

## The Grave

Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that Allah's Messenger (May the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said, "When the slave of Allah is placed in his grave and his companions retrace their steps, he hears the noise of the footsteps." He said, "then two angels come to him and make him sit and say to him: 'What did you used to say about this person (the Prophet?'" He said, "As for the faithful believer, he would say: 'I bear testimony to the fact that he is a slave and Messenger of Allah'". He said, "Then it would be said to him: 'Look to your seat in the Hell-Fire, for Allah has substituted it with a seat in Paradise.'" Allah's Messenger (May the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said, "He would be shown both seats. As for the hypocrite or a non-believer, he would reply, 'I do not know; but I used to say what the people used to say.' So it would be said to him, 'Neither did you know, nor did you follow (i.e. the true path).' Then he will be hit with iron hammers once between his ears, and he will cry a loud cry that everything near him – other than humans and jinn- can hear." [Transmitted by Al-Bukhari and Muslim: 1338, 2870].

The return of the soul to the body in the grave is from the affairs of the Hereafter, which the human intellect cannot comprehend in this world. However, Muslims have unanimously agreed that a person enjoys bliss in his grave if he were a faithful believer deserving bliss; and that a person will be punished in the grave if he deserves punishment – if Allah does not forgive him. Allah the Most High said,

﴿ النَّارُ يُعْرَضُونَ عَلَيْهَا غُدُوًّا وَعَشِيًّا وَيَوْمَ تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ أَدْخِلُوا آلَ فِرْعَوْنَ أَشَدَّ الْعَذَابِ ﴾ [Ghafir: 46]

"The Fire; they are exposed to it morning and evening; and on the day when the Hour will be established (it is said): 'Cause Pharaoh's folk to enter the most severe punishment.'" [Ghafir: 46]

The Messenger of Allah (May the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said, "Seek refuge with Allah from the punishment of the grave." [Transmitted by Muslim: 2867]

Sound reason does not deny this, because one sees in this world some events that bring this reality closer. One who is having a nightmare may feel as if he is being severely punished, and so he shouts and screams seeking aid, while the next person lying close to him does not realize what he feels, despite the great difference between life and death. Both the body and the soul suffer punishment in the grave. Allah's Messenger has said, "Indeed the grave is the first stage among the stages of the Hereafter. So, if one is saved from it, then what comes after it is easier than it. And if one is not saved from it, then what comes after it is worse." [Transmitted by At-Tirmidhi: 2230]

Hence, a Muslim should frequently seek refuge with Allah from the punishment of the grave, especially before making *tasleem* in prayer (i.e. before concluding the prayer). He should strive to abstain from acts of disobedience to Allah, which are the reasons for deserving punishment in the grave. It has been called the punishment of the grave because most people are buried in graves. However those who drown, burn to death, or are eaten by wild animals, and the like, will all either be punished or granted bliss in the *Barzakh* (the barrier between this world and the Hereafter).

Punishment of the grave varies. It may include: being struck with an iron hammer; the grave may be filled with darkness, or furnished with carpets from Hellfire, or have its gates opened to him; his evil deeds may be shown to him in the form of an ugly man with a foul smell, sitting with him inside the grave. The punishment will be continuous in the case of the disbeliever and hypocrite. As for the sinful Muslim, then the punishment will endure according to his sins, and it may come to an end.

In regards to the faithful believer, he will enjoy bliss in the grave whereby it would be widened for him, filled with light, and a gate will be opened to Paradise from where its good smell and fragrance will come to him. The grave will be furnished from Paradise, and his good deeds will be displayed to him in the form of a handsome man who will give him company in the grave.