

Messenger of Allah ﷺ about our situation while he was lying in the shade of the Ka'aba, with his head resting on his cloak. We said, 'Will you ask Allah to help us? Will you invoke Allah for us?'

"He said, 'Among those who were before you, a believer used to be seized and placed in a pit dug especially for him; then a saw would be brought and put on his head which would then be cut into two halves, after his flesh had been sliced with iron combs and torn from his bones – and yet all that did not make him abandon his *deen*. By Allah! this *deen* will be completed, and a rider will be able to travel from San'a to Hadramout, fearing nobody except Allah and the wolf – lest it should trouble his sheep – but you are impatient!'"⁸

Some of our predecessors used to say, "Had it not been for misfortunes, we would have arrived in the *akhira* completely destitute."

Sufyan ibn 'Uyaynah, when commenting on the following *ayah* of the Qur'an:

﴿ And We appointed leaders from among them who guided by Our command, so long as they persevered and firmly believed in Our signs. (32:24) ﴾

said, "When they wanted to amputate Urwah ibn az-Zubair's leg, they said to him, 'Shall we give you a drink so that you won't feel the pain?' He replied, 'Allah has given me this affliction in order to test my endurance – shall I then act against His will?'"

Umar ibn Abdal-Aziz said, "Whenever Allah gives a blessing to a servant, and then takes it back from him, and the servant patiently endures his loss, then He rewards him with a blessing which is better than the one which He took back."

When Abu Bakr as-Siddiq, may Allah be pleased with him, fell ill and people visited him, they said to him, "Shouldn't we call a doctor to see you?" He said, "The Doctor has already seen me." They said, "What did He say to you?" He said, "Whatever I wish, I make it happen."

It has been related that Sa'id ibn Jubair said, "Perseverance is the servant's acceptance before Allah of the affliction that He has caused to befall him, his recognition that Allah has taken it into account, and his hope that Allah will reward him for it. The servant may inwardly be in a state of fright and panic, but by exercising his self-control, nothing but perseverance can be observed in his demeanour."

Ibn Jubair's saying, "the servant's acceptance before Allah of the affliction that He has caused to befall him", is like an explanation of the words, "Surely to Allah we belong". Here, the servant accepts that he belongs to Allah and that Allah does as He wishes with His possessions.

His saying, "his hope that Allah will reward him for it", is like an explanation of the words, "and surely to Him we are returning". It means that when we return to our Lord, He rewards us for our perseverance – for the reward for perseverance is never lost.

Notes

1. *Da'if*, al-Haythami, *Majma' az-Zawa'id*, 6/35.
2. *Da'if*, part of the previous *hadith*.
3. Al-Bukhari, *Kitab az-Zakat*, 3/335; Muslim, *Kitab az-Zakat*, 7/144.
4. Muslim, *Kitab al-Jana'iz*, 6/220.

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5. Al-Bukhari, *Kitab ar-Riqaq*, 11/241.
6. Al-Bukhari, *Kitab al-Mardha*, 10/111; Muslim, *Kitab al-Birra's-Silah*, 16/129.
7. Ahmad, *al-Musnad*, 2/287; at-Tirmidhi, *Kitab az-Zuhud*, 7/80; al-Hakim, *Kitab ar-Riqaq*, 4/124.
8. Al-Bukhari, *Kitab al-Ikrah*, 12/315, and also *Kitab Manaqib al-Ansar*, 7/164.

FOURTEEN

GRATITUDE

Gratitude is thanking the One who grants blessings for His generosity. The gratitude of a servant should have three qualities, without which it can hardly be considered to be gratitude. They are the inner recognition and appreciation of the blessing, speaking about it openly, and using it as a means to worshipping Him.

Gratitude is a matter for the heart, the tongue and the limbs. The heart is for knowledge and love of Him; the tongue is for thanking and praising Him; and the limbs are to be used in obeying the One Who is being thanked, and in holding back from committing disobedient acts.

Allah, Glorious and Exalted is He, has linked gratitude with belief. He says that He does not need to punish His creatures if they thank Him and believe in Him. He says:

◀ What has Allah to do with punishing you, if you are grateful and you believe? (4:147) ▶

The Glorious and Mighty also says that the people who are grateful are singled out from the rest of His servants because of the mercy that He displays towards them. The Mighty and Glorious says:

◀ And thus We test some of them by means of others, so that they say, "Are these the ones whom Allah has favoured from amongst us?" Is not Allah best Aware of those who give thanks? (6:53) ▶

He divides people into those who are grateful and those who are ungrateful; and the most displeasing thing to Him is ingratitude and its people; and the most precious thing to Him is gratitude and its people:

◀ Surely We have shown him the way, whether he is grateful or ungrateful. (76:3) ▶

And also:

◀ And when your Lord proclaimed: "If you are thankful, I will give you more, but if you are ungrateful, then surely My punishment is terrible indeed." (14:7) ▶

In these *ayat*, Allah makes the granting of more blessings conditional on gratitude. There is no limit to the increase in His blessings, just as there is no limit to being grateful to Him. Allah, Mighty and Glorious is He, has made a great deal of reward dependent on His will. He says:

◀ And if you fear poverty, Allah will enrich you through His generosity, if He wills. Surely Allah is Knowing, Wise. (9:28) ▶

And also:

◀ And He forgives whomever He wills. (5:40) ▶

And also:

◀ And Allah turns in mercy towards whomever He wills. (9:15) ▶

He puts no limit on His reward for gratitude when He refers to it:

◀ We shall reward those who are thankful. (3:145) ▶

When the enemy of Allah, *shaytan*, learned of the value of gratitude – and that it is one of the most exalted and

highest states – he directed his efforts towards distancing people from it:

◀ “Then will I approach them from in front of them and from behind them, and from their right and from their left; and You will find that most of them are not grateful.” (7:17) ▶

Allah has described the grateful ones among His worshippers as being few in number:

◀ And only a few of My servants are grateful. (34:13) ▶

The Prophet ﷺ is reported to have stayed up in prayer all night until his feet swelled up. He was asked, “Why do you do this when Allah has already forgiven you all your past and future wrong actions?” He, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, “Should I not still be a grateful servant?”¹

The Prophet ﷺ once told Mu’adh, “By Allah, you are dear to me! So do not forget to say at the end of each prayer, “O Allah, help me in remembering You, in being grateful to You and in serving You well.”²

Gratitude is linked to Allah’s generosity and it is what makes it increase. Umar ibn Abdal-Aziz said, “Join Allah’s generosity towards you to your gratitude towards Him.”

Ibn Abi’d-Dunya reported that Ali ibn Abi Talib, may Allah be pleased with him, said to a man from the tribe of Hamazan, “Allah’s generosity is connected to gratitude, and gratitude is linked to increase in His generosity. The generosity of Allah will not stop increasing unless the gratitude of His servant ceases.”

Al-Hasan said, “Speak about His generosity frequently, for speaking about it is gratitude.”

Allah commanded His Messenger, may Allah bless him

and grant him peace, to speak of His Lord's generosity in the *ayah*:

◀ And speak about the blessings of your Lord. (93:11) ▶

Allah, Exalted is He, is pleased when the effect of His generosity on His servant is made apparent, for this in itself is a form of gratitude that speaks for itself.³

When Abu al-Mughirah used to be asked how he was, he would say, "We are immersed in the Lord's generosity, and incapable of being sufficiently grateful. He is most loving towards us, even though He does not need us, and we are disrespectful towards Him, even though we are utterly dependant on Him."

Sharih said, "Whenever a servant is afflicted with a misfortune, Allah grants him three things: that it does not affect his faith; that it is not more severe than it might have been; and that, as it was decreed, it has already happened and is over."

Yunus ibn Ubaid reported that Abu Ghunaimah was once asked, "How are you?" He replied, "I am caught between two blessings whose nature is such that I do not know which of them is more excellent: my wrong actions which Allah has concealed for me, so that no one can taunt me about them; or the affection for me which Allah has placed in the hearts of His creatures, and which, because of my actions and deeds, I do not deserve."

Suffian said about this *ayah* of the Qur'an:

◀ Leave Me (to deal) with those who reject these words. We shall gradually lead them on, in ways which they do not perceive, (68:44) ▶

that Allah makes His blessings pleasing to them, while withholding the ability to be grateful from them.

Others have said that whenever such people commit a

sin, He confers a blessing on them.

A man once asked Abu Hazim, "O Abu Hazim, what is the gratitude of the eyes?" He replied, "It is to reveal whatever good they see and to veil whatever bad they see."

The man said, "And what is the gratitude of the ears?" He replied, "If you hear something good with them you understand it, and if you hear something bad you reject it."

The man asked, "And what is the gratitude of the hands?" He said, "Do not use them to take what is not yours, and do not restrain them from giving what is due to Allah."

The man asked, "And what is the gratitude of the stomach?" He replied, "That its lower part is for food and its upper part is for knowledge," (i.e. it should not be stuffed full of food).

The man asked, "What is the gratitude of the private parts?" Abu Hazim replied by reciting the *ayat* of the Qur'an:

◀ And those who guard their chastity, except with those to whom they are married, or the servants whom they own, for them there is no blame; but those whose desires exceed these limits are wrongdoers. (23:5-7) ▶

The man asked, "What is the gratitude of the feet?" He replied, "If you learn of the death of a righteous man who used to use his feet in doing good deeds and acts of worship, then use them in the same way as he did; whereas if the man who has died was someone despicable to you, then turn away from what he used to do and be grateful to Allah.

"And as for the one who uses only his tongue to ex-

press his gratitude, he is like a man who only covers himself with the hem of his garment without putting it on, so it is of no use to him in either the heat, or the cold, or the snow, or the rain.”

A man of knowledge once wrote to his brother, “We have been granted so many of Allah’s blessings – in spite of our many acts of disobedience – that it is impossible for us to count them. We do not know which to be most grateful for – the best of our good actions, which He enabled us to do, or the ugliest of our wrong actions which He has veiled for us.”

Notes

1. Al-Bukhari, *Kitab at-Tahajjud*, 3/14; Muslim, *Kitab Sifat al-Qiyyamah*, 17/162.
2. Ahmad, *al-Musnad*, 5/245-247; al-Hakim, *Ma’rifat as-Sahabah*, 3/273; an-Nisa’i, *Kitab as-Sahw*, 3/53.
3. This is supported by a *hadith* related by at-Tirmidhi, *Kitab al-Adab*, 8/106, and by al-Hakim, *Kitab al-At’ima*, 4/135, on the authority of ‘Amr ibn Shu’aib, transmitted to him by his father and grandfather, that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, “Allah likes to see the effect of His generosity on His servant.” *Shaykh Shakir* classifies this *hadith* as *sahih* in his *al-Musnad*, 6708.

FIFTEEN

COMPLETE RELIANCE ON ALLAH

Complete reliance on Allah is the sincere dependence of the heart on Allah in the servant's endeavours in pursuing his interests and safeguarding himself against anything that may be harmful to his well-being both in this life and in the *akhira*:

◀ And for whoever fears Allah, He prepares a way forward for him, and He provides for him from where he does not expect. And for whoever relies on Allah, then He is enough for him. (65:2-3) ▶

A person who fears Allah and relies completely on Him, will find that these two qualities are sufficient for him both in matters of this world and of his *deen*.

Umar ibn al-Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him, said, "I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say, 'If you had all relied on Allah as you should rely on Him, then He would have certainly provided for you as He provides for the birds, who wake up hungry in the morning and return with full stomachs at dusk.'" ¹

Abu Hatim ar-Razi said that this *hadith* establishes the fundamental principle that reliance on Allah is one of the most important means of acquiring one's sustenance and provision.

Sa'id ibn Jubair said, "Reliance on Allah is an essential part of faith." Possessing the state of reliance, however,