

Sura 103: Al-‘Asr (The Time)

In the name of God, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy

Verses 1 to 3:

1. *By the time, indeed humankind is in loss;*
2. *Except those who believe and do good deeds,*
3. *And exhort one another to truth and exhort one another to perseverance. (103: 1 – 3)*

This short Sura which has only three verses presents a complete project for human life as dictated by Islam. The Sura establishes the Islamic constitution in these three verses. It describes the true characteristics and the obligations of the Muslim nation in one verse, the third verse in the Sura. This Sura is an example of the miraculous eloquence of the Qur'an.

“By the time, indeed humankind is in loss; except those who believe and do good deeds, and exhort one another to truth and exhort one another to perseverance.” These three verses establish one single major fact: there is only one successful project for human life. This is the project that the Sura describes. What is belief? Belief is what connects the tiny mortal being with the Eternal Originator of the universe. This connection also connects humankind with the universe and the laws that govern the universe. This connection gives humankind an access to the powers and resources that exist in this universe and allows him to go beyond his limited sphere of influence to the spacious sphere of the universe. Belief allows humankind to enjoy his existence and the beauty of the universe.

Worshipping one God elevates humankind above the servitude to anyone else and establishes equality between all the servants of God. This is the ultimate freedom that humankind can hope for. It is a freedom that emanates from the human consciousness and from the understanding of the fact that there is only one power and only one Lord in this universe.

The Lordship of God determines the source of all human concepts, values, standards, laws, and rules. It defines the relationship between the human being and his Lord, between the human being and other people, and between the human being and the universe. The clear, direct, and simple relationship between the servant and the Lord fills the servant's heart with light, security, friendliness, and comfort. It removes feelings of hesitation, fear, stress, and confusion. It also eliminates any tendencies for arrogance and tyranny.

Belief brings consistency in following the Islamic project. It becomes a way of life not a transient condition or a discrete event. The whole Muslim nation becomes united under a single banner and pursuing a single objective. Belief is the origin of life from which all branches of goodness emanate. It is the project that defines the framework of all good deeds in life.

Good deeds are the natural fruits and the practical consequence of belief. Belief is more than a theory that resides in the consciousness of the believer, and more than an expression of good intentions. It is also a positive force that motivates the believer to move, to act, and to build. Once belief is settled deeply in the heart of the believer, it will shape the deeds and the behavior of the believer.

The concept of enjoining truth and perseverance reflects and defines the special characteristics of the Muslim nation. It is a nation aware of its responsibility and confident of its character. It is aware of the requirements and the hard work that are needed to fulfill its responsibility. This responsibility can only be fulfilled through the mechanism of the collective enjoining of the truth and perseverance. Enjoining truth is essential but difficult. There are many things that can

distract people from the truth; including among other things: temptations, social pressures, and tyranny of rulers.

Enjoining perseverance is also necessary. It is required to be able to fulfill the requirements of belief and doing good deeds; and to protect the truth and justice. Enjoining perseverance strengthens the resilience of the nation.

These values define the meaning of profit and loss as one will find them in the Hereafter. This Sura defines clearly how to avoid loss in the Hereafter.