

SURAH AS A STORY



Surah Al-'Asr

Time

The complete journey — three ayahs that hold everything —
told the way a loving elder shares it with a child



Surah No. 103 • 3 Ayahs • Meccan

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The Surah at a Glance

Wal-'Asr

1. By time —

Innal-insaana lafee khusr

2. Indeed, mankind is in loss,

Illal-lazeena aamanoo

3a. except those who believe

Wa 'amilus-saalihaat

3b. and do righteous deeds,

Wa tawaasaw bil-haqq

3c. and advise one another to truth,

Wa tawaasaw bis-sabr

3d. and advise one another to patience.

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The Surah Imam ash-Shafi'i Wept Over

Beta, this surah is three ayahs long — about fourteen words. And Imam ash-Shafi'i (rahimahullah) said about



it: if Allah had revealed nothing but this surah, it would have been sufficient for mankind.

Think about that claim, beta. A scholar who had memorised the entire Quran and mastered its sciences said that these three lines alone contain everything a human being needs.

And it was the practice of some of the companions, as reported, that when two of them met, they would not part until one recited Surah Al-'Asr to the other, and then they gave salam. Beta, imagine that as a parting habit: before we separate, let me remind you what life is about.

By Time

'WAL-'ASR — BY TIME.'

Beta, Allah swears an oath by 'al-'asr'. The scholars explained it in several ways: time itself, the age, the passing epochs — and some said the late afternoon, the part of the day when the sun begins to decline and the



day is visibly ending.

Both meanings serve the same purpose. Time is the one asset every human being receives equally — the rich man and the poor man both get twenty-four hours — and it is the one asset that can never be recovered, replaced, or bought back. Wealth lost can return. Health lost can return. A minute lost is gone from existence.

And beta, notice something: Allah swears by time to prove that human beings are in LOSS. As if time itself is the witness for the prosecution. Every ticking second is testifying: he was given, and he spent, and he has nothing to show.

Al-Hasan al-Basri (rahimahullah) said: O son of Adam, you are nothing but a collection of days — whenever a day passes, part of you has gone. Beta, feel that. You are not someone who HAS days; you are MADE of days, and they are being spent from you.

And this is why some scholars said 'al-'asr' means the late afternoon: because that is when a person suddenly



notices the light changing and realises how much of the day has already gone.

Mankind Is in Loss

'INNAL-INSANA LA-FEE KHUSR — indeed, MANKIND is IN LOSS.'

Beta, look at the precision. Allah does not say man WILL BE in loss, or MIGHT BE in loss. He says he IS in loss — right now, presently, continuously. And the word 'fee' — IN loss — means surrounded by it, immersed in it, as a fish is in water.

'Khusr' is a business word, beta. It is the loss of a trader: capital gone, nothing gained. And the metaphor is exact. Every human being is given a capital — a lifetime — and it is being spent, every second, whether he trades with it or not.

This is the frightening part: you cannot stop the spending. There is no option to hold your capital and wait. Every breath is a coin leaving your hand. So the



only question is whether you are BUYING anything with it.

And note that Allah says 'al-INSAN' — mankind, humanity as a whole. The default state of a human being, unless something rescues him, is loss. Not neutral — LOSS.

Beta, we usually think of a wasted day as 'nothing happened'. This surah corrects that: a wasted day is not zero. It is a debit. The capital was withdrawn and nothing came back.

The Four That Rescue

And then comes the exception — the rescue — and it has four parts. Beta, memorise them, because these four are the complete curriculum of a saved life:

'ILLAL-LAZINA AMANOO — EXCEPT those who BELIEVE.' The first is iman: the foundation. Without it, the building has nothing to stand on — and this is why the Quran always mentions it first.



'WA 'AMILUS-SALIHAT — and DO RIGHTEOUS DEEDS.' Beta, belief that stays in the chest and never moves the limbs is not what Allah is describing. Iman and action are named together throughout the Quran, like two halves of one thing.

But look, beta — Allah did not stop at two. If it were only about personal salvation, 'believe and do good' would have been enough. He added two more, and both are about OTHER PEOPLE:

'WA TAWASAW BIL-HAQQ — and ADVISE ONE ANOTHER TO TRUTH.' Beta, 'tawasaw' is a mutual verb — they advise EACH OTHER. Not a preacher lecturing an audience, but a community in which everyone reminds everyone. You correct me, I correct you, and both of us stay straight.

And it is 'bil-haqq' — to the TRUTH: encouraging what is right, and honestly telling a person what he does not want to hear when he needs to hear it. Beta, this is one of the rarest forms of love. Most people will tell you



what pleases you. Only someone who genuinely wants good for you will risk your annoyance to tell you the truth.

'WA TAWASAW BIS-SABR — and ADVISE ONE ANOTHER TO PATIENCE.' And why is patience added? Because the moment you begin to live by the truth and speak it, you will meet resistance — from your own nafs, from society, from people who prefer you as you were. Truth without patience collapses in the first week.

Beta, look at the architecture of these four: the first two build the individual — believe, act. The second two build the community — remind each other of truth, hold each other through the difficulty.

And that is why Imam ash-Shafi'i said this surah would have been enough. Because it answers everything: What am I? A creature in loss. What is my capital? Time. What saves me? Faith, action, truth, patience. Who do I need? Other people who are doing the same.



Beta, one last reflection. Notice that a person can believe and act righteously — and still be included in the loss if he abandons the last two. A believer who worships alone, keeps his knowledge to himself, and lets those around him drift without a word of reminder has only completed half the exception.

So this surah, in fourteen words, hands you your whole life's job description: save yourself, and take someone with you. And do both patiently, because the clock is running the entire time.

'Wal-'Asr' — beta, by the time that is passing as you read this line.

What This Surah Teaches Us

1. Time is the one capital everyone receives equally and no one can recover — you are not someone who has days, you are made of them.
2. Loss is the DEFAULT state; a wasted day is not zero, it is a debit.



3. Iman is the foundation — nothing else stands without it.

4. Belief that never moves the limbs is not what Allah described: pair it with action.

5. Personal salvation is only half the exception — you must also remind others.

6. Real love risks annoyance: tell people the truth they need, and accept it when told to you.

7. Pair truth with patience, because living and speaking the truth always meets resistance.

Ya Allah, save us from being of the losers — grant us faith, righteous action, truthfulness, and patience, and give us companions who remind us. Ameen.

— This is a simplified, faithful retelling for understanding, based on the Quran's translation and established tafseer (Ibn Kathir and others). For deeper study, always read with a qualified teacher. —

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