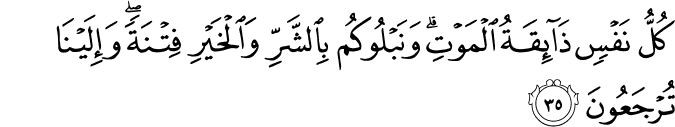
# Death

# 3:185

**3.185**. (No one will live forever doing what they do:) Every soul is bound to taste death. So (O people), you will but be repaid in full on the Day of Resurrection (for whatever you have done in the world). Whoever is spared the Fire and admitted into Paradise has indeed prospered and triumphed. (Know that) the present, worldly life is nothing but a transient enjoyment of delusion.(1)



**21.35**. Every soul (person) is bound to taste death, and We try you through the bad and the good things (of life) by way of testing (so that your real character and rank may reveal itself). In fact, you are on the way to return to Us (to finally be brought to Our Presence).(2)

300. Abu Hurayra, may Allah be pleased with him, reported that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “Remember frequently the thing (death) that cuts off pleasures.” (Sunan at-Tirmidhi, Zuhd, 4). (3)

303. Anas, may Allah be pleased with him, reported: “The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, ‘None of you should wish for death because of some harm which has befallen him. If he has got to do something, he should say, ‘O Allah, make live if life is best for me and make me die if death is best for me.” (Sahih al-Bukhari, Marda, 19; Da’awat, 30; Sahih Muslim, Dhikr, 10). (4)

**What is Death?**

The body is an instrument of the spirit, which governs and controls it in its entirety.

When its appointed hour comes, an illness or failure of bodily functions is like an invitation to the Angel of Death, known as Archangel ‘Azra’il in Islam. God is obviously the One Who causes people to die. But to save people from complaining about Him, as death appears as a disagreeable event to many people, God uses ‘Azra’il as a veil between Himself and the taking of souls. He also puts illnesses or some other calamity as another veil between ‘Azra’il and death so that people are saved from complaining about him.

# What About the Angel of Death?

Since all angels were created from light, they can be present in any place and in any form simultaneously. They also can perform countless tasks at the same time. Therefore, ‘Azra’il can take millions of souls simultaneously and without any confusion. Each Archangel has subordinates that resemble him and are supervised by him. When believers die, angels come to them with smiling, radiant faces. They are followed by ‘Azra’il, ‘Azra’il and his subordinates charged with taking these souls, or by one of his subordinates. The Qur’anic verses: By those who pluck out violently; by those who draw out gently (79:1–2) indicate that the angels who take the souls of believers differ from those who take the souls of unbelievers. The souls of the latter, who have embittered and frightened faces at death, are plucked out violently.

# What Do We Feel At the Time of Death?

At the time of death, believers experience the opening of windows from their places in Paradise. Prophet Muhammad stated that the souls of such people are drawn out as gently as the flowing of water from a pitcher. Better than that, martyrs do not feel death’s agonies of and do not realize that they are dead. Instead, they think that they have been transferred to a better world and enjoy perfect happiness.

Prophet Muhammad told Jabir, the son of ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Amr, who was martyred at the Battle of Uhud:

Do you know how God welcomed your father? He welcomed him in such an indescribable manner that neither eyes have seen it, nor ears heard it, nor minds conceived of it. Your father said: “O God, return me to the world so that I can explain to those left behind how pleasant martyrdom is.” God replied: “There is no longer a return. Life is lived only once. However, I’ll inform them of your circumstances you are in,” and He revealed: Never think of those slain in the way of God as dead; rather, they are alive and are provided in the Presence of their Lord (3:169). If you led a good, righteous life, you will have a happy death. If you led a wicked life, you will have a wicked death.

Prophet Muhammad, the most advanced in worshipping God, and ‘Umar advised performing the prescribed prayers while one is dying. Khalid ibn Walid, one of the few invincible generals in world history, asked those beside his death-bed to fetch his sword and horse. Such people as ‘Uthman, ‘Ali, Hamza, Mus’ab ibn ‘Umayr, and many others dedicated themselves to the cause of Islam and so died as martyrs.

# Should We Fear Death?

Those who believe and do righteous deeds have no reason to fear death. Although it appears to us as decomposition and the extinction of life and its pleasures, in fact it is no more than a discharge from the heavy duties of worldly life, a change of residence, and a transferral of the body. It is an invitation to and the beginning of everlasting life.

As the world is continually enlivened through acts of creation and predetermination, so is it continually stripped of life through other cycles of creation, determination, and wisdom. The death of plants, the simplest level of life, is a work of Divine artistry, like their life—in fact, it is more perfect and better designed. When a fruit pit dies underground, it seems to decompose and rot away. But in fact, it undergoes a perfect chemical process, passes through predetermined states of re-formation, and ultimately grows again into an elaborate, new tree. This shows clearly that death is the beginning of a new and more elaborate life.

The “death” of fruits, vegetables, and animal flesh in a person’s stomach causes them to rise to the degree of human life. Thus, their death can be regarded as more perfect than their lives. Since the death of plants is so perfect and serves such a great purpose, our own deaths must be even more perfect and serve a still greater purpose. After all, we occupy the highest level of life. Given this, we certainly will be brought into eternal life.

Death discharges us from the hardships of worldly life. This turbulent, suffocating, and narrow dungeon, which becomes more difficult to endure with the onset of old age and illness, admit us into the Eternal, Beloved One’s infinitely wide circle of the mercy. There, we will enjoy the everlasting company of our loved ones and the consolation of a happy, eternal life.

# BELIEF IN THE RESURRECTION MAKES DEATH LOVABLE

The All-Compassionate Creator has made this world in the form of a festival, a place of celebration and exhibition. He has decorated it with the most wonderful inscriptions of His Names, and clothed each spirit with a body possessing suitable and appropriate senses that allow the individual to benefit from the good things and bounties in the festival. He sends each spirit to this festival once only. As it is very extensive in time and space, He divided it into centuries and years, seasons and days, and various parts. His animal and plant creations promenade therein, especially during the spring and summer, when the earth’s surface is transformed into a vast arena of successive festivals for all small creatures. This arena is so glittering and attractive that it draws the gaze of angels, other inhabitants of the heavens, and spirit beings in the higher abodes. For people who think and reflect, it is an arena for reflection, and one so wonderful that the mind cannot describe it.

The manifestations of Divine Grace, Mercy, and Munificence in this Divine festival are counterbalanced by the Names of All-Overwhelming, All-Crushing, and the One Who Causes to Die through death and separation. This does not appear to be in line with the all-embracing Mercy expressed in *My Mercy encompasses all things* (7:156). However, consider the following points:

• After each group of creatures has served its purpose and produced the desired results, the All-Compassionate Creator causes most of them, by His Compassion, to feel weariness and distaste for the world. He then grants them a desire to rest and a longing to emigrate to another world. And so when they approach the time of discharge from their duties (through death), He arouses in them an enthusiastic inclination to return to their original home.

• The Most Merciful One bestows the rank of martyrdom on a soldier who dies in the line of duty (defending sacred values), and rewards a sheep sacrificed in His way with an eternal existence in the Hereafter. Given this, His infinite Mercy assigns a specific reward and wage, according to their nature and capacity, to other animate beings who perform their duties despite hardship and death. Thus, these beings are not sad when death comes; rather, they are pleased and look forward to it.

The world is continually enlivened through creation and predetermination, and ceaselessly stripped of life through other cycles of creation, determination, and wisdom. Death is not an extinction, but a door opening on a better, more developed, and more refined life.

The Qur’an presents death as something created and therefore having existence (67:2). When death enters a living body, life seems to depart. In reality, however, that organism is being elevated to a higher degree. The death of a plant, the simplest level of life, is a work of Divine artistry, just like its life, but one even more perfect and better designed. When a tree seed “dies,” it appears to decompose into the soil. However, it actually undergoes a perfect chemical process, passes through predetermined states of re-formation, and grows into an elaborate, new tree. A “dead” seed represents the beginning of a new tree, and shows that death is something created (like life) and, accordingly, is as perfect as life.

Since fruit and animals, when consumed by people, cause them to rise to the degree of human life, their deaths can be regarded as more perfect than their lives. If this is true of plants, it must be true of people. As people are the pinnacle of creation, their deaths must be more perfect and serve a still greater purpose. Once individuals have died and been buried, they surely will be brought into eternal life.

Death is a blessing for human beings for several reasons, among them:4

• It discharges us from the hardships of life, which gradually become harder through old age. It also opens the gates to reunion with many of our friends who died before us.

• It releases us from a worldly life that is a turbulent, suffocating, narrow dungeon, and admits us into the wide circle of the Eternal Beloved One’s Mercy. As a result, we enjoy a pleasant and everlasting life free from suffering.

• Old age and other unbearable conditions come to an end through death. Both the elderly and their families benefit from this. For example, if your elderly parents and grandparents were living in poverty and hardship, would you not consider their deaths to be blessings? The autumnal deaths of insects is a mercy for them, for otherwise they would have to endure winter’s harshness and severity and be deprived of their lovers— lovely flowers.

• Sleep brings repose and relief, as well as mercy, especially for the sick and afflicted. Death, sleep’s brother, is a blessing and mercy particularly for those afflicted with misfortunes that might make them suicidal. However, for the misguided, death and life are a torment within torment, and pain after pain.

• Just as death is a blessing for a believer, the grave is the door to illuminated worlds. This world, despite its glitter, is like a dungeon in comparison with the Hereafter. To be transferred from the dungeon of this world to the gardens of Paradise, to pass from the troublesome turmoil of bodily life to the world of rest and the realm where spirits soar, to be free of the distressing noise of creatures and go to the Presence of the Most Merciful— all of this is a journey, indeed a happiness, to be desired most earnestly.

• The All-Merciful One explains in His Scriptures, especially the Qur’an, the true nature of the world and the life therein, and warns us that love or attachment to either one are pointless.(5)

**References**

**(1)The Quran with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English by Ali Unal**

**(2)The Quran with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English by Ali Unal**

**(3)Nawawi, Imam. Riyad As-Salihin; The Gardens of the Righteous: A collection of authentic hadiths. Tughra Books Press, Inc. 2014**

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**(5) Unal, Ali. The Resurrection and the Afterlife. The Light, Inc. 2006.**