

SIX

REMEMBRANCE OF ALLAH AND RECITATION OF THE QUR'AN

Ibn Taimiyya wrote, "Remembrance of Allah is to the heart what water is to fish. What happens to a fish when it is taken out of water?" *Imam* Shams ad-Din ibn al-Qayyim wrote about nearly eighty benefits that come with *dhikru 'llah* in his book *al-Wabil al-Sayyib*. We shall quote some of them here, although we recommend the reader to refer to this book itself because of its great value.

Remembrance of Allah is sustenance for both the heart and the spirit. If the servant is deprived of it he becomes like a body which has been deprived of food.

Remembrance of Allah also drives away *shaytan*, suppressing him and breaking him; it is pleasing to the Merciful, Mighty and Exalted is He, dispels worry and melancholy from the heart, adorns it with delight and joy, fills the heart and face with light, and cloaks the one who remembers Allah with dignity, gentleness and freshness. It instils love for Allah, fear of Him, and relating all matters to Him. It also enhances Allah's remembrance of His servant, for as Allah says:

◀ So remember Me – I will remember you. (2:152) ▶

Even if this were the only reward for the remembrance of Allah, it would be mercy and honour enough, for such a heart is always aware and free from wrong actions.

Although remembrance is one of the easiest forms of worship, the mercy and honour that it brings cannot be achieved by any other means. Abu Huraira reported that the Prophet ﷺ said, "Whoever recites the words, 'There is no god but Allah, the One, having no partner with Him. Sovereignty belongs to Him and All praise is due to Him, and He is Powerful over everything', one hundred times every day, there is a reward equal to freeing ten slaves for him, and a hundred good actions are recorded for him, and a hundred wrong actions are removed from his record. That is a safeguard for him against *shaytan* on that day until evening, and no one brings anything more excellent than this, except the one who has done more than this (that is, who recites these words more than one hundred times)." ¹

Jabir reported that the Prophet ﷺ said, "Whoever recites the words, 'Glory be to Allah and His is the praise', will have a palm tree planted for him in the Garden." ²

Ibn Mas'ud, may Allah be pleased with him, said, "To Praise Allah, may He be Exalted, is more dear to me than spending the same number of *dinars* (as the number of times I praise Him) in the way of Allah."

Remembrance of Allah is a remedy for hard hearts. A man once told al-Hassan, "O Abu Sa'id, I complain to you about the hardness of my heart." He said, "Soften it with the remembrance of Allah." Makhul said, "Remembrance of Allah is (a sign of) health, while remembrance of people is like a disease." A man once asked Salman, "Which deeds are the best?" He said, "Haven't you read in the Qur'an:

﴿And the remembrance of Allah is greatest. (29:45)﴾?"

Abu Musa once related that the Prophet ﷺ said, "The difference between the one who remembers his Lord and the one who does not is like the difference between the living and the dead." ³

Abdullah ibn Busr related that a man once told the Prophet ﷺ, "The roads to good are many and I am unable to take all of them, so please tell me something to which I can hold fast, but do not overburden me lest I forget it." He said, "Make sure that your tongue is moist and supple with the remembrance of Allah, the Exalted." ⁴

Continual remembrance of Allah increases a servant's good witnesses on the Day of Resurrection. It is a means which prevents him from talking in the wrong way, such as backbiting and spreading tales and their like. Either the tongue is mentioning Allah and remembering Him, or it is talking incorrectly.

Whoever has the gates of remembrance opened to him has an opening to his Lord, Mighty and Glorious is He, through which he will find what he seeks. If he finds Allah, he has found everything. If he misses the opportunity, he has missed everything.

There are several types of remembrance. The remembrance of the Names of Allah, Mighty and Glorious is He, the remembrance of His Attributes, and praising Him and thanking Him. All of these can take the form of saying, for example, 'Glory be to Allah', 'Praise be to Allah', 'There is no god but Allah'. A servant can also remember Allah by referring to His Names and Attributes, such as by saying, for example, "Allah, Mighty and Glorious is He, Hears all that his servants say and do"; or by mentioning what He has commanded and what He has forbidden, such as saying, "Allah, the Mighty and Glorious, commands such and such, or forbids such and such".

A servant can also remember Allah by talking about His blessings, while the best type of remembrance is the recitation of the Qur'an, because this contains remedies to cure the heart from all illnesses. Allah, the Exalted, says:

◀ O mankind, there has come to you a protection from your Lord and a healing for what is in your hearts, and for those who believe, a guidance and a mercy. (10:57) ▶

And also:

◀ We send down in the Qur'an that which is a healing and a mercy for those who believe. (17:82) ▶

All the illnesses of the heart result from desires and doubt, and the Qur'an is a cure for both. It has enough clear signs and proofs to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and thus it cures the diseases of doubt which ruin knowledge, understanding and perception, by enabling a person to see things as they really are.

Whoever studies the Qur'an, and allows it to be absorbed by his heart, will recognise truth and falsehood and will be able to distinguish between them, just as he is able to distinguish between night and day.

As for curing the diseases that arise from desires, it is because it contains wisdom and good counsel. This recommends avoiding worldly gains and inspires a yearning for the *akhira*.

The Prophet ﷺ once said, "Whoever wants to love Allah and His Messenger should read the Qur'an." ⁵

The Qur'an is also the best means for bringing the servant nearer to his Lord, Glorious and Exalted is He. Khabbab ibn al-Arat said to a man, "Draw closer to Allah as much as you can, and remember that you can do so by no means more pleasing to Him than using His own words."

Ibn Mas'ud said, "Whoever loves the Qur'an loves Allah and His Messenger," and *sayyedina* Uthman ibn Affan, may Allah be pleased with him, said, "If your hearts were really pure, they would never have enough of reciting Allah's words."

All in all, the most beneficial thing for the servant is to remember Allah, Mighty and Glorious is He, constantly:

◀ Surely in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest. (13:28) ▶

The best kind of remembrance is to recite the Book of Allah, the Glorious and Exalted.

Notes

1. Al-Bukhari, *Kitab ad-Da'awat*, 11/201; Muslim, *Kitab adh-Dhikr wa'd-Du'a*, 17/16.
2. *Sahih*, at-Tirmidhi, *Kitab ad-Da'awat*, 9/433.
3. Al-Bukhari, *Kitab ad-Da'awat*, 11/208; al-Hakim, *Kitab ad-Du'a*, 1/495.
4. At-Tirmidhi, *Kitab ad-Da'awat*, 9/314.
5. *Da'if, munkar*. See the commentary on this *hadith* in Ibn Hajar's *Tahdhib at-Tahdhib*, 2/222 and *Lisan al-Mizan*, 2/185, and in as-Suyuti's *Al-Jami' as-Saghir*, 6/150.

SEVEN

SEEKING ALLAH'S FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness is being shielded from the harmful consequences of wrong actions, and the veiling of them. Seeking forgiveness is mentioned again and again in the Qur'an, and in some places it is a command, as in His saying, Glorious and Exalted is He:

◀ And seek forgiveness of Allah; surely Allah is Forgiving, Compassionate. (73:20) ▶

In other places, Allah praises those who seek His forgiveness, as in the *ayah*:

◀ And those who pray for forgiveness in the early hours of the morning. (3:17) ▶

In other places, Allah tells us that He forgives those who ask for His forgiveness, as in the *ayah*:

◀ And whoever does evil, or wrongs his own soul, but afterwards seeks Allah's forgiveness, will find Allah is Forgiving, Compassionate. (4:110) ▶

Seeking forgiveness is frequently associated with repentance, in which case it takes the form of asking for forgiveness with the tongue. Repentance is turning away from wrong actions with both heart and body. Seeking forgiveness is similar to supplication in that Allah, if He so wishes, responds to it and forgives the person who seeks His forgiveness. This is especially true if the *du'a* came di-

rectly from a heart troubled by wrong actions, or if it was made during the times most favourable for His response, such as in the early hours of the morning or immediately following the prayer.

It has been transmitted that Luqman once told his son, "O my son, make it a habit for your tongue to utter the words, 'Forgive me, O Allah', for there are certain times during which Allah will not disappoint a servant who calls on Him."

Al-Hasan said, "Ask for Allah's forgiveness frequently – in your homes, at your tables, on your roads, in your markets, at your meetings, wherever you are. You never know when you will be granted His forgiveness."

Abu Huraira reported that the Prophet ﷺ said, "I swear by Allah that I supplicate for Allah's forgiveness and turn to Him in repentance more than seventy times a day."¹

Abu Huraira said, "I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say, 'A servant committed a sin and he said, "O Allah, I have committed a sin, so forgive me." Allah said, "Does My servant know that he has a Lord Who forgives sins and helps him? I forgive My servant." After some time, the man committed another sin so he said, "O my Lord, I have committed another sin, so forgive me." His Lord said, "Does My servant know that he has a Lord Who forgives sins and helps him? I forgive My servant." After some time, the man committed yet another sin so he said, "O my Lord, I have committed another sin, so forgive me." His Lord said, "Does My servant know that he has a Lord Who forgives sins and helps him? O servant, do what you like. I have granted you forgiveness."'"²

He, Exalted is He, said this three times.

This means that the man was granted forgiveness because he continued to seek Allah's forgiveness each time he

committed a sin. It appears that this applied so long as his seeking forgiveness was not accompanied by the intention to repeat the sin again afterwards.

Aisha, may Allah be pleased with her, said, "It is a fortunate person who (on the Day of Judgement) finds in his record many *du'as* for forgiveness."

In other words, seeking Allah's forgiveness is a cure for all wrong actions.

Qatada said, "This Qur'an guides you to the recognition of your illnesses and to their remedies. Your illnesses are your sins and your medicine is seeking Allah's forgiveness."

Ali ibn Abi Talib, may Allah be pleased with him, said, "Allah does not inspire seeking forgiveness in any servant whom He wishes to punish."

Notes

1. Al-Bukhari, *Kitab ad-Da'awat*, 11/101.
2. Al-Bukhari, *Kitab at-Tawhid*, 13/466; Muslim, *Kitab adh-Dhikr wa'd-Du'a*, 17/75.