

does not prevent you from utilising the ways and means which Allah has decreed for His creation. These are His laws, and He has commanded us to use ways and means, while at the same time He has instructed us to rely on Him. Endeavouring to make use of the ways and means in His Universe with our limbs is obedience, and relying on Him in our hearts is faith in Him. Allah says:

﴿ O you who believe, take your precautions! (4:71) ﴾

Sahl said, "Whoever questions actions (e.g. striving to earn a living) questions the very validity of the *sunnah*, and whoever questions reliance on Allah questions faith itself."

Reliance is the state of the Prophet ﷺ, while striving to earn a living is his *sunnah*, and whoever behaves in accordance with the state of the Prophet ﷺ must not abandon his *sunnah*.

It has been said, "Ignoring ways and means is doubting the need for the *shari'ah* of Islam, while trusting entirely in ways and means is doubting the Reality of *Tawhid* (the existence of Allah).

There are three kinds of actions that the servant has:

First, the acts of obedience which Allah has commanded His servants to do, since He has made them the means for rescuing them from the Fire and their entering the Garden. These must be done, while at the same time still relying on Allah when doing them and seeking this outcome – for there is no strength and no power except from Him. Whatever He, the Exalted, wishes to be has already happened, and whatever He wishes not to be will never happen.

Whoever does not fulfil one of the duties which have been imposed on him by Allah deserves to be punished in

this life and in the next life in accordance with the *shari'ah* and as decreed by Allah, the Exalted.

Yusuf ibn Asbat said, "Do what you do like a man who can only be saved by his actions, and rely completely on Allah like a man who can only be afflicted by the afflictions that have already been decreed for him."

Second, the actions which Allah has made a part of life in this world, and in which He has told His servants to take part – such as eating when hungry, drinking when thirsty, seeking shade in the heat, keeping warm in cold weather, and other such things. Being involved in such actions is also a duty. Whoever does not do so, to the extent that he does himself harm by abandoning them – even though he was perfectly capable of doing them – has been negligent and deserves punishment.

Third, the actions which Allah has made a part of life in general, without their being essential. Allah can make exceptions for whomever of His servants He chooses.

There are several kinds of these actions, one of which is taking medicine. The *ulama'* have given varying answers to the following question: Is it better for a sick person to take medicine or, in the case of those who rely completely on Allah, to abstain from taking it?

There are two better known answers to this question:

Imam Ahmad says that reliance on Allah for the one who has it is better. The *Imam* cites the saying of the Prophet ﷺ, "Seventy thousand people of my *Ummah* will enter the Garden without being taken to account or being punished. They are the ones who do not make talismans, or seek them, or look for omens, or treat their body by burning, and who completely rely on their Lord." ²

Those *ulama'* who approve of taking medicine, say that the Prophet ﷺ used to take it, and he only did what was

best; and that the above *hadith* only applies to the use of talismans, which are rightly regarded with suspicion because they can lead to reliance on other than Allah, and which are accordingly equated with looking for omens and treatment by burning.

Mujahid, 'Ikrimah, an-Nukha'i and several of our predecessors said, "No one has been given permission to totally abandon trying to use the ways and means of this world for treating his afflictions, except one whose heart has altogether ceased to relate to the creation."

Ishaq ibn Rahawayh was asked, "Can a man engage in warfare without making any preparation for it?" He answered, "He can, if he is like Abdullah ibn Jubair – otherwise he cannot."

Notes

1. *Sahih*, at-Tirmidhi, *Kitab az-Zuhud*, 7/8; al-Hakim, *Kitab ar-Riqaq*, 4/310.
2. Al-Bukhari, *Kitab ar-Riqaq*, 11/305; Muslim, *Kitab al-Iman*, 3/89.

SIXTEEN

LOVE OF ALLAH

Loving Allah, the Glorious, the Exalted, is the ultimate aim of all stations, and the summit of all states. Having attained the state of true love for Allah, each station that follows it is one of its fruits and a branch from its roots – such as longing, intimacy and contentment. Each station that precedes it is a step towards it – such as repentance, perseverance and doing without, or *zuhud*.

The most beneficial, the most sincere, the most elevated and the most exalted kind of love is most certainly the love of the One Whom hearts were created to love, and for Whom creation was brought into existence to adore. Allah is the One to Whom hearts turn in love, exaltation, glorification, humility, submission and worship. Such worship cannot be directed towards other than Him. It is the perfection of love accompanied by complete submission and humility. Allah, the Exalted, is loved for His own sake in every respect. All except Him are loved for the love they give in return. All the revealed Books, and the messages of all the Prophets, bear witness to the love that is due towards Him, as does the natural impulse He has created in all His servants, the intellect He has given them, and the blessings He has poured on them.

Hearts, as they mature, come to love whomever is merciful and kind towards them. So how much greater is their love for Him from Whom all kindness springs!

Every good thing enjoyed by His creation is one of His limitless blessings, and He is One, with no associates and no partners:

◀ And whatever good you have – it is from Allah; and then, when misfortune comes to you, you cry to Him for help. (16:53) ▶

And also:

◀ And from among mankind there are some who take for themselves (objects of worship as) rivals to Allah, loving them as they should (only) love Allah. And those who believe are stronger in their love for Allah. (2:165) ▶

And also:

◀ O you who believe, whoever of you becomes a rebel against his *deen*, (know that in his place) Allah will bring a people whom He loves and who love Him, humble towards the believers, harsh towards the disbelievers, fighting in the way of Allah, and not fearing the blame of anyone who blames. (5:54) ▶

The Prophet ﷺ has sworn that no servant truly believes until he, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, is more dear to that servant than his own child, father, and all of mankind.¹

The Prophet ﷺ also said to Umar ibn al-Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him, “even until I am more dear to you than your own self.”²

This means that you are not a true believer until your love for the Prophet ﷺ reaches this level.

If the Prophet ﷺ must take precedence over our own selves³ when it comes to what we love and what this entails, then is not Allah, Exalted is He, even more deserving

of our love and adoration than our own selves?

Everything that comes from Him to His servants, whether it is something that they love or something that they hate, directs us to love of Him. His giving and His withholding, the good fortune and the misfortune that He decrees for His servants and His abasing them and elevating them, His justice and His grace, His giving life and taking it away again, His compassion, generosity and veiling of His servants' wrong actions, His forgiveness and patience, His response to His servants' supplications even though He is not in any need of His servants whatsoever – all this invites hearts to worship Him and love Him.

If a human being were to do the smallest amount of any of these things to another, that person would not be able to restrain his heart from loving him. How can a servant not love, with all his heart and body, the One Who is constantly Merciful and Generous towards him in spite of all his wrong actions?

Allah's mercy descends upon His servant from the heavens, while the servant's wrong actions rise up to him from the earth.

Allah seeks His servant's friendship and love by means of His generosity towards him, even though He is not in any need of him. The servant, on the other hand, invites Allah's anger through his disobedience and wrong actions, even though he is in need of His assistance.

Neither Allah's mercy nor His generosity towards the servant deter him from disobeying his Lord. In the same way, neither the servant's disobedience nor his wrong actions deter Allah ta'Ala from granting him His blessings.

Furthermore, while anyone whom we love and who loves us may behave like this for personal gain, Allah, Mighty and Glorious is He, does so in order to benefit us.

Furthermore, while anyone with whom we trade will not do business with us if he does not expect to make a profit from the transaction – and he will do what he can to make a profit one way or another – Allah, Mighty and Glorious is He, trades with us in order to enable us to make the best and greatest profit for ourselves from our transaction with Him. Thus one good deed counts as between ten and seven hundred good deeds, or even more, while a bad deed is recorded as only one bad deed and can be swiftly wiped out.

Furthermore, He, Glorious is He, created us for Himself and He created everything for us, both in this world and in the next. Who else, then, deserves to be loved and pleased more than Allah ta'Ala?

Furthermore, all that we – and the whole creation, for that matter – require and need is with Him. He is the Most Generous. He gives His servants more than they need, even before they ask him. He is pleased with even a little right action and increases its rewards. He forgives untold wrong actions and wipes them out. Whatever is in the heavens and the earth supplicates to Him. Everyday He is on a new affair. The multiplicity of things never bewilder Him, nor is He ever made weary by the insistent pleas of His servants. Indeed He is pleased with those who persist in their supplication.

He is pleased with those of His servants who seek His assistance, and He is angry with those who do not. He is displeased when He sees a servant being disobedient and not caring about his actions, and yet He veils His servant's wrong actions while the servant himself does not veil them. He has mercy on His servant while the servant does not have mercy on himself.

He has called him to His acceptance and mercy through His compassion and generosity – but he declines. He has sent messengers to him and made His covenant known through them. He, Glorious is He, even draws near him and says, “Is there anyone who is calling on Me, so that I may answer his prayer? Is there anyone who is seeking My forgiveness, so that I may forgive him?” 4

How, then, can hearts not love Him, the One Who – and no one other than Him – grants rewards, answers prayers, pardons mistakes, forgives sins, veils wrong actions, dispels grief and drives away sorrow?

He alone, Exalted is He, is worthy of remembrance, gratitude, worship and praise. He is the most generous to be asked, the most liberal to give, the most merciful to pardon, the mightiest to assist and the most dependable to rely on. He is more merciful to His servant than a mother is to her baby. He is also more pleased by the repentance of the penitent sinner than a man who is overjoyed to find his riding beast with all his provisions still on its back after he had lost it in a barren land and had given up all hope of survival.

He is the King, with no partner, the One, the Unique, Who has no equal. Everything will perish except His Face. He is not obeyed unless it is by His command, nor is He disobeyed without His knowing it. He is pleased with the obedient servant for his obedience, even though it could not have occurred without His help and assistance. He pardons and forgives even after He has been disobeyed. And yet the rights which are due to Him are the ones which are most rejected and neglected.

He is the nearest witness, the most sublime protector, the most true to His Word, and the most just of all judges.

He knows the secrets of the selves. ◀ There is not an animal of whose forelock He does not have a hold. (11:57) ▶. He records the actions and decides the lifetimes of His slaves. To Him the secrets in the hearts are known and the Unseen is revealed. Everyone yearns for Him, faces humble themselves before the Light of His Face, and minds are completely incapable of understanding the Essence of His Being. All the evidence that confronts the heart and mind bears witness to the impossibility of there being anything like Him. By the Light of His Face every form of darkness has been enlightened, the heavens and the earth have been illuminated, and the whole creation has been set in order. He does not sleep, nor is it fitting for Him to do so. The action of the night are presented before Him before daybreak, and those of the day before nightfall. He is veiled by pure light, and if the veil were to be removed, then the radiance of His Light would engulf all of His creation that His vision contains.

Love of Allah the Almighty gives life to the heart and sustains the soul. The heart experiences no pleasure, nor feels any joy, nor tastes any success – not even life – if it does not have this love. If the heart loses this love, then the loss it suffers is more severe than that of the eye when it is deprived of its sight and the ear when it is deprived of its hearing.

Even worse than this, the decay of the heart when it is devoid of love for its Creator, Source, and True God, is far worse than that of the body when it no longer contains the soul. This truth is only recognised by the people who are alive, for a wound does not pain the dead.

Fath al-Mawsili said, “The lover finds no other pleasure in life and does not neglect remembering Allah for an instant.”

A righteous man once said, "The lover is always with Him: he remembers Him continually and constantly with longing, using every possible means and *nawafil* to please Him." ⁵

Another man said in a poem:

And love your Lord by serving Him,
For lovers are but servants of the Beloved.

When she was giving counsel to her children, one of the women of the *Salaf* once said to them, "Make it a habit to love and obey Allah, for those who have *taqwa* take their obedience to the point where their body experiences aversion for anything other than obedience. If the cursed one (*shaytan*) tries to tempt them to do something wrong, the wrong action is ashamed and avoids them because of the way in which it is rejected by them."

Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak recited:

You disobey Allah,
and yet you still claim to love Him.
By Allah, such behaviour is disgusting,
by any standard!

You would have obeyed Him had your love been true,
For the lover is always obedient to the Beloved!

Notes

1. Al-Bukhari, *Kitab al-Iman*, 1/58; Muslim, *Kitab al-Iman*, 2/15.
2. Al-Bukhari, *Kitab al-Iman wa'n-Nudhur*, 11/523.
3. As Allah says: ﴿ The Prophet is closer to the believers than their own selves. (33:6) ﴾.