



# Lecture Summary – Monday 1<sup>st</sup> September 2025

## “The Story of the Three Procrastinators” – Br Mohammed Ali Muraj

### Historical Context: The Expedition of Tabuk

- Known as **Jaysh al-‘Usra** (Army of Hardship).
  - Faced extreme challenges:
    1. **Scorching heat** in Medina’s summer.
    2. **Harvest season**—people risked losing their annual income.
    3. Confronting the **Roman Empire**, a powerful military force.
  - Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) called on every able-bodied Muslim to join, assembling **30,000 soldiers**.
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### The Three Types of People

1. **Believers:** Responded sincerely, joined the Prophet.
  2. **Hypocrites:** Offered excuses (illness, elderly parents, harvest). Example: one man claimed he couldn’t resist Roman women—cited in Qur’an 9:49.
  3. **Procrastinators:** True believers with good track records (e.g., Battle of Badr and Uhud) but delayed until it was too late.
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### The Three Procrastinators

- Names: **Ka‘b ibn Malik, Murara ibn Rabi’, Hilal ibn Umayya.**
- Initially delayed with thoughts like, *“I’ll pack later, I’ll catch up tomorrow.”*
- Result: Left behind with children, women, elderly, and hypocrites.

### Consequences:

- When the army returned after 50 days, hypocrites gave false excuses.
- The three procrastinators admitted fault honestly.
- Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), disappointed in their delay, turned away—community also boycotted them.
- They endured:
  - **Social isolation** (treated like ghosts in Medina).
  - **Emotional and spiritual anguish** (constant repentance).
  - **Temptation:** Even received a letter of enticement from the Roman emperor. They tore it up.
- After 50 days, Allah forgave them (Qur’an 9:118).

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## Moral Lessons from the Story

- Procrastination is not simply “doing bad” but **failing to do good at the right time**.
- It can lead to:
  - **Physical trauma** (missed opportunities).
  - **Emotional strain**.
  - **Spiritual setbacks**.
- Key message: *Delays in fulfilling duties, even with faith, can carry severe consequences.*

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## Why Do We Procrastinate?

1. **Present Bias:** Preference for short-term comfort over long-term gain.
  - Examples: choosing entertainment over work, unhealthy food over exercise.
  - Illustrated through psychological studies (Stanford Marshmallow Test; Kritfield & Collins research on delayed rewards).
2. **Laziness:** “I’ll do it soon” attitude (Arabic: *taswif*, from *sawfa* = “soon”).
3. **Overconfidence:** Believing tasks can be done later with ease, underestimating effort required.

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## How to Overcome Procrastination

1. **Break tasks into smaller steps:**
  - *Two-minute rule* (James Clear, *Atomic Habits*): Make starting so easy you can’t say no.
  - Example: Read 5 verses of Qur’an after salah instead of committing to an entire juz’.
2. **Accountability:**
  - Self-reflection (*muhasaba*), journaling, calendars.
  - Imam Musa al-Kadhim (a) emphasized self-accounting.
3. **Use Parkinson’s Law:** Tasks expand to the time allowed—set tighter deadlines.
4. **Focus on what matters:**
  - “What you focus on grows.”
  - Qur’an reminds: this life is play and amusement; the Hereafter is the true life (Q. 29:64).

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## Spiritual Reflection

- Imam Ali (a) said: “*Opportunity passes like a cloud. Seize it before it passes you by.*”
  - Even fleeting good thoughts (e.g., to give charity, pray, reconcile with someone) are **opportunities** from Allah—do not delay.
  - Life is short; tomorrow is never guaranteed.
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### Connection to Imam Ali (a)

- At Tabuk, Imam Ali remained in Medina to guard it, leading to mockery by hypocrites.
  - Prophet (ﷺ) reassured him: *“You are to me as Harun was to Musa, except there is no prophet after me.”*
  - Lessons:
    - Ali’s role was divinely mandated.
    - His loyalty showed **no procrastination** in responding to Allah’s command.
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### Closing

- The lecture ties procrastination to both **daily habits** and **spiritual obligations**.
- Encourages seizing opportunities for good deeds immediately.
- Reminder: The story of the three procrastinators is not about weak faith but about delayed action—an urgent lesson for all believers.