

On Divine Punishment 3

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In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

May God bestow peace and blessings upon our master Muhammad.

Study, my brethren! Avoid negligence

to strengthen your commitment to your faith.

Whoever dies without knowing his faith

is doomed to hell. Speak, if you disagree!

One who has faith but lacks piety

will not be saved from hell when they die.

One who has faith and practices it

won't fall into hell or need rescue – how lucky!

There is no true deity, none at all

save for Allah, who exemplifies perfection.

He who laid out the earth and enlarged it for us,

and raised the sky without a pillar.

He who rises above all scarcity and need,

forever existing, never to be associated with absence.

He is Eternal, and nothing precedes Him.

He will exist forever. There is none like Him.

He is as unique in Majesty as He is in Essence.

He is the one and only in Essence, Attributes, and Action.

He is capable in a unique capacity. His will is destiny.

He fathoms with a knowledge that is incontestable.

He lives a life that cannot diminish.

He hears with the hearing of unlimited coverage.

He has a perfect sight, the only kind that exists.

He speaks without needing a tongue.

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He speaks without the smallest sound,

a speech that has no beginning nor end.

It is impossible to assign non-existence to our Maker,

just like a coordinate rooted in space and time.

He cannot be compared to anything in the universe,

or to a body composed of interlocking parts,

or a body that is of fluid or tangible object.

Indeed, He is unparalleled in form and permanence.

In every direction, He is present,

be it up, down, north, south, east, and west.

When pointing to time, He has existed in all times,

and when pointing to a place, He is Omnipresent across the universe.

The same applies when listing his Essence,

in form, in act, and in uniqueness.

It is inconceivable to think of Him as being made of bits and pieces,

or having multiple sources of power or shared responsibilities.

It is inconceivable to think of the existence of a living being

that possesses His form, acts, and traits.

Don't associate the Master of the universe with fatigue,

or with creating something that He has willed would not be created.

Don't associate Him with ignorance in all its forms,

like forgetfulness, sleepiness, and carelessness.

Don't associate death with Him; same with deafness and blindness,

mutism and the like. Put all of this aside [when thinking about Him].

He has willed into existence all that exists. Non-existence was his will too.

Again, don't associate Him with anyone. He has not appointed a deputy creator.

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Expect a high standard from the Prophets,

like honesty and truthfulness in the messages they deliver.

It is impossible for them to lie and deceive,

and conceal any part of their mandate.

Allow the Prophets to be tangible beings.

Don't associate them with God-like perfection.

Allow them to sell, buy, and have possessions,

to eat and to drink and to have lawful relationships.

Allow them sleep and forgetfulness as long as

the message they're tasked with delivering to humankind [is not affected].

They cannot be afflicted with illnesses caused by jinn,¹ leprosy, and amputation,

nor deafness, blindness, mutism, and fainting.²

Jacob was not blind; he was inflicted with cataracts.

¹ In this context, *jinn*s are akin to the evil spirits that are invisible to humankind and are the putative cause of what would be termed a psychiatric disorder in today's world.

² According to the author, all these illnesses may be caused by *jinn*s.

Job did not lose agency and he did not reek.³

Believe in God and His Angels,

the Prophets, the Holy Books, and the Day of Judgement.

Also believe in the narrowing of the grave, its torment,

and Nakir and Munkar, the two masters of interrogation.⁴

“Who is your Lord, your Prophet, and your Evidence?”⁵

“What is your Religion, your Direction of prayer?”⁶ they’d ask hurriedly.

“Allah, Muhammad, the Quran,

Islam and the Kaaba,” would say an informed believer.

To which they shall say “you are lucky,”

followed by the widening and illuminating of the grave!

But if the dead were to be ignorant of his faith,

like a confused herder roaming a farmstead,

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he will say: “I do not know!” To which they will follow up

with “Don’t ever know!” while beating him with an iron hammer –

which if all humans and jinns were to offer a hand,

they would never move the hammer even an inch.

³ The Fula word *nejal* that the author used implies losing agency over one’s excretory system (*nefnaade*). The author suggests that Job died an honorable sanitary death and did not progress to the worst-case scenario of losing agency of his bowels, thus reeking of a foul odor.

⁴ These are the two angels assigned with testing the faith of the deceased as soon as they are buried. The two angels are described as some of the strongest, biggest, and terrifying angels. The word “angel” here has a different usage than the modern English association with a nice and welcoming being safeguarding the interest of hapless humans.

⁵ The “Evidence” refers to the four Divine Books of Abrahamic religions: the Torah (Book of Moses), the Bible (Book of Jesus), the Psalms (Book of David), and the Quran (Book of Muhammad).

⁶ This refers to the direction Muslims face during obligatory ritual prayers. For Muslims, this was in the direction of Jerusalem in the early days of Islam before it was switched to the Kaaba in Mecca during the later life of Prophet Muhammad.

Then they would constrict the grave all around the dead,
and unleash piles of scorpions and snakes.

He will then be chained up until the Judgement Day,
at which point he is thrown into eternal hell.

Always remain purified [with ablutions].

When obligatory ritual prayer time comes, pray it promptly.⁷

At the crack of dawn, say your morning prayer,
then pray again upon the passing of the solar noon.⁸

Say your afternoon prayer when the sun meets the eye.

Hurry in the evening twilight to pray right after sunset.

Say your night prayer after twilight is gone,
and don't skip the non-obligatory ones.

Don't shy away from Friday collective prayers.

When you are suffering at the venue [mosque], try to be patient.

For whoever fails to attend the collective prayers until they're buried,
will burn in hell, even if he practiced the religion tirelessly.

Don't be a stranger in the House of God [the mosque] while decorating,
the House of Satan for the love of vanity.

The heat, hunger, and thirst experienced at a collective prayer
is preferred to eating lunch and drinking followed by a prayer in isolation.

⁷ Each of the five daily prayers has a preferred (early) time to pray and a later grace period. In this line of thought, the author is encouraging his audience to pray early and not drag their feet until the grace period/last minute.

⁸ The word *jawal* is the Fula pronunciation of the Arabic *ẓawāl* (the disappearance of the shadow), which refers to the time when one's shadow disappears as the sun crosses the sky directly above the observer, and then makes its way to the western side of the sky (within 5 minutes) to cast an eastern shadow. No prayers are allowed when the sun is directly above (zenith) until it has crossed over about 5 minutes later.

The search for wealth shouldn't prevent you from attending collective prayers,
for it's not worthwhile to be delinquent and beg for a bailout!⁹

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Don't treat all that you have as a "gain,"
and don't treat all that you have as a "loss."

Sometimes, "a gain" may be a loss
and sometimes "a loss" may be a "gain!"

Gaining all things in this life but losing the hereafter is indeed a loss,
and losing all things in this life but gaining the hereafter is indeed a gain.

Don't miss giving out the compulsory charity [zakat].

If you desire salvation, don't dodge paying tithe.

Whoever withholds from God what He is due today
will burn for it in hell and be roasted like never before seen!

The animals in hell will kick and attack him with their horns!

Once it's over, the torture starts all over again.

God recognizes those who perform obligatory prayers and who gives alms,
and He condemns those who refuse to comply with these injunctions.

When Ramadan comes, break your fast with a prayer.

And during the month [of Ramadan], no part of your body should disobey God.

Ramadan burns bad deeds, ridding us of them,
as Satan will be tied up until the fast is broken.

Let go of backbiting, pitting one against another.

⁹ Here, the author encourages the believer to take initiative and participate in collective prayers rather than banking on the possibility that a saint will intercede on their behalf in the hereafter.

Don't eat what's forbidden, speak of only which concerns you.

State your intent on the eve of Ramadan to fast the whole month,

and stick to it until dusk if you've sighted the moon.

The intent of the first night suffices when an exemption doesn't apply.¹⁰

If you're exempt, pay zakat¹¹ in lieu of fasting, before the month ends.

When dawn arrives on a Ramadan day, do not eat,

nor drink, nor touch women before sunset.

Don't exaggerate ablution when rinsing your mouth or nose,

and don't smoke any tobacco or inhale it through your nose,

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though both actions are permitted before the break of dawn.

The legality of smoking remains contested. So stay away from it, far away.

Remember the story of Ali and al-Laqqani.¹²

If you seek salvation, you will pay attention to their story.

Al-Laqqani prohibited smoking while Ali permitted [what God had prohibited].

Thus a curse of blindness was imposed on the latter.

The one who allowed it became blind while the prohibitor was not blind.

So, Ali repented, regained his sight, and upheld the prohibition.

Repent sincerely for your transgressions,

¹⁰ Permanent exemption from fasting can come from old age and chronic illness, while temporary exemption can come from acute sickness, travel, and ritual impurity. The two most relevant ritual impurities here are menstruation and postnatal bleeding, both of which exempt a woman from praying and fasting during a window of time.

¹¹ The act of paying zakat in lieu of fasting occurs only when an individual has permanent exemption. For temporary exemptions, people are expected to make up the missed days in the following 11 months.

¹² Here the poet refers to Ali al-Ajhourī, the author of *A Statement on the Favorability of Drinking that Which Does Not Alter the Brain from Smoke* and Ibrahim al-Laqqani. While Ali ruled that smoking is permissible, al-Laqqani contends that it is prohibited.

defend the rights of others, and do what's commanded after Friday's prayer.

Perform pilgrimage to God if you meet the requirements,

and don't skip Medina on the way there and on the way back.

Also, pay visit to Muhammad, may God's peace

and blessing be upon him, the one worthy of admiration.

Pray for everything you want, and your prayers will be granted.

He is full of distinction and is the bearer of the Last Message.¹³

He is the most distinguished of all creation, in heaven and earth.

He loves, he is loved, and has been granted excellence.

Follow Muhammad's tradition and stay away from idolatry

in words and deeds, if you desire salvation.

Don't stray from the righteousness and avoid the unrighteous.

Avoid the ignorant and emulate the learned.

Don't be unjust or take part in injustice,

to avoid damnation when death comes to you.

Don't be like the hyena, the leopard, or the lion,

and don't be like a dog that surprises a vulture.

The hyena suffocates its prey, the leopard kills with claws,

and the lion catches by force or by surprise while hiding.

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The dog runs swiftly when the sky is filled with vultures

who pick up the signal of a carrion surrounded by flies.

¹³ In Islam, Prophet Muhammad is considered to have continued the same message of God that was delivered by Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and Jesus. He is also considered to be the Last Messenger of God.

Unlawfulness and unjust acts will be compensated

with tens of five and two prayers acceptable to God.¹⁴

Don't think about adultery or come even close to it,

or worse engage in it. Stay within what's permissible.

Don't stare at other women for the sake of lust.

Don't spend time alone with them, either for a meeting or for a walk.

Don't feed on insolence, disobedience, and pride

even if for a second, for it's a joy rife with disgust.

The pungent smell of the adulterer's private parts

will be an added bonus of torture among the damned.

Their private parts will fatten and ooze with pus.

They will repent but in vain, and all that would be left will be the remains of their bones.

Don't love this world too much to the extent of becoming

an enemy of God and a pile of garbage.

All bad acts that result from excessive love

of this world may not be eligible for any forgiveness.

This applies even to those who love this world excessively, yet pray and fast,

pay zakat, perform pilgrimage, and perform acts of worship consistently!

Don't be prideful. Be humble and you will be respected.

Don't be selfish. Be generous towards your kin.

Remember that Satan was cursed due to pride,

¹⁴ Here the poet gives the number of prayers required to clear unlawful and unjust acts. He used *cappande jowii-didi*, which translates into "tens of 5 and 2," which could either be $10 \times (5+2) = 70$ or $(10 \times 5) + 2 = 52$.

and selfishness deprived Cain¹⁵ of joy.

Don't renege on a promise nor lie.

Don't betray anyone, for that is hypocrisy. Stay away from it!

¹⁵ This refers to the Quranic and Biblical story of the two children of Adam and Eve, *Cain* (Arabic: *Qābīl*) who killed his brother *Abel* (*Hābīl*) due to selfishness.