

### Fast 13: Women in Islam — 6: Reward for good deeds

- According to the Quran, women are entitled to equal spiritual reward with men for good deeds:

“It will not be in accordance with your vain desires nor the vain desires of the People of the Book. Whoever does evil, will be recompensed for it and will not find for himself besides Allah a friend or a helper. And whoever does good deeds, **whether male or female**, and is a believer — these will enter the Garden, and they will not be dealt with unjustly in the least.” (4:123–124)

لَيْسَ بِأَمَانِيكُمْ وَلَا أَمَانِي أَهْلِ  
الْكِتَابِ مَنْ يَعْمَلْ سُوءًا يُجْرِبُهُ وَلَا يَجِدْ  
لَهُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلِيًّا وَلَا نَصِيرًا ﴿١٢٣﴾  
وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِنَ الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَ  
هُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَأُولَٰئِكَ يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ وَلَا  
يُظْلَمُونَ نَقِيرًا ﴿١٢٤﴾

This verse lays down the principle that “entering paradise” or receiving “salvation” is not achieved by one’s wishful thinking, i.e., that because you belong to some particular group it means you become the favoured one of God. It is achieved by good deeds, and God does not make any distinction in the least between a male and a female as regards bringing their good deeds to fruition.

- Similar statements are made again in the Quran:

“Whoever does good, **whether male or female**, and is a believer, We shall certainly make him live a good life, and We shall certainly give them their reward for the best of what they did.” (16:97)

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ  
مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهٗ حَيٰوةً طَيِّبَةً وَ  
لَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٧﴾

“Whoever does evil, he is recompensed only with its like; and whoever does good, **whether male or female**, and is a believer, these shall enter the Garden, to be given sustenance in it without measure.” (40:40)

مَنْ عَمِلَ سَيِّئَةً فَلَا يُجْزَىٰ إِلَّا مِثْلَهَا وَ  
مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ  
مُؤْمِنٌ فَأُولَٰئِكَ يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ يُرْزَقُونَ  
فِيهَا بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ ﴿٤٠﴾

“I will not let the work of any worker among you to be lost, **whether male or female**; each of you is as the other.” (3:195; quoted earlier in Study 9).

أَنِّي لَا أُضِيعُ عَمَلَ عَامِلٍ مِّنْكُمْ مِّمَّنْ ذَكَرٍ  
أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ بَعْضُكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْضٍ

- The importance of deeds is shown by the fact that in all these verses good deeds are mentioned first, and being a believer is mentioned after that.
- In the verses quoted above, the addition of the words “and is a believer” does not mean that good deeds of an unbeliever, a non-Muslim, are not recognized by Allah. As a matter of principle it is stated in the Quran:

“On that day people will come forth, in diverse bodies, that they may be shown their works. So **whoever** does an atom’s weight of good will see it. And **whoever** does an atom’s weight of evil will see it.” (99:6–8)

يَوْمَئِذٍ يَصْدُرُ النَّاسُ أَشْتَاتًا لِّيُرَوْا  
أَعْمَالَهُمْ ۗ فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا  
يَرَهُ ۗ وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ ۗ

The least and smallest good done by anyone, whomsoever, will bear good fruit, and the least bad done by anyone will cause harm. The Holy Prophet has called these verses as containing a “comprehensive” principle. The Quran also says:

“**Whoever** brings good, he will have better than it; and **whoever** brings evil, those who do evil will be recompensed only for what they did.” (28:84)

مَنْ جَاءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُ خَيْرٌ مِنْهَا وَمَنْ  
جَاءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَلَا يُجْزَى الَّذِينَ عَمِلُوا  
السَّيِّئَاتِ إِلَّا مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

“Whoever” includes everyone. We may further refer to the following verse where the whole of humanity is addressed and told:

“For everyone of you We appointed a law and a way. And if Allah had pleased He would have made you (humanity) a single people, but that He might try you in what He gave you. **So vie with one another in good works.** To Allah you will all return, so He will inform you of that in which you differed” (5:48).

يُكَلِّبُ جَعَلْنَا مِنْكُمْ شُرَعَةً وَمِنْهَا جَا  
لَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَ  
لَكِن لِّيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ فَاسْتَبِقُوا  
الْخَيْرَاتِ ۗ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا  
فِي نَبِيِّكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ

All the different sections of humanity, and followers of different religions, are here exhorted to “vie with one another in good works”, i.e. for each to try to excel others in the doing of good. This advice would be meaningless if Allah did not reward non-Muslims for their good deeds.