

SUCCESS IN ISLAM (PART 1 OF 2): SUCCESS OR FAILURE IS RECOGNISED BY THE ULTIMATE RESULT

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“Not alike are the dwellers of the Fire and the dwellers of the Paradise. It is the dwellers of Paradise that will be successful.” (Quran 59:20)

God tells us in the Quran that the inhabitants of the fire  and the inhabitants of the garden are not alike. It is those who live in the garden that are the achievers, they are the successful ones. A good end that culminates in an eternal home of bliss is the reward for a successful life. How then do we define a successful life? Is it riches beyond compare, or perhaps good health, some might argue it is happiness or a stress free existence. Just how does Islam define success?

Google defines success as the accomplishment of an aim or a purpose. It says that its opposite is failure; failure to accomplish the aim or purpose. In these times we are inclined to think of success as a spacious house, an overseas holiday or fame. People work hard for these small successes and they are not to be trivialised however such success is transient. As the saying goes, you can't take it with you and Islam tells us, the only things you can take with you to the grave are your deeds. Prophet Muhammad said, “Three things follow the dead person to his grave, two of which return and one of which remains with him. His family, money and deeds accompany him [to the grave], then his family and wealth return, and his deeds stay with him. [\[1\]](#)

“Everyone shall taste death. And only on the Day of resurrection shall you be paid your wages in full. And whoever is removed away from the fire and admitted to Paradise, he indeed is successful. The life of this world is only a deceiving thing.” (Quran 3:185)

In his traditions Prophet Muhammad tells us that, the one who has accepted Islam is successful, the one who has been provided with sufficient for his wants and is content with what God has given him is successful.[\[2\]](#) Submitting to the will of God makes a person successful. This does not necessarily mean that one is rich or healthy or even constantly happy.

With the acceptance of Islam comes great responsibility, we are now responsible for our own happiness and for our own success. And success, as we are beginning to discover is the ultimate prize. If we are judged successful Paradise becomes our eternal abode; health, wealth and happiness now become eternal. Success in Islam is defined as achieving the ultimate result, or Paradise. Whatever success we achieve along the way whether it is financial, health related or a satisfying lifestyle is finite. It will come to an end.

The Arabic word for success is *falah*, it is a word that Muslims of all ethnicities are familiar with. They hear it every day in the call to prayer. "...hayya 'alal-falah!" Hurry to success. Come to prayer, come to success. This is what the words of the call are saying to the believers. You will find success in the prayer, in maintaining your connection to God. Interestingly the same root fa-la-ha gives us the Arabic word for farmer - *fallah*. How do we know if a farmer is successful? He has abundant crops and healthy livestock. But the farmer has very little control over his efforts and his labour; he plants the seeds, tills the soil, and tends to his livestock. Then however he must put his trust in God, for he has no control over the weather. His success as a farmer is determined by God's power over all things. Floods and drought, winds and rain, even his own health and the health of his plants and livestock could affect his success.

Could we then say that the definition of success includes putting one's trust in God? Make an effort, do what is required and leave the outcome to God. Prophet Muhammad explains to the believers that all their affairs are amazing. He said, "How wonderful is the affair of the believer, for his affairs are all good, and this applies to no one but the believer. If something good happens to him, he is thankful for it and that is good for him. If something bad happens to him, he bears it with patience and that is good for him."^[3] Thus when one devotes his life to pleasing God by submitting to His will, this saying takes on even more layers of meaning. Completely trusting God means that there is no failure. Thus minor setbacks and difficulties are just a small glitch on the road to ultimate success.

What about outcomes that this worldly life considers to be failures. What if you lose your livelihood, or your spouse? What if you are not recognised as the good person you are striving to be. None of this has the least bit of influence on whether or not you are ultimately successful. What is taken into account is how you react and how you face life's challenges. A person is successful and on the road to the ultimate success because of his attitude, his intention, and his ability to trust God's promise.

"He will indeed be successful who purifies his ownself, and he will indeed fail who corrupts his ownself." (Quran 91:9-10)

"And my success cannot come from any source besides God. I have put my trust in Him." (Quran 11:88)

God tells us throughout the Quran when we are successful and how to be successful. He also tells us when we are failing, when we are in fact loosing or in loss. In chapter

103 of the Quran, God Almighty swears by time that all of us are losers unless we do four things; believe, do good, teach each other the truth and encourage one another to be patient.

“By Al-Asr (the time). Verily, man is in loss. Except those who believe and do righteous good deeds, and recommend one another to the truth and recommend one another to patience.” (Quran 103)

In part 2 we will look at the various ways to achieve success. Remember that it is the ultimate success that we are striving for and God Himself, through the Quran and the noble life of Prophet Muhammad, has given us the real recipe for success.

Footnotes:

[1] *Saheeh Al-Bukhari, Saheeh Muslim*

[2] *Saheeh Muslim*

[3] *Saheeh Muslim*

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