

## Sura 3, al-Imran [family of Imran], Medina 89

### The Quranic Text & Ali's translation:

فُلْ أَوْ نَبِّئُكُمْ بِخَيْرٍ مِّنْ ذَلِكَم ... up

15. Say: shall I give you glad tidings of things far better than those?

...لِّلَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ جَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا...

For the righteous are gardens in nearness to their Lord, with rivers flowing beneath; therein is their eternal home;

...وَأَزْوَاجٌ مُّطَهَّرَةٌ وَرِضْوَانٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ...

with companions pure (and holy), and the good pleasure of God.

[ Ali's comment; 355. Cf. 2:25 and n. 44.]

...وَاللَّهُ بِصِيرٍ بِالْعِبَادِ (١٥) For in God's sight are (all) His servants.

الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا إِنَّا أَمَّا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ (١٦) up

3:16. (Namely), those who say:

"Our Lord! we have indeed believed: forgive us, then, our sins, and save us from the agony of the fire."

الصَّابِرِينَ ... up

3: 17. Those who show patience, firmness and self-control;

... وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالْقَانِتِينَ وَالْمُنْفِقِينَ وَالْمُسْتَغْفِرِينَ بِالْأَسْحَارِ (١٧)

who are true (in word and deed);

who worship devoutly;

who spend (in the way of God);

and who pray for forgiveness in the early hours of the morning.

### Asad's translation:

3:15

Say: "Shall I tell you of better things than those [earthly joys]? For the God-conscious there are, with their Sustainer, gardens through which running waters flow, therein to abide, and spouses pure, and God's goodly acceptance." And God sees all that is in [the hearts of] His servants –

(3:16) **those who say, "O our Sustainer! Behold, we believe [in Thee]; forgive us,** then, our sins, and keep us safe from suffering through the fire" - :

(3: 17) **those who are patient in adversity, and true to their word, and truly devout, and who spend [in God's way], and pray for forgiveness from their innermost hearts. 10**

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### **Ali's comments:**

**356.** Sabr (Sabirin) includes many shades of meaning: I have specified three here, viz., patience, firmness, and self-control. See 2:45 and 2:153 and notes 61 and 157.

**357.** True servants of Allah are described in 3:16 and 17. They have faith, humility, and hope (3:16); and they have certain virtues (3:17) viz.,

1. patience, steadfastness, self-restraint, and all that goes under the full definition of Sabr;  
this shows a certain attitude of mind:
2. in all their dealings they are true and sincere as they are also in their promises and words;  
this marks them out in social conduct:
3. further, their spiritual worship is earnest and deep, an inner counterpart of their outward conduct;
4. their worship of Allah shows itself in their love of their fellow-men, for they are ready and liberal in charity: and
5. their self-discipline is so great that the first thing they do every morning is humbly to approach their God.

**502.** The full meaning of **Sabr** is to be understood here, viz.: Patience, perseverance, constancy, self-restraint, refusing to be cowed down. These virtues we are to exercise for ourselves and in relation to others; we are to set an example, so that others may vie with us, and we are to vie with them, lest we fall short; in this way we strengthen each other and bind our mutual relations closer, in our common service to Allah.

**503.** Prosperity (**falah**) here and in other passages is to be understood in a wide sense, including prosperity in our mundane affairs as well as in spiritual progress. In both cases it implies happiness and the attainment of our wishes, purified by the love of Allah.

### **Asad's comments:**

10 The expression bi'l-ashar is usually taken to mean "at the times before daybreak", or simply "before daybreak". This is in agreement with the Prophet's recommendation to his followers (forthcoming from several authentic Traditions) to devote the latter part of the night, and particularly the time shortly before dawn, to intensive prayer.

But while the word sahar (also spelled sahr and suhr), of which ashar is the plural, undoubtedly denotes **"the time**

before daybreak", it also signifies - in the spellings sahar and suhr - "the core of the heart", "the inner part of the heart", or simply "heart" (cf Lisan al-'Arab; also Lane IV, 1316). It seems to me that in the context of the above Qur'an-verse - **as well as of 51 :18** - **this latter rendering is preferable to the conventional one**: for, although the value of praying before daybreak has undoubtedly been stressed by the Prophet, **it is not very plausible that the Qur'an should have tied the prayer for forgiveness to a particular time of day.**