

## Sura 23, Al-Muminun [The Believers], Mecca 74

### The Quran's Text & Yusuf Ali's Translation:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١﴾

23: 1. The Believers must (eventually) win through –

الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ ﴿٢﴾

23: 2. Those who humble themselves in their prayers;

Allatheena hum fee salathihim khashiAAoona

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنِ اللَّغْوِ مُعْرِضُونَ ﴿٣﴾

23: 3. Who avoid vain talk;

Waalatheena hum AAani allaghwi muAAhidoona

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِلزَّكَاةِ فَاعِلُونَ ﴿٤﴾

4. Who are active in deeds of charity;

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأُزْوَاجِهِمْ حَافِظُونَ ﴿٥﴾

5. Who abstain from sex,

إِلَّا عَلَىٰ أَزْوَاجِهِمْ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ...

6. Except with those joined to them in the marriage bond, or (the captives) whom their right hands possess --

...فَإِنَّهُمْ غَيْرُ مَلُومِينَ ﴿٦﴾

for (in their case) they are free from blame,

فَمَنْ ابْتَغَىٰ وَرَاءَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْعَادُونَ ﴿٧﴾

7. But those whose desires exceed those limits are transgressors

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَمَانَاتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رَاعُونَ ﴿٨﴾

8. Those who faithfully observe their trust and their covenants;

[Covenants create obligations, and express and implied trusts and covenants taken together **cover the whole field of obligations.**]

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَى صَلَاتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُونَ ﴿٩﴾

9. And who (strictly) guard their prayers –

أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْوَارِثُونَ ﴿١٠﴾

23: 10. Those will be the heirs,

الَّذِينَ يَرِثُونَ الْفِرْدَوْسَ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿١١﴾

23: 11. Who will inherit Paradise: they will dwell therein (forever).

### **Muhammad Asad's Translation:**

23:1 TRULY, to a happy state shall attain the believers:

(23:2) those who humble themselves in their prayer,

(23:3) and who turn away from all that is frivolous,

(23:4) and who are intent on inner purity;' (23:5) and who are mindful of their chastity, 2

(23:6) [not giving way to their desires] **with any but their spouses - that is, those whom they rightfully possess [through wedlock]** -: 3 for then, behold, they are free of all blame,

(23:7) whereas such as seek to go beyond that [limit] are truly transgressors;

**(23:8) and who are faithful to their trusts and to their pledges,**

(23:9) and who guard their prayers [from all worldly intent].

23:10 It is they, they who shall be the inheritors

(23:11) that will inherit the paradise; [and]  
therein shall they abide.

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### **Ali's Comments:**

#### **2865. Aflaha:**

- win through, - prosper, - succeed,
- achieve their aims or obtain salvation from sorrow and all evil.

This verse connects on with verses 10 and 11 below.  
The success or victory may come in this world, but is certain and lasting in the world to come.

#### **2866. Humility in prayer as regards:**

- their estimate of their own worth in Allah's presence,
- as regards their estimate of their own powers or strength unless they are helped by Allah, and

- as regards the petitions they offer to Allah.

**2867.** The Muslim must guard himself against every kind of sex abuse or sex perversion.

The new psychology associated with the name of Freud traces many of our hidden motives to sex, and it is common knowledge that our refinement or degradation may be measured by the hidden workings of our sex instincts. But even the natural and lawful exercise of sex is restricted to the marriage bond, under which the rights of both parties are duly regulated and maintained.

**2868.** This is further explained and amplified in 4:25. It will be seen there that the status of a captive when raised to freedom by marriage is the same as that of a free woman as regards her rights, but more lenient as regards the punishment to be inflicted if she falls from virtue.

**2869. Trusts** may be express or implied.

- Express trusts are those where property is entrusted or duties are assigned by some one to some other

whom he trusts, to carry out either immediately or in specified contingencies, such as death.

- Implied trusts arise out of power, or position, or opportunity; e.g., a king holds his kingdom on trust from Allah for his subjects.

**The subject of covenants, express and implied, has been discussed in n. 682 to 5:1.**

**2870.** In verse 2 we were directed to the spirit of humility and earnestness in our prayers.

Here we are told how necessary the habit of regular prayer is to our spiritual well-being and development, as it brings us closer to Allah, and thus sums up the light of the seven jewels of our Faith, viz.,:

- humility,
- avoidance of vanity,
- charity,
- sex purity,
- fidelity to trusts,
- and to covenants,
- and an earnest desire to get closer to Allah.

**2871.** Cf. 21:105, where it is said that the righteous will inherit the earth.

In the first verse of this Surah, the final success or victory is referred to.

Truth will prevail even on this earth, but it may not be for any individual men of righteousness to see it: it may be in the time of their heirs and successors.

But in the life to come, there is no doubt that every man will see the fruit of his life here, and the righteous will inherit heaven. in the sense that they will attain it after their death here.

**682.** This line has been justly admired for its terseness and comprehensiveness.

**Obligations:** 'uqud' the Arabic word implies so many things that a whole chapter of Commentary can be written on it.

**First, there are the divine obligations that arise from our spiritual nature and our relation to Allah.**

- He created us and implanted in us the faculty of knowledge and foresight: besides the intuition and reason which He gave us.



He made Nature responsive to our needs, and His Signs in Nature are so many lessons to us in our own inner life;

- He further sent Messengers and Teachers, for the guidance of our conduct in individual, social, and public life.

All these gifts create corresponding obligations which we must fulfil.

But in our own human and material life we undertake mutual obligations express and implied.

- We make a promise:

- we enter into a commercial or social contract;

- we enter into a contract of marriage:

- we must faithfully fulfil all obligations in all these relationships.

Our group or our State enters into a treaty; every individual in that group or State is bound to see that as far as lies in his power, such obligations are faithfully discharged.

There are tacit obligations;

- living in civil society, we must respect its tacit conventions unless they are morally wrong, and in that case we must get out of such society.

- There are tacit obligations in the characters of host and guest, wayfarer of companion, employer or employed, etc., which every man of Faith must discharge conscientiously.

The man who deserts those who need him and goes to pray in a desert is a coward who disregards his obligations.

All these obligations are inter-connected. Truth and fidelity are parts of religion in all relations of life.

This verse is numbered separately from the succeeding verses. (R).

### **Asad's comments**

1 Lit., "working for" or "active in behalf of [inner] purity", which is the meaning of zakah in this context (Zamakhshari; the same interpretation has been advanced by Abu Muslim).

2 Lit., "who guard their private parts"

3 Lit., "or those whom their right hands possess" (**aw ma malakat aymanuhum**). Most of the commentators assume

unquestioningly that this relates to female slaves, and that the particle aw ("or") denotes a permissible alternative.

This conventional interpretation is, in my opinion, inadmissible inasmuch as it is based on the assumption that sexual intercourse with one's female slave is permitted without marriage: **an assumption which is contradicted by the Qur'an itself (see 4:3, 24, 25 and 24:32, with the corresponding notes).**

Nor is this the only objection to the above-mentioned interpretation. Since the Qur'an applies the term "believers" to men and women alike, and since the term azwaj ("spouses"), too, denotes both the male and the female partners in marriage, **there is no reason for attributing to the phrase ma malakat aymanuhum the meaning of "their female slaves"; and since, on the other hand,** it is out of the question that female and male slaves could have been referred to here, **it is obvious that this phrase does not relate to slaves at all, but has the same meaning as in 4:24 - namely, "those whom they rightfully possess through wedlock" (see** note 26 on 4:24) - with the significant difference that in the present context this expression relates to both husbands and wives, who "rightfully possess" one another by virtue of marriage. On the basis of this interpretation, the particle aw which precedes this clause does not denote an alternative ("or") but is, rather, in the nature of an explanatory amplification, more or less analogous to the phrase "in other words" or "that is", thus giving to the whole sentence

the meaning, save with their spouses - that is, those whom they rightfully possess [through wedlock)..", etc. (Cf. a similar

construction 25:62 - "for him who has the will to take thought - that is [lit., "or"], has the will to be grateful" .)