

Answer to those who ask "Is possessing power, wealth, and grandeur incompatible with the essence of Islam?"

Some circles identify being a Muslim with poverty, underdevelopment, rustic manners, passivity or the state of giving up all mundane interests. Many people believe that a contrary model is somehow against religion. However, such convictions stem from a totally incorrect understanding of the Qur'an. People develop such false ideas, which are then reinforced by hearsay and various myths, because they neither read nor ponder the Qur'an, although it is the main source of accurate knowledge about Islam.

As Allah reveals in **"The Messenger says: 'My Lord, my people treat this Qur'an as something to be ignored,"** (Qur'an, 25:30) this flawed way of practicing the religion stems from people's failure to refer to the Qur'an. When people actually refer to the Qur'an, it immediately becomes clear that Islam does not suggest such a model. We can see this in the splendid wealth and possessions that Allah granted to many of the Prophets. Over the centuries, Prophet Sulayman's (Solomon) (pbuh) unprecedentedly glorious wealth has become legendary. Sulayman (pbuh), a Prophet praised by the Qur'an for his exemplary conduct, surely pursued nothing but earning Allah's good pleasure and had no guide other than His religion. Indeed, before being endowed with great wealth, he prayed the following prayer:

He said: "My Lord, forgive me and give me a kingdom the like of which will never be granted to anyone after me. Truly, You are the Ever-Giving." (Qur'an, 38:35)

If praying for wealth was a practice to be condemned, then a Prophet praised by Allah in the Qur'an would not have done so. Indeed, the Qur'an states that Allah answered his prayer. As the verse below indicates, Allah always mentions Prophet Sulayman (pbuh) with praise:

And to Dawud We gave Sulayman. What an excellent servant! He truly turned to his Lord. (Qur'an, 38:30)

Prophet Sulayman (pbuh) is not the sole example, for Allah also granted authority and power to his father, Prophet Dawud (David) (pbuh), as well as great wealth to Prophet Ibrahim (pbuh) and his family:

Or do they in fact envy other people for the bounty Allah that has granted them? We gave the family of Ibrahim the Book and Wisdom, and We gave them an immense kingdom. (Qur'an, 4:54)

As we see, Allah condemns any feelings of jealousy over the wealth He grants to Muslims as a blessing. The Qur'an reveals that the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was also enriched by Allah, for:

Did He not find you impoverished and enrich you? (Qur'an, 93:8)

At this point, the difference between wealth as perceived by believers and unbelievers arises: believers are conscious that only Allah, the real owner of property, gives wealth, while unbelievers perceive wealth as claiming ownership over property, which is no less than rebellion against Allah, Who owns everything in the universe. This divergence also emerges when it comes to using property: believers spend their wealth for good causes, whereas unbelieving property owners commonly seek to **"cause corruption in the land."** (Qur'an, 28:77)

Wealth, glory, and authority are blessings that Allah bestows upon His servants. The essential feature here is to use this wealth in the proper way in order to give due thanks to Allah for them, to constantly remember His favors,

and thus to draw nearer to Him and seek ways to earn His good pleasure. Indeed, Prophet Sulayman's (pbuh) words below makes his intention clear:

And he said: "Truly do I love the love of good, with a view to the glory of my Lord". (Qur'an, 38:32)

However, we need to remember that this life is a test sent to us by Allah. The level of people's commitment and patience shows when they are confronted with hardships and difficulties, for their reaction reveals the profoundness of their faith. Thus, Allah may test people with such difficulties as death, fear, hunger, poverty, and so on both to reveal their steadfastness and other superior qualities and to reward them. However, while showing patience, Muslims must pray constantly to Allah for relief, increase, and an expansion of blessings. Furthermore, they have to ask for these blessings not only for themselves but for all believers, and ask for vast resources so as to glorify Allah's name. This is the attitude that most complies with the Qur'anic stance.

However, it goes without saying that the criteria used to judge people in Islam is not wealth, for poverty or wealth does not determine a person's worth in Allah's sight. What matters is that believers spend their means, whether abundant or scarce, in compliance with Allah's good pleasure and ask for wealth only to spend for His cause. Believers do not hoard possessions, for they avoid the fate awaiting those who do, which the Qur'an describes in the following verse:

As for those who hoard up gold and silver and do not spend it in the Way of Allah, give them the news of a painful punishment. (Qur'an, 9:34)

Believers enjoy spending in Allah's cause just as they enjoy benefiting from His blessings. From this stance, praying for wealth, possessions, and fortune is an act of worship that brings rewards to sincere believers. Allah promises to increase the believers' property provided that they thank Him for them and spend it in His cause.

True believers who comply with the Qur'an are the servants of Allah on Earth. They represent Allah. While stating that the real owners of Earth will be believers, Allah mentions the attributes of those who will attain this blessing, as follows:

Allah has promised those of you who believe and do right actions that He will make them successors in the land, as He made those before them successors, and will firmly establish for them their religion, with which He is pleased, and give them, in place of their fear, security. "They worship Me, not associating anything with Me." Any who are unbelievers after that, such people are deviators. (Qur'an, 24:55)