



THE GOOD LIFE

THE SWEETNESS OF IMAN & WORSHIP



Life With Allah

الحياة مع الله

Contents

The Good Life: Life With Allah	02
The Good Life	04
Why Do We Not Experience the Sweetness of Worship?	06
The Inner Reality of Worship	07
The Centrality of the Heart	08
The Good Life = A Life of Luxury?	10
The Good Life = A Life With Allah	11
How Can We Attain the Good Life?	13
The Eternal Good Life	16
Tasting the Sweetness of Iman	18
Iman in Times of Trials	19
Why Do People Leave Islam?	20
What Is the Sweetness of Iman?	23
Sins: A Barrier to Tasting the Sweetness of Iman	24
How to Taste the Sweetness of Iman	25
What Does Tasting the Sweetness of Iman Lead to?	28

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ اُنْثِي وَهُوَ
مُؤْمِنٌ فَإِنَّهُمْ حَيُّونَ طَيْبَةً وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ
أَجْرَهُمْ بِمَا حَسِنُوا يَعْمَلُونَ.

“Whoever does good, whether male or female, and is a believer, We will surely bless them with a good life, and We will certainly reward them according to the best of their deeds” (16:97).





The Good Life: Life With Allah

We all seek happiness. How we define it and how we pursue it, however, differs. For some, happiness lies in wealth and material abundance; for others, in fame and recognition. Some find it in sensual pleasure and gratification, while others in breakthroughs within their fields of expertise.

Yet amidst today's unbounded pleasures and excesses, more of us than ever remain unfulfilled. No matter how much we buy or consume, or how much validation we receive, a void still lingers within us: an '**emptiness**' we cannot remove. That reassuring satisfaction and contentment we hope will come, actually never does.

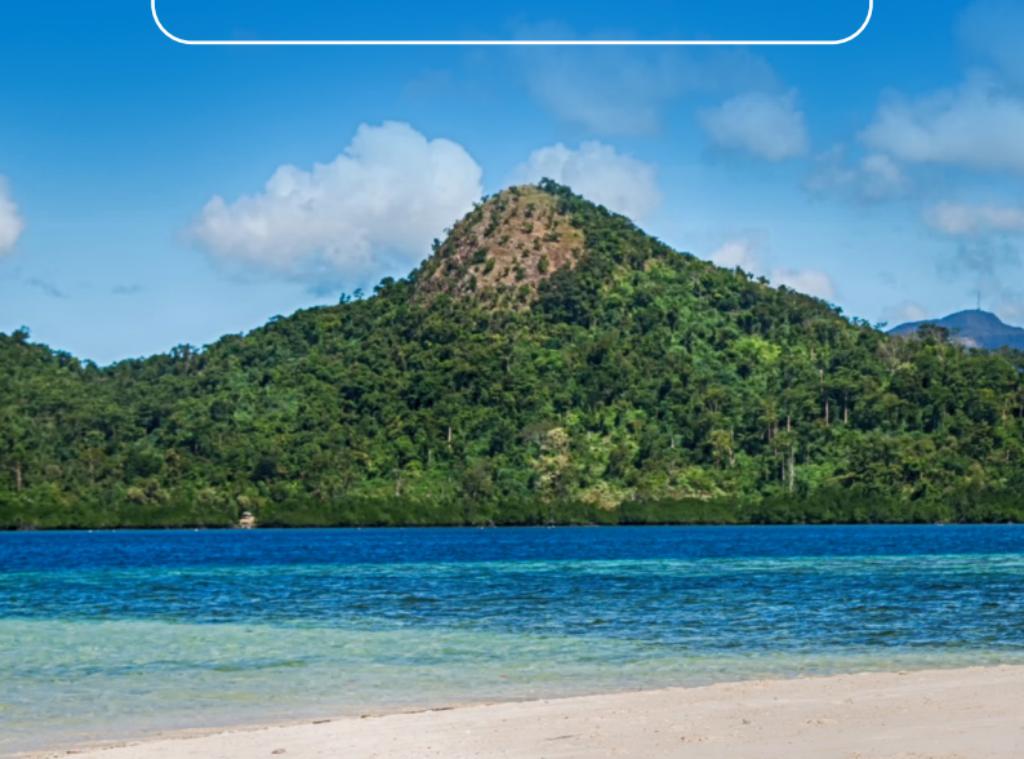
This is because we have suppressed and ignored our **inborn instinct** to know and worship our Maker. It is this instinct that is the human's path to happiness. Allah says, "But whoever turns away from My Reminder will certainly have a **miserable life**, then We will raise them up blind on the Day of Judgment" (20:124).

Knowing Allah ﷺ and, as a natural outcome, upholding our obligations to Him, is the true antidote to today's emptiness and despair.

“Truly in the heart there is a certain **loneliness** that cannot be removed except by spending time with Him in solitude. In it there is a sadness that cannot be removed except through the **happiness of knowing Him** and being true to Him...

In it there is a void that cannot be filled except through **loving Him, turning to Him** constantly, always remembering Him, and being sincere to Him. Were a person to be given the entire world and everything in it, **it would never fill this void.**”

– Ibn al-Qayyim ﷺ



The Good Life

Allah ﷺ says in the Qur'an:

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ اُنْثِي وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيهِ حَيَاةً طَيِّبَةً
وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ بِاَحْسَنِ مَا كَلُّوْنَا يَعْمَلُونَ.

“Whoever does good, whether male or female, and is a believer, We will surely bless them with a good life, and We will certainly reward them according to the best of their deeds” (16:97).

This ayah tells us that to live a good life, we need to be people of:

- ➊ firm belief in Allah (īmān) and
- ➋ righteous deeds ('amal šāliḥ)

What then is the 'good life'? The 'good life' is the 'paradise of this world'. It is a life in which a believer attains a deep sense of **contentment**, happiness and inner bliss through his worship, closeness and intimate conversation with his Creator.

Abū Bakr al-Warrāq ﷺ defined 'the good life' as "**the sweetness of obedience.**"

What does it mean to '**taste the sweetness of obedience**' or to taste the '**sweetness of īmān**' (as mentioned by our beloved Prophet ﷺ)? Just as we enjoy the sweetness and incredible flavours of delicious foods with our mouths, īmān and worship also consist of a sweetness and special flavour which can be 'tasted' by our hearts. Thus, the '**good life**' is the **good life of the heart**, and this is the real life.

In this world, the reward for īmān and righteous deeds is a good life. In the hereafter, however, there is even more, as we read in the āyah above: “We will certainly reward them according to the best of their deeds”. Imām al-Ghazālī ﷺ said, “If the only reward of the person obeying Allah was the **sweetness of the obedience**, and feeling comfort in privately conversing with Him — it would be enough! Then how about the additional bliss of the hereafter?!”

Ibn al-Qayyim ﷺ explains the ‘good life’ as “The **life of the heart**, its joy, delight, and serenity through īmān, knowledge of Allah, **love** for Him, **turning** to Him in repentance, and **reliance** upon Him. There is no life more blessed than the life of such a person, and no bliss greater than his, except for the bliss of Paradise itself... This ‘good life’ exists in all **three abodes**: the abode of this world, the abode of the **barzakh**, and the abode of **permanence** (i.e. the hereafter)...

...And just as Allah ﷺ has made the life of the body dependent on food and drink, the **life of the heart** depends on constant remembrance, repeatedly turning back to Him, abandoning sins, and avoiding the heedlessness that weighs upon the heart. Clinging to base desires and fleeting passions **weakens** this life, and the weakness continues to increase until the heart dies.”

Why Do We Not Experience the Sweetness of Iman and Worship?

Many of us exert ourselves in acts of worship, and yet do not experience this sweetness and happiness. One of the primary reasons is that we focus solely on the **outer physical actions**, and we do not give sufficient attention to the **core of the worship: the inner state of the heart** which accompanies it. Ibn al-Qayyim ﷺ writes, “You may find a person who fasts, prays, does dhikr and recites Qur’ān abundantly, but nothing from his actions reach his heart: **no fear, no hope, no love, no conviction** in Allah and no happiness with Him.”

Thus, to attain a good life, we have to combine the external acts of obedience with the internal states of the heart, also called ‘**the actions of the heart**’.

The actions of the heart include: firm belief (**īmān**), knowledge of Allah (**ma’rifah**), sincerity (**ikhlāṣ**), piety and mindfulness (**taqwā**), repentance (**tawbah**), trust in Allah (**tawakkul**), hope (**rajā’**), fear (**khawf**), gratitude (**shukr**), patience (**ṣabr**), love (**ḥubb**), yearning for Allah (**shawq**) and certainty (**yaqīn**).

Ibn Taymiyyah ﷺ said, “If you don’t find sweetness and joy in the deed you perform, then **doubt its sincerity**, for Allah ﷺ is Shakūr (Most Appreciative and Rewarding).” This means that Allah will reward His servant for his deeds in this world by granting him **sweetness and tranquillity** in his heart. But if he finds that his heart lacks delight and joy, then his deed is imperfect and defective.

The Inner Reality of Worship

In a world that measures success by numbers, Islam shifts our focus to **quality**. Allah ﷺ says: “He is the One who created death and life in order to test which of you is **best in deeds...**” (67:2).

Notice how the āyah mentions “best in deeds” and not “most in deeds”. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Indeed Allah loves that when one of you does something, he **perfects it**” (Tabarānī).

Every act of worship in Islam consists of both an **outer manifestation** ('action of the limb') and an **inner reality** ('action of the heart'), which is its essence and core.

The outer manifestation of **salāh** consists of rukū' and sujūd, whilst its essence is **khushū'**.

The outer manifestation of **fasting** is to stay away from food and drink, whilst its essence is **taqwā**.

The outer manifestation of **hajj** consists of ṭawāf, standing in 'Arafah and the pelting, whilst its essence is to **honour** the symbols of Allah ﷺ.

The outer manifestation of **du'ā** is to raise the hands and utter words, whilst its essence is **humility** and an utmost need for Allah ﷺ.

The outer manifestation of **dhikr** is to utter Subḥānallāh, Alḥamdu lillāh, and Allāhu Akbar, whilst its essence is **loving**, fearing and having hope in Allah ﷺ, and **contemplation** upon His creation and blessings.

The Centrality of the Heart

A person's superiority to another is determined by the **actions of his heart**. Allah said, "The noblest amongst you in Allah's sight is the one with the **most taqwā**" (49:13).

'Abdullāh b. Mas'ūd ﷺ described the Companions ﷺ as the best of this ummah with the '**most virtuous hearts.**' Bakr al-Muzanī ﷺ said, "Abū Bakr ﷺ did not surpass others because of an abundance of fasting and ṣalāh. Rather, he surpassed them because of something that **settled in his heart.**"

Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ said to the generation after him: "You fast and pray more than the Companions of Muḥammad ﷺ, yet they were better than you." They asked: "Why is that?" He replied: "**They were less attached to the world and more eager for the Hereafter than you.**"

Fāṭimah b. 'Abd al-Malik was asked about the worship of her legendary husband, the Caliph '**Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz** after his death. She replied, "By Allah, he was not the one who prayed or fasted the most amongst the people. But, by Allah, I have not seen anyone more **fearful of Allah than him**. He would remember Allah in his bed and would twitch like a sparrow out of fear, until we would say that in the morning, the people will no longer have a caliph (i.e. he would die by morning)."

Ibn Taymiyyah ﷺ said, "Actions surpass each other in proportion to the **īmān and ikhlāṣ** (sincerity) **of the hearts.** There may be two men in the same row of prayer, yet the difference between their prayers is like the distance between the heavens and the earth."

“The best of people are those who follow the path of the Prophet ﷺ and his closest Companions: moderation in physical acts of worship and **striving hard in matters of the heart**.

For the journey to the hereafter is traversed by the **heart**, not the body.”

– Ibn Rajab 



The Good Life = A Life of Luxury?

We may think that the ‘good life’ is a life devoid of any difficulties; a comfortable, luxurious life. On the contrary, those who enjoy the ‘good life’ may experience some of the worst worldly difficulties. However, despite the difficulties and severe illnesses they may suffer, their hearts are at peace. Their hearts are **content** with Allah’s decree. They may have very little material wealth, but **their hearts are brimming with īmān and the love of Allah**. Our beloved Prophet ﷺ is the person who best personified this. He ﷺ owned very little of the world: he would sleep on a simple mat which would leave marks on his blessed back, but despite this, he lived the best life.

Ibn al-Qayyim ﷺ explains that the ‘good life’ in the above āyah does not refer to a life of fine clothing, food, drink and spouses, as Allah ﷺ may bestow this in far greater quantities to His enemies. But rather the **‘good life’ is the life of the believer who occupies himself with one goal: pleasing his Beloved** ﷺ. Instead of feeling confused and torn in many directions of life, the believer who enjoys the ‘good life’ has one focus. Everything he does and seeks is to attain the love and closeness of his Beloved.

When he speaks, he speaks for Him. When he is silent, he is silent for Him. When he moves, he moves for Him. When he is still, he is still for Him.

His focus is Allah. He lives for Allah. He dies for Allah.

قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ
لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ وَبِذِلِّكَ أُمِرْتُ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

“Say, ‘My prayers and sacrifice, my life and death, are all for Allah, Lord of all the Worlds. He has no partner. This is what I am commanded, and I shall be the first of those who submit to Him.’” (6:162-3)

The Good Life = A Life With Allah

A life with Allah begins with **sincere repentance** (tawbah), and revelling in the joy of reuniting with one’s Creator after having been away.

It is a life in which one relishes the **sweetness of ḥalāh**, as our beloved Prophet ﷺ said, “My utmost joy has been put in ḥalāh” (Nasā’ī). It is a life in which there is nothing more delightful and soothing to the heart than **conversing** and crying to one’s Lord in the stillness of the night, alone.

It is a life in which one feels the joy of hunger when **fasting**, and gives up his base desires — which he loves — for his Beloved, who he loves much more.

It is a life in which one makes the **Qur’ān his best friend**, and finds immense peace in its recitation as, “There is nothing sweeter to the lover than the words of his beloved, for it is the joy of their hearts and their utmost desire” (Ibn Rajab رحمه الله).

It is a life in which one **happily serves** his family, neighbours and the creation of Allah selflessly. It is life in which one **overcomes his ego** and **emulates the sublime character (akhlāq) of Allah's beloved, Muḥammad** ﷺ.

It is a life in which one feels greater joy in helping others and giving charity than the recipients of the charity themselves. It is a life in which one is ready to sacrifice his own life, and cry out “By the Lord of the Kabah! I have won!” (Bukhārī).

A life with Allah is a life in which the **love of Allah supersedes everything else**. It is a life of utmost dedication to Him, in which he loves to spend time worshipping Him, and his greatest desire is to meet Him and see Him in Paradise.

“

“By Allah, the world is only sweet with **His remembrance**; the Next Life is only sweet with **His forgiveness**; and Paradise is only sweet with seeing **His Noble Face**.”

– Dhū al-Nūn ﷺ

”



How Can We Attain the Good Life?

- 1 Knowledge.** We should continuously learn about Allah ﷺ through His Names, His Words, His creation and by worshipping Him. We should learn about His beloved ﷺ who practically demonstrated to us how to live a ‘good life’, and we should learn about the ‘actions’ and the ‘diseases’ of the heart. One of the predecessors said, “How unfortunate are the people of the world who left the world without having experienced its greatest delight!” When he was asked, “What is its greatest delight?”, he replied, “Knowing Allah, loving Him, finding comfort in His closeness, and longing to meet Him.”
- 2 Battling the inner self (nafs).** In our journey to Allah, the initial stages will feel very difficult at times. We have to persevere and keep going, until our hearts become attached to Allah. Once our hearts are attached to Allah, the acts of worship will no longer feel difficult and we will begin to enjoy them. Abū Zayd ﷺ said, “I forced my nafs (inner self) to go to Allah whilst it was crying, until I was able to take it to Him whilst it was laughing.”
- 3 By performing all the obligatory deeds and additional voluntary deeds.** In a ḥadīth qudsī, Allah states, “And no servant draws near to Me with anything more beloved to Me than that which I have made obligatory upon him. My servant continues to draw near to me with voluntary worship until I love Him, and when I love him, I become his hearing that he hears with, his sight that he sees with, his hand by which he grasps, and his feet by which he walks....” (Bukhārī).

Ibn Rajab  explains that “Such a person is elevated from the level of *īmān* to the level of *iḥsān*, so that he worships Allah as if he sees Him. His heart becomes filled with knowledge (*ma’rifah*) of Allah, His love, greatness, fear, awe, reverence, closeness, and longing for Him, until the person ‘sees’ Allah with the eye of insight...

This state within the hearts of the devoted lovers of Allah continues to grow stronger until their hearts become completely filled with it. Nothing remains in their hearts besides Him, and their limbs move only in accordance with what their hearts contain. When a servant reaches this state, it is said of him: ‘Nothing remains in his heart except Allah,’ i.e. His knowledge, love, and remembrance.”

- 4 Spending time in isolation with Allah.** This includes reciting the *Qur’ān* with reflection (*tadabbur*), *dhikr* with reflection (*tafakkur*), talking to Him intimately in heartfelt *duā’*; and combining all of the above in *ṣalāh* with humility and full focus (*khushū’*). This has a deep impact on strengthening our connection with Allah and increasing in love for Him. Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī  said, “Indeed the beloved of Allah are those who have inherited the good life and tasted its bliss, due to conversing privately with their Lord and experiencing the sweetness of His love in their hearts.”
- 5 Staying away from sins.** Wuhayb b. Ward  was asked, “Can the sinner taste the sweetness of worship?” He said, “No, not even the one who considers doing the sin.”



“The ‘good life’ is attained through lofty aspirations, true love, and a sincere intention.”

– Ibn al-Qayyim 

The Eternal Good Life

The worldly ‘good life’ is merely a glimpse of the eternal good life of the hereafter, the joy and pleasure of which is unimaginable. A saint of Allah said, “There are times when I say: if the people of Paradise have anything like this, then how blissful must their lives be!”

Another stated, “There are times when the heart bursts in joy (out of the love for Allah).”

After quoting the above, Ibn al-Qayyim ﷺ writes, “Glorified is the One who lets His slaves witness His Paradise well before they meet Him, who opens its doors to them in this world of deeds; and who gives them some of its joy, its breeze and its perfume, so that **they may seek it and hasten towards it with all their strength.**”

“

“There is an ‘early paradise’ in the world. It is to **know Allah, to love Him**, find comfort in Him, **long to meet Him**, fear Him and obey Him. Beneficial knowledge leads one to attain this. Whoever’s knowledge leads him to enter this ‘early paradise’, will enter Paradise in the next world. And whoever does not sniff the fragrance of the ‘worldly paradise’, will not sniff the fragrance of the Paradise of the hereafter.”

– Ibn Rajab ﷺ

”

Let us have firm belief in Allah (īmān) and do righteous deeds (‘amal ḥāliḥ) so that we become from, “Those whose souls the angels take (in death) **while they are good and virtuous**. They will say to

them, ‘Peace be upon you. Enter Paradise for what you used to do’ (16:32).

Let us live a life with Allah, so that in our final moments, the angels will come to us and say, “Come out, **O good soul** that was in a good body! Come out praiseworthy, and receive the good news of serenity, bliss, and a Lord who is pleased and not angry” (Ibn Majah).

Let us live a life with Allah, so that on the Day of Judgement, we will be led to Paradise. With its gates already open, we pray that the angels will welcome us saying,

سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ طَبِّعْتُمْ فَادْخُلُوهَا خَلِدِينَ

“Peace be upon you. You have been good so come in, to stay forever.”

May Allah – the Lord of Majesty and Honour – make us of those who relish and delight in His worship in this world, and of those who will be fortunate to gaze at His Magnificent Face in the Eternal Abode of Bliss.



Tasting the Sweetness of Iman

īmān is to firmly believe in Allah, His Angels, His Books, His Messengers, the Last Day and al-Qadr (divine decree) — also known as the pillars of īmān.

The essence of īmān is to firmly believe in لَّا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ: there is no god worthy of worship except Allah. Lā ilāha illā-Allāh is the **greatest statement ever uttered**, the foundation of faith and the **cornerstone of existence itself**. Allah created the heavens, the earth and everything in between them for this fundamental truth: that He Alone is worshipped, loved and obeyed. He sent Messengers and revealed Books for this very reason: **so that He Alone is worshipped**. For the same reason, the Day of Judgement will be established; creation will be gathered and questioned, and then taken either into Paradise or Hell.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “īmān has more than **sixty or seventy branches**. The best of (these) is to declare there is no god worthy of worship but Allah; and the least of which is to remove something harmful from the path, and modesty is a branch of īmān” (Muslim).

Ibn Abī al-‘Izz al-Ḥanafī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى عَنْهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَعْلَمُ writes, “The Prophet ﷺ informed us that īmān has multiple components. **And every component is classified as īmān**. So ṣalāh is part of īmān. So too are zakāh, fasting and ḥajj; interior actions like modesty, trusting in Allah, being in awe of Allah, turning to Allah in repentance (are also from īmān), to the extent that even removing something harmful from the pathway is from īmān.”

Iman in Times of Trials

The Prophet ﷺ said, “Indeed īmān wears out in the heart just as clothes wear out — so renew your īmān” (Tabarānī).

Īmān is like a tree. If it isn’t tended to, it will wither and die. It must be constantly watered with **beneficial knowledge, righteous deeds** and the **remembrance of Allah**. Likewise, for it to grow into a strong, healthy tree, it must be protected from pests and weeds. In other words, we must protect our hearts from sins, desires and doubts if we want our īmān to be strong.

We cannot take our īmān for granted, especially in this era of trials (fitan). The Prophet ﷺ said, “Hasten to good deeds before being overtaken by trials that are like parts of the dark night. A man would be a believer in the morning and become a disbeliever in the evening, or he would be a believer in the evening and become a disbeliever in the morning. **He sells his religion for a worldly gain**” (Muslim).

Although this era of temptation is a tough test, the reward for staying firm is immense. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Indeed, ahead of you are days of perseverance (ṣabr), in which perseverance will be like **grasping a hot coal**. The one who does good deeds in these days will have the **reward of fifty men** whose actions are like yours” (Tirmidhī).

“

“Īmān in times of trials and doubts is from the greatest blessings” – Ibn Taymiyyah رحمه الله

”

Why Do People Leave Islam?

With the onslaught of deadly trials such as atheism, secularism, liberalism and materialism, we are witnessing an increase in people leaving the dīn of Allah. Many in the Ummah are confused and lack clear direction and purpose in their lives.

The key reason for this is that, **unfortunately, the essence of īmān never entered their hearts to begin with.**

Before embracing Islam, during one of his business trips to Syria, Abū Sufyān رض was requested in the court of Heraclius, the Emperor of the Byzantine Empire. Eager to know about the new Prophet, Heraclius asked Abu Sufyān many questions. Among them was: “Does anybody amongst those who embrace his religion become displeased and renounce the religion afterwards?” When Abū Sufyān replied in the negative, Heraclius made a pertinent observation: **“This is (the sign of true) īmān, when its delight enters and merges fully in the hearts”** (Bukhārī).

In other words, once īmān fully merges into the heart and flesh of a believer, he will never give it up for anything. īmān has a sweetness: once you taste it, you will never be pleased with a substitute. Once you taste the **sweetness**, you will never want to let go of it, and you will feel very protective over it. But the heart that has never tasted the sweetness of īmān will never even realise what it is missing. And when it loses īmān, it will never realise what it has truly lost.

A lack of knowledge about the inner dimensions of worship, and an insufficient appreciation for the beauty of Islam, prevents us from

tasting the sweetness of īmān.

Too often, we reduce the practice of the dīn to outward acts of worship, overlooking their deeper significance.

One may pray, fast, or perform any external act of devotion, yet if it is treated merely as a ritual or cultural custom, it becomes hollow and devoid of its true essence: a deep connection with the Lord of the worlds.

Allah ﷺ says,

قَالَتِ الْأَعْرَابُ أَمَّا قُلْ لَمْ تُؤْمِنُوا وَلَكِنْ قُوْلُوا أَسْلَمْنَا
وَلَمَّا يَدْخُلِ الْإِيمَنُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ...

“The desert Arabs say, ‘We have believed.’ [Prophet], tell them, ‘You have not believed. What you should say instead is, ‘We have submitted,’ for **īmān has not yet entered your hearts...**”(49:14).

In other words, these Bedouins were Muslims, but not Mu’mīnūn (believers), as īmān had not fully entered and merged into their hearts. They were not disbelievers, but **they were yet to taste the reality of īmān**. Ibn al-Qayyim ﷺ says, “Indeed īmān has a joy and sweetness in the heart. Whoever does not experience it either lacks or is deficient in his īmān.”

In the next āyah, Allah ﷺ describes the **true believers**. He says, “The true believers are those who believe in Allah and His Messenger — never doubting — and strive with their wealth and

their lives in the cause of Allah. **They are the ones true in faith”** (49:15).

The true believers are those who have tasted the essence and sweetness of īmān. They are the ones who believe in Allah and His Messenger, and do not experience any doubts. This is because the **delight of īmān has fully entered their hearts**, leading them to give up what they love the most (i.e. their wealth and their own lives) for the sake of Allah. Only those who have tasted the true essence and delight of īmān are able to **sacrifice** in this manner.

Conversely, when īmān is not firm in the heart, the heart will gradually collapse when faced with trials and temptations. It becomes very easy for doubts to creep in and, if left unchecked, can lead one to eventually losing one’s īmān. Thus, **a strong protection against doubts is to nurture the heart to taste the sweetness of īmān**. Ibn al-Qayyim ﷺ writes, “Doubts will not be removed from the heart until the servant arrives at this state [of tasting the sweetness of īmān].”

Īmān is the core. Without it, everything collapses. It is the first thing we must learn and it is the first thing should nurture in our youth. Jundub b. ‘Abdillāh ﷺ said, “We were with the Prophet ﷺ and we were young men, nearing puberty. **We learnt īmān before we learnt Qur’ān**. Then we learnt Qur’ān, and increased our īmān through it” (Ibn Mājah). We must strengthen īmān in our hearts. We must attach our hearts to Allah, so that we always turn to Him, be in awe of Him, have hope in Him, put our trust in Him, and love Him like no other.

What Is the Sweetness of Iman?

One of Allah's greatest blessings upon the servant is that He makes īmān beloved to him, adorns his heart with the beauty of īmān and makes him taste its sweetness.

The sweetness of īmān refers to the **joy one feels in doing good deeds** and in enduring hardships for Allah's sake. Such a person worships and bears difficulties, forsaking worldly pleasures in pursuit of eternal bliss. It is a contentment experienced only by those who worship Allah sincerely.

Ibn Rajab رَحْمَةَ اللَّهِ مُتَّسِعٌ writes, “**īmān has a flavour and a sweetness which is tasted by the heart** just as the sweetness of food and drink is tasted by the mouth; for indeed, īmān is the sustenance of the hearts, just as food and drink are the sustenance of the body.”

There is nothing like tasting the sweetness of īmān. You can read about it extensively, but you will not truly understand it until you experience it.

“

“The one who is sincere for Allah will taste the sweetness of servitude to Allah, to the extent that it will prevent him from servitude to anyone else. This is because **there is nothing sweeter nor more joyful or blissful than the sweetness of īmān**, which consists of servitude to Allah, loving Him and being sincere in the religion for Him. This requires the heart to journey to Allah: to turn to Him in constant repentance, to love Him and to be in constant awe of Him.” – Ibn Taymiyyah رَحْمَةَ اللَّهِ مُتَّسِعٌ

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Sins: A Barrier to Tasting the Sweetness of Iman

Sins deprive us of tasting the sweetness of īmān and worship. The more sweetness and joy we find in sinning, the less sweetness and joy we find in worshipping Allah.

When we are sick, we do not enjoy the taste of food. Sometimes, we cannot even taste the flavour. If we are feeling nauseous, even the most expensive meal would not entice us to eat. Likewise, if our hearts are **sick and diseased** due to committing sins and following desires, we cannot enjoy the ‘sweetness of īmān’.

We must **purify our hearts from its diseases**, including pride (kibr), envy (ḥasad), greed (shuhūh), heedlessness (ghaflah) and hypocrisy (nifāq).

Mālik b. Dīnār ﷺ said, “If it pleases you to find the sweetness of worship and reach its peak, then place **a wall of iron between you and the desires of the world.**”



How to Taste the Sweetness of Iman?

The sweetness of īmān is attained through worshipping Allah holistically by combining the outer acts of worship with their essence: the **inner states of the heart**. There is a sweetness in every branch of īmān. There is sweetness in trusting in Allah, hoping in Allah, being in awe of Him; in performing ṣalāh, in reciting the Qur’ān, in making du‘ā’ and so forth.

The Prophet ﷺ specified the following means to taste the sweetness of īmān:

- 1 Love Allah and His Messenger ﷺ more than anyone else.
- 2 Love a person for the sake of Allah.
- 3 Have such **yaqīn (conviction)** in Allah that you would rather be burned than turn to disbelief.

The Prophet ﷺ said, “There are three [qualities] which, if they are found in anyone, shall cause him to **experience the sweetness of īmān**: that Allah and His Messenger are more beloved to him than everything else; that he loves a person only for Allah’s sake; and that he hates to return to disbelief after Allah had saved him, just as he would hate being thrown into the fire” (Bukhārī).

The above three qualities are the loftiest qualities of īmān. They have been singled out as they **combine the main principles of īmān**. It is not possible to attain these unless īmān is deeply rooted in the heart.

4 Purify your soul

The Prophet ﷺ said, “Whoever does three things will experience the taste of īmān: … a servant who purifies himself. A man asked, ‘O Messenger of Allah! What does it mean for a person to purify himself?’ He replied, ‘**He knows that Allah is with him wherever he may be**’ (Bayhaqī).

Thus, to taste the sweetness of īmān, we must purify our hearts from its diseases. Ibn Rajab (rahimahullāh) said, “Occupying yourself with purifying your heart is better than an abundance of prayer and fasting whilst your heart is corrupt.”

5 Give zakāh wholeheartedly

The Prophet ﷺ said, “Whoever does three things will experience the taste of īmān: whoever worships Allah Alone and that there is no god worthy of worship but Allah, and he gives the zakāh due on his wealth every year, **with his soul happy and helping him** (to give zakāh)...” (Abū Dāwūd).

When a person gives zakāh happily, and does not feel like he is burdened or forced to do so, this quality leads him to tasting the sweetness of īmān.

6 Have firm belief in al-Qadr (Divine Decree)

The Prophet ﷺ said, “Everything has a reality, and the servant **will not reach the reality of īmān** until he knows that what afflicted him could never have missed him, and what missed him could never have afflicted him” (Ahmad).

7 Be pleased with Allah as your Lord, Islam as your dīn, and Muhammad ﷺ as your Prophet

The Prophet ﷺ said, “He who is **pleased** with Allah as his Lord, with Islam as his religion and with Muhammad ﷺ as his Prophet — has tasted the flavour of īmān” (Muslim).

When you are happy with Allah as your Rabb, you are content with Him, and you do not seek other than Him. Rabb is the One who manages your affairs; thus, you are happy with how He manages your life. You are happy with what He decrees for you, including the tests you are afflicted with, and you are happy with what He has legislated. Such contentment mirrors being happy with Islam as your dīn, the perfect way of life Allah has ordained.



What Does Tasting the Sweetness of Iman Lead to?

Experiencing the sweetness of īmān and acts of worship is a **game changer**. Once you have experienced it, your life will change and you will forever crave its pleasure. You will realise that no other blessing can compare. Ibrāhīm b. Adham ﷺ said, “If the kings and the princes knew what we experience of spiritual bliss and happiness, they would fight us for it with their swords.”

The sweetness of īmān overpowers the bitterness of worldly difficulties. Similarly, once the heart experiences the sweetness of īmān, it detests sins and disbelief. Allah ﷺ says, “But Allah has endeared īmān to you, and made it **beautiful in your hearts**. And He has made disbelief, sins, and **disobedience detestable to you**. Those are the ones rightly guided” (49:7). The world is no longer the goal. The eyes are focused on the hereafter. Even amidst trials and temptations, the person is not swayed. The sweetness of īmān keeps them firm on the truth.

Let us always ask Allah ﷺ with the words of His Beloved ﷺ:

اللَّهُمَّ زِينْنَا بِزِينَةِ الْإِيمَانِ، وَاجْعَلْنَا هُدَاءً مُهْتَدِينَ

O Allah, adorn us with the beauty of īmān and make us those who guide others and are guided themselves.

We ask Allah al-Mu'min, the Giver of īmān and safety, to grant us the sweetness of īmān in this world and the sweetness of His company in Paradise.

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