

يَتَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اسْتَجِيبُوا لِلّٰهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ اِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا
يُحْيِيكُمْ وَاَعْلَمُوْا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَحُوْلُ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَقَلْبِهٖ وَاَنَّهُٓ تَوَّابٌ اِلَيْهِ

تُحْشَرُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

Al-Anfal (The Spoils of War) 8:24

O You Who Believe!

- Give your response to Allah and His Messenger.
- When He calls you to that which will give you life.
- And know that Allah comes in between a man and his heart.
- And that, it is He to Whom you shall (all) be gathered.

Commentary

Allamah Taba Tabai (AR)

God says, "O you who believe! Give your response to Allah and His Apostle, when He calls you to that which will give you life."

The words in the words, "Obey God and Obey the Messenger" there is an invitation to truth and the admonishment about not believing. Here the same is repeated by asking the believer to respond to the invitation to truth given by God and his Messenger. This reminder is explained through the truth and is based on it. The truth of this essential duty is what has saved mankind from obliteration and rekindled his life. The fact of the human life is that God is closer to him than his heart and soon he will have to return to Him. This is the reason why he should be alert and aware of all that he does.

Explanation

Life is something priceless and is aware of a greater existence encompassing and why should I not be when nothing else exists around him but contradictory and void. The priceless-ness of this life is because of realization and determination.

Mankind is a living creature like all other manifest beings governed by definite principles that are similar to rules that govern all other creatures and ensure their well being and existence. It ensures his well being and keeps him safe from problems and losses and it also ensures his peace and development. The guidance that teaches man to differentiate between the evil and the beneficial is inherent (from God) and a sign of his creation. It is impossible that any part of his creation and existence can be faulty and he understands this perfectly and has no doubts about it. Like other creatures, instead of falling prey to errors of omission or commission, adopts the God ordained way of life that ensures their well being and safety.

If they lose the right path, then it is because of other facts and reasons that misguide him from the path of truth and entice him to the path of sin. It is like a body that exists naturally on earth is forced by his strength to soar high above the earth against his natural traits but return to earth the moment these pressures of urges subside. If his return is not under the pressure of some other force then he attains his position but if he is forced to return due to other factors or pressures then his condition will be different.

This is the same explanation that has been oft repeated in the Qur'an. It has said, the path of well being that is glorified by the presence of knowledge and action is not hidden on any human being and he is clearly able to realize the path that he has to take and the actions that he has to perform.

It is said in the next Sura, " Ar-Rum- (30:10)-Then evil was the end of those who committed evil by rejecting God's manifest signs and mocking them. In Sura A'la God says-And the most reprobate one will avoid it. (87:11)

Explanation

Those who do not believe in judgment and God will be punished in a way in which they will be neither dead nor alive. At times they will wish they were dead to escape the punishment but they won't and since they will be alive to the punishment it will be nothing but a great torment. The five ayahs earlier, God has said, " Therefore remind them (men) in case the reminder profits them. The reminder will be received by him who fears God, but it will be avoided by the wretched." (Sura Al-A'la 9-11) and in Sura As-Shams (10) God says, " And by Nafs and by Him who perfected him in proportion. Then He showed him what is wrong and what is right for him. Indeed, he succeeds who purifies his own self and indeed he who corrupts himself fails."

It happens at times that man loses his way in faith and action and suffers doubts but his mistakes are not connected with God and His guidance at all. It is merely because he has not made the correct use of his intelligence and has fallen prey to his sexual urges and satanic doubts, thereby has lost the path of development and success.

In Sura Najam (23) the Qur'an says, "They are nothing but (mere) names which you and your fathers have named. God sent no authority for them. They follow but a conjecture and what their own selves are inclined to; the right guidance has now come to them from their Lord." And again in Sura Ghasiya (23), He says, "Have you seen one who takes as God his own vain desires while God has allowed him to go astray, knowing it, and sets a seal upon his ear and heart and put upon his eyes a veil? Who can then guide him besides God? Will you not then reflect?"

The premise of this is that all these things (knowledge and actions) invite the nature of man towards a life that may be termed the true life because they are the its ingredients. A true life is dependant on faithful deeds and belief and these actions and knowledge too desire such a life. A truly obedient and successful life is able to retrieve the lost ones back to the true path.

We therefore, conclude that if a person moves away from the true path that God has shown him and to which he is invited, then it means that he has reneged from a successful life. Until such time that he returns to the true path of knowledge and actions, from which he had moved away, because of reluctance to believe and obey and because of his attraction towards evil and ignorance, no living being can bring back to the right path.

This means the same as the ayah says, " O you who believe, respond to the invitation of God and His Messenger when they invite you to the things that rejuvenate or rekindle your life." The word " Lam" has been used in the manner common to the Arabs. The invitation of the Messenger is the true faith and the true faith is that Islam which the Qur'an explains as the response to the invitation to truth and actions and to benefit from pious and fruitful actions.

Qur'an has another meaning for life, which is far profound from this ordinary and simple explanation. In both, the life and the worldly life from birth to death is full of meaningful and just actions that can be observed even among the animals. God, however, is hinting to a life other than this life for mankind as in Sura Ankabut (26) because the dazzle of this life can be termed as an illusion or a mirage compared to that true life, which is the embodiment of those actions that give the soul a true meaning. The business of this worldly life are like a screen that shields it from the true life that is to come.

In Sura "Qaf" this is further explained by the words, "You were heedless of this; now we have removed your veil from you, your sight today is sharp." [Every one shall see the consequence of his own evils that he could not visualize in this life.]

We learn:

- That there is a respect and price for man,
- and that life is the hereafter while this worldly life is but a mirage.
- The veil will soon be lifted to exhibit the life that is free from all contaminations
- and man does not discern anything but light of belief and submission (to the will of God).
- The Qura'n says, "They are those, God has inscribed faith in their hearts and has strengthened them with a Spirit from Himself" Mujadilah22.

- And then further states in Sura Anam (122), "Is he who was dead, then we raised him to life and made for him a light whereby he walks among people, like unto him that whose similitude is one who is in utter darkness, whence he cannot come forth?"
- This life in the hereafter is more respectable and on a higher plane than this worldly life of all kinds of men and animals.
- The books then says, " We gave clear proofs and evidence and supported him with Ruhul Quds." (The exalted spirit or Gabriel?).
- It is the same as the meaning in Sura Shuara (52) that says, "Thus did we reveal to you our guidance by Our command; you did not know what the Book (Qur'an) was, nor the faith, but We made it a light, guiding thereby whomsoever We please of our servants and verily a guide to the right path."

The conclusion that we now draw is that there is another life over and above these two lives about which we will discuss in details later.

The conclusion we come to is that there is a true life for humans, which is superior to this inferior life. A person reaches that life when his willingness to submit himself (to God) is perfected and then he joins the likes of the ordained ones and the saints. It is in the same way that he reaches this present stage of life when the seeds that carry him develop and take the shape of a human.

The ayah being discussed says, "*O you who believe! Give your response to Allah and His Apostle, when He calls you to that which will give you life.*"

This ayah invites man to respond or show the willingness to accept the doctrine (Islam) that invites him to a better life in the hereafter by obeying and practicing its commands. It prepares man to understand this promised true life just as present life also asks him to do pious deeds. The verse, "Whosoever did good, whether male or female, being a believer, then We shall certainly make them live good and pure life. We shall certainly give them their (just) recompense, with the best of what they were doing." Sura Namal (97) has the same purpose and meaning.

In the verse being discussed the words "He calls you to that, which will give you life." Refers to the Messenger's invitation to the divine truth, which has the power to and gives us a new life so a person should have no hesitation about accepting it. This also includes the life that is closest to God and is eternal and because it includes these things. This is also the reason why that this verse should be interpreted in a narrow sense as has been done by some exegetes who says that since it includes the words "He calls you to that which will give you life." it means that when the Messenger calls you to Jihad he invites you to an eternal and respectful life.

Some exegetes have taken the view that Jihad is the base of an eternal life from the words, "And do not think of those slain in the way of God as dead. They are alive with their Lord, being sustained." [Al Imran-169]

Others have taken the view that it means to respond and obey the invitation of God and the Messenger to the truth because belief and truth rekindle life whereas disbelief and evil destroy the possibility of a future perfect life.

Another group is of the view that knowledge is life giving and ignorance in reality is death. Qu'ran is the divine light (Noor), the actual life and the perfect knowledge.

Yet another group is of the view that this invitation given by the Messenger is about paradise because life in paradise will be eternal and without upheavals and decadence.

But all these conjectures or inferences are the ways that this verse may be interpreted so we cannot say that the explanation we give is the only explanation. We have already stated that this is a general verse and includes all, so there is no proof to make it wider than the general meaning by saying that it means this or that.

God says, "*And know that Allah comes in between a man and his heart. And that, it is He to Whom you shall (all) be gathered.*"

- The heart is a well known part of the body but Qur'an has often used this word in the sense of realization of feelings and their demands within it and exposing them e.g. love and hate, hope and despair, desire and anxiety and others.
- The heart has many sides,
 - ❖ it orders,
 - ❖ it prefers,
 - ❖ it feels animosity,
 - ❖ it fears, it hopes and desires,
 - ❖ it is at times happy and at times sad.
- When the heart has all these facets then it can be termed as the real existence within the body that instigates the caravan of life.

The human being like all other creatures, which exist, is a part of this world and is composed of many facets and elements that are under his control. He is their owner and uses them for conflicting feelings. All these elements, facets, power are inherent in him and he is their master. He unites these elements and powers no matter what their numbers is. He is that embodiment of unity that despite being a single entity works, stops work, moves and even becomes static.

The special factor is that both the human being and his elements of power and resources have been created by God who is the master of every facet of man, who uses them and gives him whatever he wants but declares man to be the owner of what is given. God exists between man and the facets or elements subservient to him. He is the authority that exists between man and his heart, between man and his ears, eyes, his body and his life. He uses his powers as the creator of man to whom he has gifted these powers and who uses them as a proxy owner. He makes man the authority within limits beneficial to him but confiscates these powers and authority when He wants.

This arrangement or order is also for other creatures because there is no creation that has no individuality, its subordinates too have individuality but the special feature is that both God is the owner of both the creation's as well as its subordinate's individuality and it is God who has declared the humans to be the owners or possessors of the elements. He stands between him and that which he owns.

The long and short is that God stands as a screen between the human and his heart and whatever the human being has is through his knowledge that connects both. God is closer to the human being than his jugular vein. Sura Qaf (16) says, "We are closer to him than his jugular vein."

The verse being discussed also expresses the same when it says, "And know that Allah comes in between a man and his heart." The premise of the matter is that God is the owner of all creation, including humans who are insignificant, so He is more closer to facets or features that humans possess than human themselves because whatever man has, has been endowed by God and so He stands between man and his ownership of powers. This is the reason why the verse being discussed has been ended on "it is He to Whom you shall (all) be gathered", and the reason for this is that there is a visible and valid sign for all creations in Domsday and God controls and owns all.

To be the supreme owner is His sign only, for He has no partners and it is frivolous to think of a manifestation of signs for Him as a being. Only His kingdom is eternal because He has said, "Whose is the kingdom this Day? It is Allah's, the One, the irresistible." (Surah Momin-16). In another instance He says, "It will be the Day when no one shall have the power (to do) anything for another, and the Decision that Day will with Allah." (Sura Infitar-19).

So what this issue means to say is:

- Remember that God is the true of both your hearts and yourselves and He is closer to you than whatever you possess. You will learn this soon when you return to Him (how powerful an owner is He and how His power encompasses all).
- Remember that nothing can free you from His authority.

But the words " And know that Allah comes in between a man and his heart. And that, it is He to Whom you shall (all) be gathered", is interlinked with the words *Give your response to Allah and His Messenger. When He calls you to that which will give you life.* The reason is that God being in between a man and his heart is in the sense that, if the man does not respond to the invitation of Messenger then none of his excuse will be held reliable, because the invitation is to something that rekindles life and the essence of the Message is the Unity of God or Tawhid.

And, when it is said that God is closer to man than his heart, which is the first power of realization, the man experiences through his soul, and through the heart he realizes the presence of the better. So, before man can discover his heart, the things that he discovers through the heart, he recognizes God to be the Sole God who has no partners. If he doubts anything then it does not mean that he has doubted upon God, the creator of things and thus he is not considered to have become wayward. So when the Messenger of God invites him towards the truth, which is a treasure, of a lifetime he should not hesitate in responding to his invitation and he has no valid reason for not doing so. He cannot say that he was unaware of the reality behind the invitation or he was worried and was perplexed about accepting the truth. The Truth is the all-encompassing God and there is no obstacle or screen between Him and His creation. He is closer to man any screen that he may think of. No matter what perplexities are there God is still present a man and his heart. Man really has no valid reason not to recognize God or to doubt His unity (Tawhid).

Now when God exists between the man and his heart it means that He is closer to that person than his heart because every intermediary is closer to both sides and since He is so close to him he knows all that is in his heart more than him. So man is helpless when he hears the Messenger's invitation to truth (which is also his code of living) that he has to accept it both heart fully and orally. It should not be that he turns to hypocrisy by nurturing it in his heart though his tongue is unwilling to express it because God is more aware of things secreted in the man's heart. And since he has to return to God his hypocrisy will then be exposed. The Quran says, " The Day when they will all come out. Nothing will be hidden from Allah." (40:16) At another place the Qur'an says, " But they will never be able to hide a single fact from Allah."

Even if we overlook this fact, when God is there between a man and his heart, and we know that God is the creator and owner of the man's heart so before the man can use his heart, God can use it any way He wants. Now all the feelings, of faith or doubt, fear or hope, unease and calm or other (instinctive or natural) reactions, which a man claims to be his own, will naturally revert more to God. This is a connection related to use. God can, due to his relationship with the heart, use it without any aid or help, and without any obstructions or admonishments that may force Him. He is oblivious to such things.

The Qur'an says, " There is none to put back His judgment and He is swift at reckoning." (Sura Ra'ad 41) and then in another chapter it says, " He is the dominion and to Him belong all praises and thanks, and He is able to do all things." (Sura-Taghabun-1)

Therefore, if a person is able to find inner peace through his good wishes and faith, or he thinks of doing some good work, or has an inclination towards piety and is proud about it, then this is the result of his ignorance. It is a person's foolishness that makes him believe that he is the sole owner of his heart and believes himself to be all-powerful, for everything is encompassed by and obedient to God. He can turn them in any direction He pleases. He is the true owner of the hearts and souls and rules over them just as He says, " We will turn their hearts and visions aside even as they did not believe in it the first time, and We will leave them in their contumacy blindly wandering on." (Sura Anam-110).

So it is important that instead of being vain, man should always fear him that God may not force his head down." God can direct man anytime He feels from well being to wretchedness and from stability to ignominy. *Nothing can save him from God's ruse.*

On the contrary he should not be desponded even if he sees that his heart is not inclined to the truth and to good deeds; he should take the initiative to correct himself and to accept the invitation by God and His Messenger. In this manner he should rejuvenate his heart but should not desert the battle in despondence and hopelessness. He should firmly believe that God is present between him and his heart and can return his heart to betterment whenever He so desires by installing his benevolence and his soul in it. He holds the control or the reins for all actions and He says, " Certainly no one despairs Allah's mercy, except the people who disbelieve." (Sura Yusuf-87) and then He says,

" And who despairs of the mercy of his Lord other than those who have gone astray?" (Sura Hijr-56)

This verse as you discern is one of the most compact and important verses of the Qur'an that deals with the realization of God's truth (Like God being present between man and his heart). By addressing the hypocrites, God desires to clarify that He is aware of all that there is in their hearts more than them and this is how He is able to root out hypocrisy and vanity from them.

The true believers who traverse the path of faith with his verses have been assured that the control of the hearts is with Him. They are not free to have the control over their hearts as owners and not oblivious of God. The crux of the matter is that God has erased vanity from their hearts and the thought that they are in complete command of all that they possess. When they realize that they have attained piety and inner faith they are not vain any longer and when they find their being and their hearts surrounded by the allurements of this world they do not lose faith in God.

What we learn from the above is that no matter how we suppose the words, "God stands between the hearts and the person" it will still be connected with and explain the words, "O you who believe! Give your response to Allah and His Apostle, when He calls you to that which will give you life." It is also clear to us that this verse has a greater connotation than the explanations related by the exegists like one who said, " In this world of human being, God is closer to their hearts. In another places he censures them strictly when He says, " for We are nearer to him than (his) jugular vein."

A second among the exegists is of the view that heart cannot conceal anything from God because God is closer to the heart than the man himself so whatever a person knows about his heart God knows better.

Yet another commentator is of the view that God is the intermediary between the person and his heart for all benefits. The heart cannot fulfill its desires whenever it wants. Knowing this, it is better for him that he should respond and be obedient as soon as possible and should not postpone or dilly-dally about it.

In short this verse instigates man to be obedient to God both in belief and in deeds. 4.5.06

Mir Ahmed Ali (AR) and Aqa Mahdi Puya (AR)

Verse 20 of al-Anfal

It is a warning to those who participated in the battle of Badr that the promise made in the preceding verse (Allah is with the believers) will not save them from punishment if they ever turn away from the Holy Prophet and his commands, because as soon as any one turns away from the Holy Prophet he becomes a disbeliever or a hypocrite. (Refer to the commentary of al Baqarah: 8 to 20 and 93).

Whenever the Holy Prophet made known Ali's special relationship with Allah and himself, all his notable companions were present, particularly in Ghadir Khum where he declared: "Of whomsoever I am mawla Ali is his mawla " (see commentary of al Ma-idah 67), yet they paid no attention to his last and final call which completed and perfected the religion of Allah, although verse 24 again ordains that the call of Muhammad is the call of Allah.

The call of the Holy Prophet invited the people to follow the divinely commissioned Imams among his Ahl ul Bayt who alone were chosen to guide the people unto the right path. It is the duty of every believer to answer the call of the Holy Prophet or any of the Imams of his Ahl ul Bayt to strive in the way of Allah to defend the faith (Jihad).

Aqa Mahdi Puya says:

Every person responds to the call of his desires, but when he submits to the call of Allah or the Holy Prophet his act of submission is due to "the coming of Allah in between a man and his desires", and thus he is prevented from going astray on account of the dictates of his vain desires.

In verse 25 it is made clear that the consequences of social, political and religious deviation will not only harm those who have done injustice to themselves but also equally jeopardise the well-being of those who have done no wrong, therefore all the believers should safeguard themselves against evil by observing the laws made by Allah.

On several occasions the Muslims were put to test and trial (Ahzab: 11). Abu Ayyub Ansari narrates that once the Holy Prophet said to Ammar: *"After me you will encounter many troubles. My followers will kill each other. They will sow the seeds of discord among themselves. In such events adhere to Ali, even if all of my followers form an alliance against him. Follow Ali and leave the people to follow whichever way they desire. Ali will not turn you away from the right path shown by me. To obey Ali is to obey me, and to obey me is to obey Allah."*

Hakim Abul Qasim Asqani says, when this verse was revealed, the Holy Prophet said:

To oppose Ali's successorship after me is to deny my prophethood and the prophethood of all the prophets before me.

According to Imam Hasan bin Ali al Mujtaba verse 25 gives report of the battle of Jamal engineered by Talha, Zubayr and A-isha against Ali. Tafsir al Kashshaf says that once Zubayr asked the Holy Prophet as to how much he loved Ali. The Holy Prophet said:

I love him as no man has ever loved any other man, not even his own son. How evil it will be when you will go to fight against him?

Ayatullah Sayyid Kamal Faqih Imani and a Group of Muslim Scholars

There are different kinds of life:

1- Vegetal life: "...Allah gives life to the earth after its death; ..."

Sura Al-Hadid, No. 57, verse 17

2- Animal life: "...the giver of life to the dead..."

Sura Fussilat, No. 41, verse 39

3- Mental life: "...who was dead then We raised him to life..."

Sura Al-'An'am, No. 6, verse 122

4- Eternal life: "...O! would that I had sent before for (this) my life! "

Sura Al-Fajr, No. 89, verse 24)

The purpose of the life, which comes into being by the acceptance of the invitation of prophets, is not the animal life, since without the effects and affluence of prophets this sort of life exists, too. Then, the objective of this life is the mental, intellectual, and spiritual life.

The phrase: ' Allah intervenes between a man and his heart ' indicates that Allah is aware and present everywhere, and He encompasses everything so that He is closer to us than our jugular vein is. All bounties and successes belong to Him, and the activities of intellect and soul are under His authority, too.

However, the acceptance of the Prophet's invitation is the same as the acceptance of Allah's invitation; and the real life of man lies in Faith and righteous deed, to which prophets have invited, too.

The verse says:

" O you have Faith! Answer Allah and the Messenger when he invites you to that which gives you life, ..."

The ordinances of Islam gives spiritual life to the believers, the same as some medicine or surgery can be life-giving to a sick person.

Going alongside the way of Allah (SWT) and divine prophets is the real life, while abandoning it is the death of humanity.

According to the Islamic literatures, one of the aspects of goodly life is the acceptance of the call of the Prophet of Islam (S) to the subject of mastership of Ali-ibn-Abitalib (AS) and his Ahl-ul-Bayt (AS). (Recorded in Tafsirul-Furqan, by Manaqib Tarmadhy)

He who believes in Allah's omnipresence and omnipotence does not disobey the invitation of prophets. Therefore, as long as you are alive and you have respite, embrace the Truth. (According to this interpretation, the phrase '...Allah intervenes between a man and his heart', metaphorically, means death.)
"... and know that Allah intervenes between a man and his heart, ..."

Among the aspects of the phrase: ' Allah intervenes between a man and his heart ' there are: the effacement of infidelity and confirming Faith, the effacement of negligence and doubt and confirming recollection and certainty. (This meaning is recorded in Tafsir-ul-Furqan, narrated from Imam Sadiq (AS).

All of you will be gathered on the Resurrection Day, then do respond to the invitation of prophets positively. The verse ends as follows:
"... and that unto Him you shall be gathered."