

The Levels of Paradise

First Khutbah

إِنَّ الْحَمْدَ لِلَّهِ , نَحْمَدُهُ , وَنَسْتَعِينُهُ وَنَسْتَغْفِرُهُ , وَنَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ شُرُورِ أَنْفُسِنَا وَمِنْ سَيِّئَاتِ أَعْمَالِنَا , مَنْ يَهْدِهِ اللَّهُ فَلَا مُضِلَّ لَهُ , وَمَنْ يَضِلَّ فَلَا هَادِيَ لَهُ , وَأَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ

Verily, all praise is for Allah. We praise Him, we seek His assistance and we ask for His forgiveness. And we seek refuge in Him from the evils of our selves. Whoever Allah guides, none can misguide. Whoever He misguides, none can guide. And I bear witness that there is no deity other than Allah and I bear witness that Mohammad is His servant and messenger.

(يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تُقَاتِهِ وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ) [آل

عمران:102]

Al Imran(3) 102 : O you who believe! Fear Allah as He should be feared, and die not except in a state of Islam.

Oh Believers:

When paradise is mentioned, it stirs the believers' hearts. They covet and long for it and their tongues move in remembrance of Allah Almighty and they supplicate for attaining it. They do not see any bliss in this worldly life, no matter how great, that comes anywhere close to the bliss of paradise, let alone similar to it.

And paradise has degrees and levels, one above the other, according to iman (faith) and righteous deeds.

أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ حَقًّا لَهُمْ دَرَجَاتٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ - الأنفال:4

Al Anfal (8) 4: Those are the believers, truly. For them are degrees [of high position] with their Lord and forgiveness and noble provision.

Levels on top of one another. Those on the lower levels raise their heads and see the higher levels just as one of us raises his head to the sky to see the moon and the stars. Abu Saeed Al Khudry, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said:

إن أهل الجنة يتراءون أهل الغرف من فوقهم كما تتراءون الكوكب الدري الغابر في الأفق من المشرق أو المغرب لتفاضل ما بينهم"، قالوا: يا رسول الله، تلك منازل الأنبياء لا يبلغها غيرهم، قال: بلى والذي نفسي بيده، رجال آمنوا بالله وصدقوا المرسلين.

The dwellers of Paradise will look at those in the upper abodes above them as you look at a shining star in the eastern or western horizon because of their superiority over others. They said, Oh Messenger of Allah, will that be the dwellings of the Prophets that no one other than them can attain? He replied, Yes, but by Him in Whose Hand is my soul, men who believed in Allah and affirmed the truthfulness of the Messengers will attain them. [Bukhari 3256, Muslim 2831b]

And Al Firdaus which is the highest level and degree of paradise was mentioned in the Book of Allah Almighty. After He the Almighty recounted some attributes of the believers, he concluded it with:

أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْوَارِثُونَ * الَّذِينَ يَرِثُونَ الْفِرْدَوْسَ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ - المؤمنون:10-11

Al Mominoon (23) 10-11: (10) Those are the inheritors (11) Who will inherit al-Firdaus. They will abide therein eternally.

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Qatadah, may Allah have mercy on him, said, Al Firdaus is the uppermost of Paradise, center of Paradise and the best of Paradise.

And the Prophet ﷺ clarified that Firdaus is four gardens. Among them is the Garden of Adn which was mentioned frequently in the Quran. Musa Al Ashari, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said:

جَنَّاتٍ مِنْ فِضَّةٍ أُنِيَّتُهُمَا وَمَا فِيهِمَا وَجَنَّاتٍ مِنْ ذَهَبٍ أُنِيَّتُهُمَا وَمَا فِيهِمَا وَمَا بَيْنَ الْقَوْمِ وَبَيْنَ
أَنْ يَنْظُرُوا إِلَى رَبِّهِمْ إِلَّا رِذَاءَ الْكِبْرِيَاءِ عَلَى وَجْهِهِ فِي جَنَّةٍ عَدْنٍ

Two gardens of silver, their vessels and everything in them; and two gardens of gold, their vessels and everything in them, and there is nothing between the people and seeing their Lord, except the Cloak of Greatness covering His Face in the Garden of 'Adn. [Bukhari 7444, Muslim 180]

The highest station of Al Firdaus is a level that only one human being can attain and that is the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. And it is the station of Al Waseelah that if anyone requests it for the Prophet ﷺ he will attain his intercession. As Abdullah bin Amr , may Allah be pleased with them, narrated that he heard the Prophet ﷺ say:

إذا سمعتم المؤذن فقولوا مثل ما يقول ثم صلوا علي فإنه من صلى علي صلاة صلى الله عليه بها عشرا ثم سلوا الله لي الوسيلة فإنها منزلة في الجنة لا تنبغي إلا لعبد من عباد الله وأرجو أن أكون أنا هو فمن سأل لي الوسيلة حلت له الشفاعة " رواه مسلم.

If you hear the caller to prayer, say as he says then send blessings upon me for whoever sends blessings upon me once, Allah will send blessings upon him tenfold. Then ask Allah to grant me Al-Wasilah, which is a position in paradise which only one of the servants of Allah

will attain, and I hope that I will be the one. Whoever asks for Al-Wasilah for me, will be entitled to my intercession. [Muslim 384]

The highest of the people in rank in Paradise is the Prophet ﷺ. And he is the best messenger. As Allah Almighty said:

تِلْكَ الرُّسُلُ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ مِّنْهُمْ مَّن كَلَّمَ اللَّهُ وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَهُمْ دَرَجَاتٍ -البقرة:253

Al Baqarah (2) 253: Those are the messengers some of whom We have given excellence over some others. Among them there are ones to whom Allah spoke (directly) and He raised some of them steps higher (in other respects)

Mujahid and others said about the verse “and He raised some of them steps higher” refers to Mohammad ﷺ.

Ibn Al Qayim, may Allah have mercy on him, said; and the station of the Prophet ﷺ was called Al Wasilah because it is the closest station to the throne of the Merciful. And it is the closest station to Allah Almighty. That is why it is the best and noblest of Paradise and has the greatest light. Al Fudhail bin Eyaadh, may Allah have mercy on him, said: do you know why it is the best of Paradise? Because the throne of the Lord of the Worlds is its ceiling. And since the Messenger ﷺ was the greatest of creation in servitude to his Lord, the most knowledgeable of Him, the most fearful of Him, and the most loving of Him, his station is the closest to Allah Almighty. And it is the highest level in paradise and the Prophet commanded his ummah (community) to request it for him. So that they attain through this supplication closeness from Allah Almighty and increased iman (faith). And also Allah decreed it for the Prophet ﷺ for reasons among which is the supplication of his ummah (community) for him.

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And whoever loves the Prophet ﷺ, follows his guidance, adheres to his sunnah, obeys his command and refrains from his prohibitions, will be gathered on the Day of Resurrection with the Prophet ﷺ who will not be concealed from him even though the Prophet is at a higher station than him. As Aisha, may Allah be pleased with her, said:

جاء رجل إلى النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم فقال: يا رسول الله، والله إنك لأحب إلي من نفسي، وإنك لأحب إلي من أهلي ومالي، وأحب إلي من ولدي، وإني لأكون في البيت فأذكرك فما أصبر حتى آتيك فأنظر إليك، وإذا ذكرت موتي وموتك عرفت أنك إذا دخلت الجنة رفعت مع النبيين، وإني إذا دخلت الجنة خشيت أن لا أراك، فلم يرد عليه النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم شيئاً حتى نزل جبريل عليه السلام بهذه الآية - وَمَنْ يُطِعِ اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَأُولَئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ - النساء: 69

A man came to the Prophet ﷺ and said: O Messenger of Allah, by Allah, you are dearer to me than myself, and you are dearer to me than my family and my wealth, and dearer to me than my children. And while I am at home, I remember you and cannot wait to come see you. And if I remember my death and your death, I know that when you enter Paradise you will be raised with the prophets and if I enter paradise I am afraid that I will not see you. So the Prophet ﷺ did not respond to him until Gabriel came to him and revealed this verse:

An Nisa (4) 69: And whoever obeys Allāh and the Messenger - those will be with the ones upon whom Allāh has bestowed favor of the prophets, the steadfast affirmers of truth, the martyrs and the righteous. And excellent are those as companions. [The Authentic Series (Albani) 6/1044]

أَقُولُ مَا تَسْمَعُونَ وَأَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ لِي وَلَكُمْ مِنْ كُلِّ ذَنْبٍ فَاسْتَغْفِرُوهُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ

I say what you have heard and I seek forgiveness from Allah for me and you from every sin. So seek forgiveness from Him, Verily He is Oft-Forgiving, the Most Merciful.

Second Khutbah

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ، وَالصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ

All praise is to Allah, and peace and blessings upon the Messenger of Allah, and I bear witness that there is no deity other than Allah and I bear witness that Mohammad is His slave and messenger.

Oh people:

The people with the highest stations in paradise are the messengers and prophets, then the steadfast affirmers of the truth. After the steadfast affirmers of the truth are the martyrs and after them are the righteous and those who accompanied them.

The person with the lowest rank in paradise will have a higher station than someone that owns the entire world and rules over all of it. Allah Almighty said:

وَإِذَا رَأَيْتَ ثَمَّ رَأَيْتَ نَعِيمًا وَمُلْكًا كَبِيرًا -الإنسان:20

Al Insan (76) 20: **And when you look there [in Paradise], you will see pleasure and great dominion.**

'Abdullah bin Mas'ud narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

إني لأعلم آخر أهل النار خروجا منها وآخر أهل الجنة دخولا الجنة، رجل يخرج من النار حبوا فيقول الله تبارك وتعالى له: اذهب فادخل الجنة فيأتيها فيخيل إليه أنها ملاءى فيرجع فيقول: يا رب وجدتها ملاءى فيقول الله تبارك وتعالى له: اذهب فادخل الجنة قال: فيأتيها فيخيل إليه أنها ملاءى فيرجع فيقول: يا رب وجدتها ملاءى فيقول الله له: اذهب فادخل الجنة فإن لك مثل الدنيا وعشرة أمثالها أو إن لك عشرة أمثال الدنيا قال: فيقول: أتسخر بي أو أتضحك بي وأنت الملك " قال ابن مسعود رضي الله عنه لقد رأيت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ضحك حتى بدت نواجذه قال: فكان يقال ذاك أدنى أهل الجنة منزلة رواه الشيخان.

I know the last of the people of Hell who will be brought out of it, and the last of the people of Paradise to be admitted to Paradise. (It is) a man who will emerge from Hell crawling, then Allah Almighty will say to him, Go and enter Paradise. He will go to it and it will appear full to him. So he will return and say, O Lord, I found it full. So Allah Almighty will say to him, Go and enter Paradise. He will go to it and it will appear full to him. So he will return and say, O Lord, I found it full. So Allah Almighty will say to him, Go and enter Paradise for you will have like the world and ten times more, or you will have like ten times the world. He will say, are You ridiculing me, or are You laughing at me, when You are the Sovereign? And Ibn Mas'ud, may Allah be pleased with him, said, and I saw the Messenger of Allah ﷺ smiling so broadly that his molar teeth could be seen. And he used to say, this is the occupant of Paradise with the lowest status. [Bukhari 6571, Muslim 190a]

Between the highest station in Paradise and the lowest are varying levels, more than people's status varies in the worldly life. Allah Almighty said:

انظُرْ كَيْفَ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَلِلْآخِرَةِ أَكْبَرُ دَرَجَاتٍ وَأَكْبَرُ تَفْضِيلاً - الإسراء: 21

Al Isra (17) 21: Look how We have favored [in provision] some of them over others. But the Hereafter is greater in degrees [of difference] and greater in distinction.

So strive in attaining the highest levels of Paradise. Do not be outdone by others and strive for it through righteous deeds such as prayer, fasting, remembrance, charity, enjoining good, forbidding evil, honoring parents, joining kinship and benefiting people. And refrain from sins and misdeeds. For whoever does that, attains the highest levels of paradise by the grace of Allah Almighty and His mercy.

Status and wealth in this world are attained by striving and hard work, as they are attained by pedigree and lineage. And some of the worldly opportunities are availed to some at the exclusion of others. And this worldly life in every case is not guaranteed. A person may possess something of this world but may not be able to enjoy it due to a disease or illness. And inevitably he will be separated from it. This is the state of this worldly life. However, the levels of Paradise are available to all people. And it is the abode that is guaranteed to last. The pleasure for the one attaining is unlike all of the pleasures of this world. And iman (faith) and righteous deeds are the vehicle to it. And lineage and pedigree do not benefit in this regard. It is justice from Allah Almighty among His servants. For the wives of Noah and Lot did not benefit from their husbands being prophets. And being the uncle of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ did not admit Abu Talib into paradise. And the son of Noah was not saved because his father was a prophet. And every doer will find what he did. So deposit righteous deeds in your books and you find it present tomorrow. Allah Almighty said:

يَوْمَ تَجِدُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ مُّحْضَرًا وَمَا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ سُوءٍ تَوَدُّ لَوْ أَنَّ بَيْنَهَا وَبَيْنَهُ أَمَدًا
بَعِيدًا - آل عمران: 30

Al Imran (3) 30: **The Day every soul will find what it has done of good present [before it] and what it has done of evil, it will wish that between itself and that [evil] was a great distance.**

And hasten towards paradise. Allah Almighty said:

وَسَارِعُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ - آل
عمران: 133

Al Imran (3) 133: **And hasten to forgiveness from your Lord and a garden [i.e., Paradise] as wide as the heavens and earth, prepared for the righteous**

We ask Allah Almighty to gather us with the prophets, messengers, steadfast affirmers of the truth and the righteous and admit us and our parents to the highest levels of paradise. Indeed Allah is All Hearing, Answering.

هَذَا وَصَلُّوا وَسَلِّمُوا عَلَىٰ نَبِيِّكُمْ كَمَا أَمَرَكُمْ بِذَلِكَ رَبُّكُمْ , فَقَالَ

I conclude with this and send prayers of blessings and peace upon your Prophet as your Lord commanded:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَمَلَائِكَتَهُ يُصَلُّونَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا صَلُّوا عَلَيْهِ وَسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا

Al Ahzaab (33) 56: Indeed, Allah confers blessing upon the Prophet, and His angels [ask Him to do so]. O you who have believed, ask [Allah to confer] blessing upon him and ask [Allah to grant him] peace.

اللَّهُمَّ اهْدِنَا فِيمَنْ هَدَيْتَ وَعَافِنَا فِيمَنْ عَافَيْتَ وَتَوَلَّنَا فِيمَنْ تَوَلَّيْتَ وَبَارِكْ لَنَا فِيمَا
أَعْطَيْتَ وَقِنَا شَرَّ مَا قَضَيْتَ إِنَّكَ تَقْضِي وَلَا يُقْضَى عَلَيْكَ وَإِنَّهُ لَا يَذُلُّ مَنْ وَالَيْتَ
تَبَارَكْتَ رَبَّنَا وَتَعَالَيْتَ

O Allah, guide us with those whom You have guided, grant us well-being among those You have granted well-being, be an ally to us along with those whom You are an ally to, and bless what You have bestowed upon us, and save us from the evil of what You have decreed. For verily You decree and none can decree over You. He whom You support can never be humiliated. Glory is to You, our Lord, You are Blessed and Exalted.

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّا نَسْأَلُكَ مِنَ الْخَيْرِ كُلِّهِ عَاجِلِهِ وَآجِلِهِ مَا عَلِمْنَا مِنْهُ وَمَا لَمْ نَعْلَمْ وَنَعُوذُ بِكَ
مِنَ الشَّرِّ كُلِّهِ عَاجِلِهِ وَآجِلِهِ مَا عَلِمْنَا مِنْهُ وَمَا لَمْ نَعْلَمْ اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّا نَسْأَلُكَ مِنْ خَيْرِ مَا
سَأَلَكَ عَبْدُكَ وَنَبِيُّكَ وَنَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ شَرِّ مَا عَاذَ بِهِ عَبْدُكَ وَنَبِيُّكَ اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّا نَسْأَلُكَ
الْجَنَّةَ وَمَا قَرَّبَ إِلَيْهَا مِنْ قَوْلٍ أَوْ عَمَلٍ وَنَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنَ النَّارِ وَمَا قَرَّبَ إِلَيْهَا مِنْ قَوْلٍ أَوْ
عَمَلٍ وَنَسْأَلُكَ أَنْ تَجْعَلَ كُلَّ قَضَاءٍ قَضَيْتَهُ لَنَا خَيْرًا

O Allah, We ask You for all that is good, in this world and in the Hereafter, what we know and what we do not know. O Allah, we seek refuge with You from all evil, in this world and in the Hereafter, what we know and what we do not know. O Allah, we ask You for the good that Your servant and Prophet has asked You for, and we seek refuge with You from the evil from which Your servant and Prophet sought refuge. O Allah, we ask You for Paradise and for that which brings one closer to it, in word and deed,

and we seek refuge in You from Hell and from that which brings one closer to it, in word and deed. And we ask You to make every decree that You decree concerning us good.

عِبَادَ اللَّهِ، إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَاءِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ
وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ، يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ

Servants of Allah. Indeed, Allah orders justice and good conduct and giving to relatives and forbids immorality and bad conduct and oppression. He admonishes you that perhaps you will be reminded.

أذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ الْعَظِيمَ يَذْكُرْكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لَهُ يَزِدْكُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرُوا لَهُ يَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ وَاتَّقُواهُ يَجْعَلْ
لَكُمْ مِنْ أَمْرِكُمْ مَخْرَجًا ، وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ

Remember Allah, the Great - He will remember you. Thank Him for His favors - He will increase you therein. And seek forgiveness from Him - He will forgive you. And be conscious of Him - He will provide you a way out of difficult matters. And, establish the prayer.