

# **The Life Of This World Is Fleeting Enjoyment Ibn Katheer**

**(Tafsir, Vol. 9)**

"Know that the life of this world is only play and amusement, pomp and mutual boasting among you, and rivalry in respect of wealth and children. (It is) like a rain (Ghayth), thereof the growth is pleasing to the tiller; afterwards it dries up and you see it turning yellow; then it becomes straw. But in the Hereafter (there is) a severe torment, and (there is) forgiveness from Allah and (His) pleasure. And the life of this world is only a deceiving enjoyment." [57:20]

Allah the Exalted degrades the significance of this life and belittles it by saying, "that the life of this world is only play and amusement, pomp and mutual boasting among you, and rivalry in respect of wealth and children."

Meaning, this is the significance of this life to its people, just as He said in another Ayah,

"Beautified for men is the love of things they covet; women, children, much of gold and silver (wealth), branded beautiful horses, cattle and well-tilled land. This is the pleasure of the present world's life; but Allah has the excellent return with Him." (3:14)

Allah the Exalted also sets a parable for this life, declaring that its joys are fading and its delights are perishable, saying that life is, "Like a rain (Ghayth)," which is the rain that comes down to mankind, after they had felt despair. Allah the Exalted said in another Ayah, "And He is it Who sends down the Ghayth (rain) after they have despaired." (42:28)

Allah's statement, "thereof the growth is pleasing to the tiller;" meaning that farmers admire the vegetation that grows in the aftermath of rain. And just as farmers admire vegetation, the disbelievers admire this life; they are the most eager to acquire the traits of life, and life is most dear to them, "afterwards it dries up and you see it turning yellow; then it becomes straw." Meaning, that vegetation soon turns yellow in color, after being fresh and green. After that, the green fades away and becomes scattered pieces of dust. This is the parable of this worldly life, it starts young, then matures and then turns

old and feeble. This is also the parable of mankind in this life; they are young and strong in the beginning. In this stage of life, they look youthful and handsome.

Slowly, they begin growing older, their mannerism changes and their strength weakens. They then grow old and feeble; moving becomes difficult for them, while doing easy things becomes beyond their ability. Allah the Exalted said,

"Allah is He Who created you in (a state of) weakness, then gave you strength after weakness, then after strength gave (you) weakness and gray hair. He creates what He wills. And He is the All-Knowing, the All-Powerful."  
(30:54)

This parable indicates the near demise of this life and the imminent end of it, while in contrast, the Hereafter is surely coming. Those who hear this parable should, therefore, be aware of the significance of the Hereafter and feel eagerness in the goodness that it contains,

"But in the Hereafter (there is) a severe torment, and (there is) forgiveness from Allah and (His) pleasure. And the life of this world is only a deceiving enjoyment."

Meaning, surely, the Hereafter that will certainly come contains two things either severe punishment or forgiveness from Allah and His good pleasure.

Allah the Exalted said,

"And the life of this world is only a deceiving enjoyment."

Meaning, this life is only a form of enjoyment that deceives those who incline to it. Surely, those who recline to this life will admire it and feel that it is dear to them, so much so, that they might think that this is the only life, no life or dwelling after it. Yet, in reality, this life is insignificant as compared to the Hereafter.

Imam Ahmad recorded that `Abdullah said that the Messenger of Allah, sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam, said,

"Paradise is nearer to any of you than the strap of his shoe, and so is the (Hell) Fire." [Ahmad 1:387]

Al-Bukhari collected this Hadith through the narration of Ath-Thawri [Fath al-Bari 11:328]. This Hadith indicates the close proximity of both good and evil in relation to mankind. If this is the case, then this is the reason Allah the Exalted encouraged mankind to rush to perform acts of righteousness and obedience and to avoid the prohibitions. By doing so, their sins and errors will be forgiven and they will acquire rewards and an exalted status. Allah the Exalted said,

"Race with one another in hastening towards forgiveness from your Lord, and Paradise the width whereof is as the width of the heaven and the earth."

Allah the Exalted said in another Ayah,

"And march forth in the way (to) forgiveness from your Lord, and for Paradise as wide as the heavens and the earth, prepared for those who have Taqwa." (3:133)

Allah said here, "prepared for those who believe in Allah and His Messengers. That is the grace of Allah which He bestows on whom He is pleased with. And Allah is the Owner of the great bounty."

Meaning, "This, that Allah has qualified them for, is all a part of His favor, bounty and compassion." We mentioned a Hadith collected in the Sahih in which the poor emigrants said to the Messenger, sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam, "O Allah's Messenger! The wealthy people will get higher grades and permanent enjoyment." He asked, "Why is that?" They said, "They pray like us and fast as we do.

However, they give in charity, whereas we cannot do that, and they free servants, whereas we cannot afford it." The Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam, said, "Shall I tell you of a good deed that, if you acted upon, you would catch up with those who have surpassed you? None would overtake you and be better than you, except those who might do the same. Say, "Glorious is Allah," Allah is Most Great", and "Praise be to Allah", thirty three times each after every prayer." They later came back and said, "Our wealthy brethren heard what we did and they started doing the same." Allah's Messenger, sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam, said,

"This is the favor that He gives to whom He wills."  
[Muslim 1:416]