

القبر موعدا

The Grave is our Appointed Place

*Dar al-Watan, Riyadh
Translated by Farhia Yahya*

*"I left my place of rest one day
So peace and rest itself left me*

*The grave is the abode on the first night
By Allah, do inform me how will it be?"*

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Introduction

All praise is due to Allah, the Owner of Sovereignty and Authority, and peace be upon the Messenger of our Lord the Most Merciful, Muhammad and upon his family and companions, the noble and devout.

To proceed;

Dear brothers and sisters, have you ever seen a grave? Have you ever seen its darkness? Have you ever seen its loneliness? Have you ever seen its narrowness? Have you ever seen its depth, and have you ever seen of its creatures and worms?

Do you not then realise that it has been prepared for you just like it has been prepared for other than you?

Have you not seen how your companions, beloved ones and relatives have been moved from living in palaces to residing in graves? From the light of their beds to the darkness of their graves? From joyfully playing with family and children to harshly being with the creatures and maggots of the grave? From taking delight in food and drink to rolling in the dust and sand? From the comfort of companionship to the loneliness of seclusion? From a cozy place of rest to a cruel and unhealthy place of ruin?

Death has taken them in heedlessness and they have taken residence in the graves after a life of luxury and sweetness. After their death, equal are they all in that ditch.

It is Allah whom I ask to make our graves a garden from the gardens of Paradise.

*I approached the graves and called out to it
Where is the exalted one and where is the debased?*

*Where is the one who was arrogant in his reign?
And where is the strong one when he did gain power?*

*All have fled, so there is no informer
And all have died and so has the news*

*The daughters of riches come and go
So they wipe away the beauty of such a picture*

*So O' questioner of a people who've now passed away
Is there not a lesson for you, in what has gone by? ¹*

¹ Attributed to Malik ibn Dinar, lines slightly rearranged to conform to his original.

The Terrors of the Grave

It is narrated from Hani' the servant of 'Uthman (radhiallahu `anhu) that he said, "Whenever 'Uthman stood at a grave, he would weep until his beard became wet so it was said to him, 'You remember Paradise and Hell but you do not cry. Yet you cry over this?!' He said, 'Indeed, the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam) said, 'The grave is the first step of the Hereafter so if one is saved from it, then what comes after is easier to bear. And if one is not saved from it, then what comes after is more difficult.' Then he said, 'The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam) said, 'I have not seen a sight except that the grave is more horrific.' ²

In the hadith of Jabir ibn 'Abdullah (radhiallahu `anhu), it is narrated from the Prophet (sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam) that he said, 'Do not wish for death, for the terrors from the onset are more severe.' ³

*Woe be to you, prepare for the graves and tombs!
Prepare for the long imprisonment with the preparation of piety
For you do not know, if you arise in the morning in the way you'd like
Perhaps you will not live to see that evening*

Al-Hasan ⁴ once accompanied a *Janaza* (funeral prayer) and sat at the edge of the grave. He said, 'If this is the end stage of a matter (i.e. the life of this world), then it is only befitting that one should be ascetic at its beginning stages. And if this is the beginning stage of a matter (the hereafter), then it is only befitting that one should fear its end stage.'

'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz gave an admonishing reminder to his companions one day and some of what he said was, 'If you pass by them (i.e. the dwellers of the grave), then call out to them if you can! And pass by their troops and leaders and see how close their ranks are now! Ask their rich what has remained of his riches, and ask their poor, what became of his poverty. Ask them about their tongues with which they spoke and their eyes with which they used to view the delights and pleasures. Ask them about their soft skins, beautiful faces and fine bodies, what have the worms done to them underneath the shrouds?!

It has indeed eaten away their tongues and dirtied their faces, it has wiped away their beauty and broke their spines, it has exposed their limbs and tore up their corpses. So where are their protective coverings and domed shrines? Where are their maids and slaves? Where are their wealth and treasures? Are they now not at the stations of loneliness? Is not day and night the same to them? Are they not in a gloomy place of darkness? It has come in between them and their doing good deeds, they have indeed left behind their beloved ones, wealth and families.

² Reported by Ahmad and al-Tirmidhi; classed as *hasan* by al-Albani

³ Reported by Ahmad; classed as *hasan* by al-Haythami

⁴ Al-Hasan al-Basri, one of the scholars from the *Tabi'in*

O' you who will reside in the grave tomorrow! What has caused you to become heedless in this world? Where is your vast home and river continuously flowing? Where are your ripe fruits and where has the softness of your clothes gone? Where is your perfume and fragrance, and where are your garments set aside for summer and winter? O if only I knew, which of your two cheeks has the punishment began with... O you who resides next to destruction, you've come to the station of death.

If only I knew, how will the Angel of Death meet me upon my departure from this world? And what message will he give me from my Lord?

Then he ('Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz) left but he did not live after that except for one week.

O brothers/sisters,

Think about those people who've gone by... where do they now remain? Remember that people will be questioned and arguments will ensue. Know that you will be criticised and rebuked just like they were... and indeed they wish that they be accepted now that they're gone, but how far a wish! They have only been buried.

Wahb ibn al-Wird: It reached us that a knowledgeable man went to 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz and said, *'Subhan Allah!* – as if he was surprised by 'Umar's state. He said, *'You've changed after us!'* 'Umar said, *'Can you really see that?'* He said, *'More than you think!'* So 'Umar said to him, *'Then what if you were to see me after three days, when I've been buried in my grave... when the two eyes come out and pour onto the two cheeks, when the lips draw together over the teeth, when the mouth gapes open, when the stomach protrudes over the chest and matter exits from behind?!'*

Yazid al-Raqqashi used to say to himself, *'Woe to you O' Yazid! Who will pray on your behalf after death? Who will fast on your behalf after death? Who will seek the Pleasure of Allah on your behalf after death?'*

Then he would say, *'O people! Won't you weep and lament over yourselves for what remains of your lives? How will it be for a person for whom death is promised, for whom the grave is his home, the dust his bed, the worms his companion, and yet with all this he still awaits the greatest of terrors. How will such a person be?'*

Then he would cry, *rahimahullah.*

Lessons from the Grave

'Abd al-Haqq al-Ishbili: It is a must for whoever enters the graveyards (when visiting) to imagine that he has died and that he has met up with them (the dead). He should imagine that he is in their ranks, in need of what they are in need of and wishing for what they wish for. Let him approach them with what he would like to be given and let him present to them what they wish to be presented ⁵. Let him ponder over the changes in their colour, the disunity of their body parts and let him think about their state – how the people used to take comfort in them and their speech, but now they flee from seeing them in fear from their sight.

Let him also ponder over the splitting of the earth, when the contents of the grave will be poured out, when the dead will come out and rise up once again, barefooted, naked and uncircumcised. Their necks stretched forth towards the caller, hurrying towards this caller.

*O' you who chose to become so plump
Tell me, for who have you become so plump?
You've fattened yourself only for punishment
And you've truly concealed, O thou concealer!*

*You committed every error and evil
But you thought you were engaged in good
How is it, that I see you at ease and peace
With the life of this world, upon which you lean*

*O you who dwells in rooms and chambers!
You do not have but the grave as a home
Today you remain increasing in wealth
A boastful one, beautified and adorned*

*But tomorrow you shall go forth to the graves
An enshrouded one, adorned with hunoot ⁶
Repent to your Lord with a sincere repentance!
For the path to that is still possible for you*

*And remove your desires with fear of Him
Of what you conceal and what you reveal*

⁵ In other words, one should strive to die in a righteous state with good deeds such that if the people of the grave were to see him, they would wish to be like him.

⁶ A type of fragranced balm rubbed on the dead corpse during funeral rites.

The Trials of the Grave

Dear brothers and sisters,

What have you prepared for the first night that you will spend in the grave? Have you not realised that it is to be a severe night? A night from which scholars have wept, the wise ones have complained about, and for which the pious and righteous have worked hard for.

*I left my place of rest one day
So peace and rest itself left me*

*The grave is the abode on the first night
By Allah, do inform me, how will it be?*

Rabi' ibn Khuthaym used to prepare himself for this night. It is narrated that he dug a hole in his house and whenever he felt hardness in his heart, he would enter this hole. He would imagine himself to have died and regretted, asking to be returned to the world! He would say,

رَبِّ ارْجِعُونِ
لَعَلِّي أَعْمَلُ صَالِحًا فِيمَا تَرَكْتُ

"... 'My Lord! Send me back
So that I may do good in that which I have left behind!' ... "
[al-Mu'minun: 99-100]

Then he would answer himself saying: 'You have now been returned, O' Rabi'!' The effects of this would be seen from him for days, i.e. it would be seen in his 'ibadah (worship), struggle in doing good and in his fear (of Allah).

It is narrated from Abu Huraira (radhiallahu `anhu) that the Prophet (sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam) said, 'Indeed, the dead person will be taken to the grave: The righteous one will sit in his grave without fear or terror and it will be said to him, 'What did you used to do?' He will say, 'I used to abide by Islam.' Then it will be said, 'Who is this man?' He will say, 'Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam). He came to us with clear proofs from his Lord and so we believed in him.' It will be said to him, 'Have you seen Allah?' He'll say, 'It's not befitting for anyone to see Allah.' Then an opening will be made for him looking into Hell, and he'll look to it and see its parts crashing and destroying each other. It will be said, 'Look at what your Lord has saved you from.' Then an opening will be made for him looking into Paradise, and he'll look to its blossoms and what it is in it. It will then be said, 'This is your place of residence' and it will be said to him, 'It was upon yaqeen (conviction) that you lived, upon yaqeen that you died and it is upon it that you will raised, insha' Allaah.'

He (sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam) said, 'And the wrong-doer will sit in his grave in fear and terror and it will be said to him, 'What did you used to do?' He will say, 'I don't know!' He will be asked, 'Who is this man?' And he will say, 'I heard the people saying something and so I said it too.' Then an opening will be made for him looking into Paradise, and he'll look to its blossoms and what is in it. It will be said to him, 'Look at what Allah has turned away from you.' Then an opening will be made for him looking into Hell, and he'll look to it and see its parts crashing and destroying each other. It will be said, 'Look to your place of residence. Upon doubt did you live, and upon it did you die and upon it will you be raised, insha'Allaah.'⁷

*I see the people of palaces when they die,
They construct over the graves with bulky stones.
They refused to live, except in boast and pride,
Over the poor, even in their graves.
By your life, were you to remove the dust from them,
You wouldn't recognise the rich from the poor,
Nor would you recognise the skin wrapped by wool,
From the skin that's been encircled by silk.
If the dust has eaten away at this one and that one,
Then what virtue do the rich have over the poor?*

Oh brethren!

Will you not weep over death and its agonies?

Will you not weep over the grave and its narrowness?

Will you not weep out of fear for the Hellfire in the Hereafter?

Will you not weep out of fear for the thirst on the Day of great sorrow and regret?

⁷ Reported by Ibn Majah, declared hasan by al-Busairi

The Punishments and Delights of the Grave

The punishment of the grave has been firmly established in the Book of Allah, the *Sunnah* and *Ijma'* ⁸, and none denies it except the arrogant and stubborn. Allah Ta'ala said,

سَنُعَذِّبُهُمْ مَرَّتَيْنِ ثُمَّ يُرَدُّونَ إِلَىٰ عَذَابٍ عَظِيمٍ

"... We shall punish them twice, and thereafter they shall be brought back to a great (horrible) torment."

[al-Tawbah: 101]

He also said,

وَحَاقَ بِآلِ فِرْعَوْنَ سُوءُ الْعَذَابِ
النَّارُ يُعْرَضُونَ عَلَيْهَا غُدُوًّا وَعَشِيًّا وَيَوْمَ تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ أَدْخِلُوا آلَ فِرْعَوْنَ أَشَدَّ الْعَذَابِ

"... an evil torment encompassed Fir'aun's (Pharaoh) people.

The Fire; they are exposed to it, morning and afternoon, and on the Day when the Hour will be established (it will be said to the angels): "Cause Fir'aun's (Pharaoh) people to enter the severest torment!"

[al-Ghafir: 45-46]

It is narrated from al-Bara' ibn al-'Azib (radhiallahu `anhu) from the Prophet (sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam) that he said, "The verse, 'يُثَبِّتُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِالْقَوْلِ الثَّابِتِ' '... Allah will keep firm those who believe, with the word that stands firm...' - was revealed regarding the punishment of the grave. It will be said (to a person), 'Who is your Lord?' He will say, 'My Lord is Allah and my Prophet is Muhammad (sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam).' And that is the statement of Allah, `azza wa jall:

يُثَبِّتُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِالْقَوْلِ الثَّابِتِ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ

"Allah will keep firm those who believe, with the word that stands firm in this world and in the Hereafter..." [Ibrahim: 27] ⁹

It is narrated from Anas (radhiallahu `anhu) that the Prophet (sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam) said, 'Were it not for the fear that you would stop burying your dead, I would have asked Allah to make you hear the punishment of the grave.' ¹⁰

Narrated also from Anas: The Prophet (sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam) said, 'Indeed, when the slave is placed into his grave and his companions turn away from him, he will surely hear the sounds of their sandals. Two angels will approach him and make him sit up saying, 'What did you used to say about this man?'

⁸ Ijma': Consensus between Islamic scholars over a particular issue

⁹ Agreed upon

¹⁰ Sahih Muslim

He (sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam) said, 'As for the believer, he'll say 'I bear witness that he is the slave of Allah and His Messenger.' He said, 'Then it will be said to him, 'Look to your place in the Hellfire, Allah has changed it for you to a place in Paradise.' The Prophet (sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam) said, 'So he will see both of them together.'

'As for the hypocrite and the disbeliever, it will be said to him: 'What did you used to say about this man?' He will say, 'I don't know! I used to say what the people said.' Then it will be said to him, 'You did not know nor did you follow (the guidance)' Then he'll be struck a blow with an iron hammer and he'll scream such that all those around him will hear except for the two races (Mankind and Jinn).' ¹¹

Narrations regarding the Graves

It is narrated from 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (radhiallahu `anhu) that he said in his *Khutbah* (sermon),

'O slaves of Allah! Be cautious of death; be cautious of death, for there is no escaping it. If you stand up to it, it will take you and if you flee from it then it will only catch up with you. Death is tied to your forelocks so seek salvation, seek salvation. Indeed there is behind you an ardent seeker and that is the grave. Surely, the grave is either a garden from the gardens of Paradise or a ditch from the ditches of Hell. It speaks everyday saying 'I am the home of darkness, I am the home of loneliness, I am the home of the worms.' Indeed after that will be a Day more severe than that day, a Day in which a child will become grey-haired and an adult will be in a drunken state,

وَتَرَى النَّاسَ سُكَارَىٰ وَمَا هُمْ بِسُكَارَىٰ وَلَٰكِنَّ عَذَابَ اللَّهِ شَدِيدٌ

"... and you shall see mankind as in a drunken state, yet they will not be drunk, but severe will be the Torment of Allah." [al-Hajj: 2]

O' grave! Does there reside within you
One whom we used to fight?
And one whom we traded with
And one whom we used to work with?
And one whom we lived with
And one whom we used to rival with?
And one whom we drank with
And one whom we used to eat with?
And one whom we loved,
Never leaving him but a little?
And one whom in the past
We never contacted but a little?

11 Agreed upon

*He's now taken residence in a place
Whoever resides therein, his ways are cut off
Indeed, death is like a water spring
That the creation is only drinking from*

Visiting the Graves

Beloved brothers and sisters;

The Prophet (sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam) encouraged the visiting the dead in their graves and taking a lesson from their state. He said, *'Visit the graves for it is a reminder of death.'*¹²

He (sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam) also said, *'I had previously forbidden you from visiting the graves but visit them now.'*¹³ In the narration of Abu Dawud he said, *'For in the visit is a reminder.'* And in the narration of Imam Ahmad, *'But visit them now for in its visit is a lesson and admonition.'*

Whenever the Prophet (sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam) went to the graves he'd say, *'Peace be upon you O' people of the land (graveyard), among the mu'minun (believers) and muslimun (Muslims). You have preceded us and insha' Allah, we shall meet up with you. You have gone ahead of us and we are following behind you. I ask Allah to grant us and you protection.'*¹⁴

There are many benefits to visiting the graves, such as:

- It reminds one of death and the Hereafter
- It severs long and futile hopes (i.e. in the life of this world)
- It causes one to become ascetic in this world
- It softens the heart
- It causes the eyes to weep
- It drives away heedlessness
- It plants fear (in the hearts)
- It causes one to strive in their *'Ibadah* (worship)

Muhammad ibn Wasi' said to a man once: *'How amazed I am at your state!'* He said, *'Why are you so amazed at my state when it will only end up in the grave?'* He said to him, *'And why should that harm you when it (the grave) prevents destruction and reminds one of death!'*

12 Reported by Muslim

13 Reported by Muslim

14 Reported by Muslim

Causes for the Punishment of the Grave

Dear brothers and sisters;

Imam Ibn al-Qayyim (*rahimahullah*) mentioned that the people of the grave will be punished due to their wilful ignorance of Allah, their abandonment of His commands and their committing of sins - for indeed, the punishment of the grave and the punishment of the Hereafter are the resulting effects of the Anger of Allah and His Wrath over His slaves. The punishment of the grave is due to the sins committed by the heart, the eyes, the ears, the mouth, the tongue, the stomach, the private parts, the hands, the legs and for sure, the whole of the body. So whoever angers Allah and earns His wrath in this world and thereafter does not repent but instead dies upon that, then for such a person is punishment in the *Barzakh* (stage in the grave between death and resurrection), which will be in accordance to the anger and wrath of Allah over him. Hence people are in between working little and much, and between a truthful one and a liar.

There has been warning of many sins and acts of disobedience which bring about the punishment of the grave; some of which are:

١. Backbiting and Slander
٢. Failing to protect oneself from urine
٣. Praying without *taharah* (purity)
٤. Lying
٥. Leaving the prayer or being indolent therein
٦. Abandoning payment of *Zakat* (obligatory charity)
٧. Committing *zina* (adultery)
٨. Stealing
٩. Treachery
١٠. Purposely causing *fitnah* (strife) between the Muslims
١١. Consuming *riba* (interest)
١٢. Abandoning aiding the oppressed
١٣. Drinking *khamr* (intoxicants)
١٤. Lowering and dragging one's clothing out of pride
١٥. Killing
١٦. Abusing the Companions
١٧. Dying upon other than the *Sunnah* (i.e. in *bid'ah*)

He (Ibn al-Qayyim *rahimahullah*) said after mentioning numerous forbidden acts that cause the dead to be punished in their grave, '*... And as long as the majority of people are like this (i.e. engage in these acts), the majority of the people in the graves will be under punishment, and little are those who are saved from it. The outward appearance of the graves is dust, but the inner realities are grief and punishment. On the outside is dust, sand and engraved stones clarifying who lies therein, but on the inside are calamities and catastrophes, boiling with sorrow just like a kettle boils what is inside it. And indeed it has a right to do so for the dead one has now come in between it and high hopes...*

*By Allah, the grave has given enough warnings such that it has outdone every other warner!
And it has called out, 'O you who have built up this world, you've only built up a home that
will surely come to an end and you've destroyed a home that you are fast approaching. This
world is a place for you to work and store your deeds, sowing your fields and it is a place for
contemplation; a garden from the gardens of Paradise or a ditch from the ditches of Hellfire.'*

*What is it with graves that they do not respond
When the sorrowful one does call out to them?
A ditch it is, enclosed and roofed over them
And rocks and stones and raised sand dunes
In there lie fathers and little children
Young youth and aged men too
How often has there been, a beloved one who
My soul never expected to one day separate from
I left him there in some of those graves
He was cast to the ground, although he's a beloved
I passed him and forgot him, but surely indeed
The day I'll see him again is drawing near*

So take a lesson O' people of Insight!

Brothers and sisters!

How many of a wrong-doer has transgressed and oppressed, he did not take responsibility over family or neighbour, and whilst he persisted in that, death overcame him and enclosed him;

فَاعْتَبِرُوا يَا أُولِيَ النَّبْصَارِ

"... Then take admonition, O people of insight!" [al-Hashr: 2]

As he goes to the house of destruction and decay, nothing has accompanied him except shrouds. When you see him at the time when trials encircle him and his beautiful face is humiliated, do not ask what has become of him;

فَاعْتَبِرُوا يَا أُولِيَ النَّبْصَارِ

"... Then take admonition, O people of insight!" [al-Hashr: 2]

Where is his lofty seating place? Where is his nice lifestyle? Where is his personal delight? O, how his grave has been raised and scattered... the eyes move on and the traces have become hidden;

فَاعْتَبِرُوا يَا أُولِيَ النَّبْصَارِ

"... Then take admonition, O people of insight!" [al-Hashr: 2]

All his ways have been cut off, his companions and beloved have deserted him, stones and dust have now become his bed and perhaps an opening has been made in the grave overlooking Hell;

فَاعْتَبِرُوا يَا أُولِيَ الْبَصَارِ

"... Then take admonition, O people of insight!" [al-Hashr: 2]

For certain, he regrets. He cries over his errors and slips. He wishes to purify what he took delight in and he knows now that he has built on an undermined sand-cliff ready to crumble to pieces;

فَاعْتَبِرُوا يَا أُولِيَ الْبَصَارِ

"... Then take admonition, O people of insight!" [al-Hashr: 2]

Causes of Salvation from the Punishment of the Grave

Imam Ibn al-Qayyim (rahimahullah) mentioned that the cause for salvation from the punishment of the grave is that a person avoids engaging in the deeds that warrant punishment and that means all sins and disobedience.

He further mentioned that the most beneficial cause is: *'that a person should call himself to account everyday for what he has profited and lost in his day. Then he should renew and make sincere repentance for what takes place between him and Allah and he should sleep with that repentance. If he were to die that night, he dies upon repentance and was he to wake up, he wakes up ready to do righteous deeds - happy that his death has been delayed until he finally meets his Lord and he catches up with what has gone by him. He should not sleep except with taharah (purity), in remembrance of Allah, `azza wa Jall and utilizing the Prophetic supplications that have been narrated from the Prophet (sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam) upon retiring to bed until sleep overtakes him. Whomsoever Allah wishes good for, He guides him to that.'*

Then he (rahimahullah) mentioned some deeds that save one from the punishment of the grave, and amongst them are:

١. Ribat (guarding the frontiers) in the Way of Allah
٢. Martyrdom in the Way of Allah
٣. Reciting Surat al-Mulk
٤. Dying due to a stomach disease
٥. Dying on a Friday

It is therefore incumbent upon every Muslim that he seeks the refuge of Allah from the punishment of the grave, and that he prepares for it by working righteous deeds before he is made to enter it. Surely, the matter may seem simple whilst he is in this world, but when he enters the grave, he'll wish to be granted permission to perform just one good deed or pray just 2 units of prayer, or that he says *'La ilaha illa-Allah,*

Muhammad Rasulallah' even if it's one time only, or that he glorifies Allah just once – but he will not be granted permission. So he'll remain in pain and regret, surprised that the living waste their days in *ghafla* (heedlessness) and falsehood.

*Your life was previously a milestone
But the milestone soon became a hand span
And the hand span has become a knot
So start digging a grave for yourself*

We ask Allah to grant us *tawfiq* (guidance) in preparing for the Day of Need and we ask Him to not make us from among those who regret. May He make the grave the best of our stations after we leave this world, indeed He is most Capable of that and Sufficient is He as a Disposer of Affairs.

May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon the Muhammad, his family and his companions.