this earth only to worship Allah (swt) and not to satisfy our lusts and greed. We have to only consume as much of the world as we need to fulfill this purpose. In every possible we have to try to be a source of good, a source of benefit for everyone and everything around us. This is what it means to make Salah. It means to make as right what was wrong. It means to mend what was broken. It means to bring order to chaos. It means to bring light to darkness. These are the actions that Allah (swt) likes to see from us. The actions that conform to His (swt)'s Law. The actions that will bring benefit to the world around us. The actions that will bring mercy and justice for all humanity, for all creation. In the end however we are doing it all for Him (swt). It is not for our selves or for the people. Although we desire such benefit for ourselves and for our brethren in humanity, our hearts are always attached to Him (swt). Even when we seek to bring good to all the people around us, we do it only for Him (swt).

So if this is our goal then what is the best way to reach this goal? If our goal is to bring the people to Allah (swt), if our goal is to bring peace and mercy for the people, if our goal is to bring order and justice to this earth, if our goal is to end the suffering on the earth then what is the best way to reach this goal? How did the Prophet (saw) and the Sahabah do it? Of course it was by establishing the Islamic State, it was by establishing Allah (swt)'s Kingdom on the earth. The Islamic State is what will bring for all mankind, for all creation, the mercy and justice that they crave. This is because the government is what controls the society. The government is what controls the people. The government is what controls what will and what will not be permitted in the land. The government is what controls how the resources of the land will be distributed. The government is what controls the media. The government is what controls the educational system.

What is the reason today why so many people are heedless of Allah (swt)? What is the reason why they allow so many moments to pass by without remembering Him (swt)? Is it not because of the secular society in which we live? A society that finds no place for Allah (swt). Do they teach the children about Him (swt) in the schools? Do they speak about Him (swt) in the media? If you were to look at the world around you in such lands would you see anything that reminds you of Him (swt)? Of course not. Because secularism is a system that is diametrically opposed to the Divine. It is a system which says that the Divine has no place whatsoever in the lives of the people or in the way that the affairs of the society are conducted.

How then can we ever hope to bring the people to Allah (swt) in such a society? In such a world would the masses ever reach a level where they are totally dedicated to Him (swt) like they are supposed to? No matter how many talks you make them listen to, no matter how many times you remind them, no matter how many books they read, the filth of the society around them will always affect them. It will always draw them away from Allah (swt). It will always fill their hearts with everything other than Him (swt). That is why in order to bring the people to Allah (swt) we have to create a society where He (swt) is supreme. A world where everywhere the people turn they will be reminded of Him (swt) and His (swt)'s greatness. An environment that will always make their Iman stronger and that will always bring them to Him (swt).

Just imagine what a world like that will be like. The constitution of the country would be the Quran and Sunnah. Everywhere the people turn they would be reminded of Allah (swt). They would see masjid on every street corner. In those masjid there would be sessions of dhikr and knowledge. The radio and the television would always be broadcasting Quran and knowledge of the Din. The schools would teach the children first and foremost about Allah (swt). They would be taught that He (swt) is the Real and the True. Everything that happens and everything that exists will be shown to be a creation of His (swt). They will be taught to see Him (swt) before they see the world. They will be taught how to practice the Din and they will be taught the Quran. The business cycle will allow everyone to spend some time engaged in the worship of Allah (swt). All businesses will be closed down during the time of Jummah, and everyone will be allowed to make their five daily prayers. In Ramadan the restaurants will be closed, and everyone will be encouraged to keep the fast. When it comes time for Hajj there will be no border guards preventing the entry of the pilgrims. No one will be required to get a visa from a kufr government in order to properly their Rabb. Anyone can visit Makkah whenever they want to.

And as for the Zakat, the Zakat will be used to take care of the people. The Zakat will be used to create an economy in which there is equal distribution of wealth. You will not have a world like today where the vast majority of people live in poverty and in need while a few live in affluence and extravagance. Rather you will have a world where everyone is taken care of. Where everyone has enough. This was the kind of world that the Islamic State once created. A nation in which poverty was eliminated completely. A nation where the officials of the State once could not find anyone to give the Zakat to. So if you want to take care of the people of the world, if you want to help them, then what better way can you do it in other than by bringing back the Law of Allah (swt)? You will never be able to rid the world of poverty and hunger today because the Capitalist system in which we live creates it. The only way to truly combat this problem is to destroy the very system that is causing it. To destroy it and to replace it with a system that will take care of the people. A system that is based on the principle that the responsibility of the State is to take care of the people and to provide for the people.

Thus we see how the second of the four actions that Allah (swt) requires of us if we want to be among the saved is that we must to actions of *Salah*. By the word *Salah* what is meant here is not the prayer, but it is the righting of what is wrong. It is the fixing of what is broken. It is the ending of suffering. It is the bringing of darkness to light. It is the bringing of mercy to pain. It is the bringing of order to chaos. It is the bringing of sanity to madness. It is the honoring of trusts and obligations. The first and foremost trust that we have to honor is our obligation to our Creator. Our obligation to believe in Him and in the Message that He sends. To do the actions that are pleasing to Him and avoid what is displeasing to Him. Then we have to help the people. First and foremost our Muslim brethren and then humanity at large. Then we should have mercy on the animals, the plants and the earth as a whole. We said that the best way in which to accomplish this is by restoring the Islamic State. By restoring the Divine Law on the earth. Thus we see that when Allah (swt) tells us to do actions of *Salah* He (swt) is not only asking us to make prayers and fast and eat halal meat. In addition to all that He (swt) is also asking us to join the effort to restore His (swt)'s Law to the earth.

So in order to fulfill this requirement we have to contribute to this effort. Without a doubt there is a battle going on today for the hearts and minds of the Muslims. Should Muslims be happy living in a secular world or should we work to bring back the Law of our Lord? Should we be "moderate" and only accept those portions of the Din that are compatible with secularism or should we demand the complete implementation of this Din? These are the questions that Muslims today are being forced to answer. These are the two sides of this battle. Now what is being asked of you is not just that you choose the right side but also that you support it. In other words not only must you believe that we can only live under the Islamic State but you must also carry this idea to the Ummah. You have to speak to the Muslims that you know about our duty and our responsibility to only live under the Law of our Lord. You have to convince them that we cannot be content living in the world as it is. We have to work for a change. You can be sure that the other side is doing their part. They are spending billions to push their version of Islam. How then can you be silent? How can you assist in preventing what will bring such good for all?

The third of the actions that we need to do if we want to be among the saved is that we must connect on the Truth. Now this may seem like a strange command so Insha Allah let us explain exactly it means? The Arabic word *thawasa* means to connect or to join. It means to come together and form a bond with. So what we need to do is connect with the Truth. Now what exactly does Allah (swt) mean here by the Truth? Of course Himself (swt). He (swt) is the Truth. There is nothing that is truer than He (swt). What is this world, what is existence itself, when compared to Him (swt)? All of it is an illusion when compared to the Divine. This is the realization that we need to come to. This is how we connect to Him (swt). It is by releasing our pride and our desires and existing only for Him (swt). It is by seeing Him (swt) before we see the world. It is by seeing Him (swt) as only a creation of His (swt). As the Sufis have said, the world is not really a veil from Him (swt), rather the world is shining with His (swt)'s Light. In everything and anything you can see Him (swt). Not that He (swt) exists inside everything as the deviants claim but rather to realize that everything is a creation of His (swt).

How exactly then do we connect with Allah (swt)? Insha Allah this will come as a natural result of our building our Iman in Him (swt). When you are so sure of Him (swt), just as He (swt) has described Himself (swt) in His (swt)'s Book, then how can you not see Him (swt)? When you know that there is such a Being, a Being of such utter Perfection and Majesty and Sublimity. Whose true essence words can not even describe then how can you not think about Him (swt)? How can you continue to live in heedlessness of Him (swt)? Of course none of us will ever reach the level where we are with Allah (swt) for every moment, but how can we not try? How can you know that there is a Being such as He (swt) and not want to journey to Him (swt)? Most people in the world today do not know of Him (swt) so they may be pardoned for their heedlessness, but you know. You have read His (swt)'s Book, you believe in the words of His (swt)'s Messenger, how then can you turn away from Him (swt)? What utter madness is that? You have to reach for Him (swt) through your obedience to Him (swt) and your submission to Him (swt). You have to always remind yourself that He (swt) is the True. He (swt) is the Light of your darkness. He (swt) is the Mercy to your pain. He (swt) is what fills your emptiness.

Now this word *thawasa* does not just mean to connect, but it means to join with others in connecting. So the meaning given here is that not only must we be connecting with Allah (swt) ourselves but we must be joining other to Him (swt) as well. We must help and guide other people to connect to Him (swt) as well. In other words we must do dawah. Not only do we have to tell the people about Allah (swt), not only do we have to invite them to Him (swt), but we have to connect them with Him (swt). We have to help them to establish with Him (swt) the kind of relationship that we seek to have with Him (swt). One of total dedication. One of total submission. How can we expect anything less? When we consider how Majestic and Glorious and Sublime a Being He (swt) IS and when we also consider how much we are in debt to Him (swt), then how can we give to Him (swt) anything less than this?

If this is the kind of relationship that we want all of mankind to have with Allah (swt) then how do we go about bringing about such a relationship? How do we make mankind dedicate themselves to Allah (swt) completely? Would this happen if mankind continues to live in a secular world? Where there is nothing that reminds them of their Rabb and everything that reminds them of other than Him (swt)? Where even the law of the land is not the Law of the Divine but rather the law of man? Where they are constantly reminded of their lusts and desires instead of being reminded of Him (swt)? How can we connect the people to Allah (swt) in the way that He (swt) deserves in such a world? We cannot. Allah (swt) Knows this and this is apparent in the dawah that He (swt) ordered the Prophet (saw) to carry. The Prophet (saw) did not simply call the people to Allah (swt), rather he (saw) first established over them the Law of Allah (swt). This is in order that the world they lived in is a world that always reminded them of Him (swt). This also then is what we need to do. If we want to fulfill the command that He (swt) has given us in this ayah. If we want the people to truly connect with Allah (swt), connect with the Real and the True, then we also need to work for the reestablishment of the Islamic State. This is what will create a world where the government and the economy and the social order are all in total submission to the Real and the True. This is what will create a world where the people may connect to Allah (swt) in the way that He (swt) deserves.

The final command that Allah (swt) gives us in this ayah is that we must connect with Sabr. This command is connected directly with the previous command. The previous command that Allah (swt) gave us was that we had to connect with Him (swt), we had to dedicate ourselves completely to Him (swt). In addition to that we also had to help all of mankind to connect with Him (swt). The kind of connection that He (swt) deserves. We had to guide them to dedicate themselves completely to Him (swt) as they had been created to do. We said that the best way in which we could do this was by working to reestablish the Islamic State. This is what needs to be done first in order for mankind to submit to Allah (swt) as He (swt) deserves. Before we can plant the seed we first need to prepare the ground. We need to create an environment in which Allah (swt) is always remembered. A world in which everything submit to Him (swt). This is the kind of submission that He (swt) deserves. This is the kind of environment in which the people will submit to Him (swt) as He (swt) deserves. But is such a task easy? Is it easy to forsake this world and give ourselves completely to Him (swt)? Is it easy to constantly do the deeds that are pleasing to Him (swt) and to constantly avoid the deeds that are displeasing to Him (swt)? Is it easy to work in this path of dawah and jihad to restore the Khilafah? Of course it is not easy. Of course it requires effort. Of course it requires determination. Of course it requires perseverance. Of course it requires constancy. This is what Sabr is.

We need to have Sabr on this effort. This effort to submit ourselves to Allah (swt) completely. This effort to call mankind to such submission. This effort to create a world where the entire society has such submission. In our efforts to do this we must have Sabr. Now the word Sabr linguistically means to tie and bind. To chain and fetter. Something like you would tie up a wild beast. This is what we need to do with our own selves. With our ego and our desires. With our laziness and our complacency. With our fear and our excuses. It should all be tied up. It should be constrained. It should not be allowed to control us. It should not be allowed to take us away from our purpose for being. So think of yourself as an animal in a cage. You have but one path on which you may walk. You must stick to this path. You must force yourself to this path. This is the effort that will bring you closer to the Divine. That will connect you to Him (swt).

So what we need to realize from this Surah is that all of mankind can be divided into two groups. The first is those who have correctly received the Message from Allah (swt) and the second is those who have never received the Message. As for the second of these groups their case is up to Allah (swt), He (swt) will judge them in a way that He (swt) pleases. But as for you and me, since we are reading this Quran, we are from the first group. We have received the Message. Now those who have received the Message can further be divided into two groups. The ones who are saved and the ones who are destroyed. The ones who gain and the ones who are in loss. Then the question that we must be asking ourselves is how do we make ourselves from the former of these groups and not the latter. This is what Allah (swt) tells us in this Surah.

We have learned from this Surah that there are four actions that we need to do. First we need to believe with utmost certainty and conviction. We mentioned how this Iman, this conviction was a creation of Allah (swt). He (swt) puts it into whosoever hearts that He (swt) pleases. It is not a simple choice that we make. It is up to Him (swt) to give it to us. So what is required of us is that we must ask Him (swt) for it, we must seek it from Him (swt). We spoke briefly about a few of the ways in which we can do this. From doing the actions that are pleasing to Him (swt), to contemplating on His (swt)'s signs, to making sacrifices for Him (swt). Second we must do the actions of *Salah*. The actions of righting what is wrong. The actions of being a source of good for the world. We said that the best way in which we could do this was by working to reestablish the Islamic State. This system is what will bring mercy and justice for all mankind, for all creation. The third action that is required of us is that we must connect with the Real and the True. We must connect with Him (swt) and we must help others to connect with Him (swt) as well. We said that the best way to accomplish this as well was by working in this effort to restore His (swt)'s Law. Finally we said that we must have Sabr on this effort. We must have steadfastness and constancy on this effort. By no means will it be easy. By no means will the State be established tomorrow. By no means will we not be required to make sacrifices. This was the task of the prophets and messengers, and we know that there is no one who is severely tested than them. May Allah (swt) make it easy for us! May He (swt) give us the enabling grace!

Now the question that you may ask at this point is how exactly can we go about restoring the Islamic State? Especially those of us who are living in the West. Especially those of us who are not even scholars. Especially those of us who do even know the Arabic language. If we study the methodology of dawah employed by the Prophet (saw) then we see that what is required at this point is not armed struggle. It is not through jihad with the sword and violence as some claim. The Prophet (saw) never waged jihad with the sword when the Islamic State was absent, and even when the State was present he (saw) never targeted civilians. So this method that many of our brothers call for today is not correct. Neither is the method correct where we work with the system to change the system. In other words those groups who call for political participation in kufr governments. So what then is the correct way to proceed and how can we be a part of it? We believe, and Allah (swt) Knows best, that the change must come by convincing the Muslims that they need the Islamic State. That such is an obligation upon us. That such is an effort that we all need to work for. When the Muslim masses demand the return of the State, then the non-Islamic governments who currently rule the Muslim lands will have no choice but to concede. They may be able to suppress pockets of resistance here and there, as they have been doing for all these years, but they will never be able to suppress an entire population. So this comes back to what we mentioned earlier about the battle for the hearts and the minds. The forces of Shaitan and *taghut*, the ones who want to prevent Allah (swt)'s Law from returning to the earth, they are working to convince the Ummah that we do not need the State. They even pay so-called "scholars" to go in front of the Ummah and say that there is no such thing as the Islamic State, or at least to say that we as Muslims living in the West should not be concerned with the State. There is a huge campaign being launched today to further this idea. The least that we can do is to try our best to counter this. To speak to the Muslims that we know and show them how this is wrong. If we cannot go to the Middle East or Central Asia to work in the dawah full-time then this is the least that we can do. Otherwise we will be among the destroyed, we will be among those who have lost everything. May Allah (swt) be with us and you!