

4. Muslim has related in his *Sahih*, *Kitab Salat al-Musafirin wa Qasruha*, 6/36, on the authority of Abu Huraira, may Allah be pleased with him, that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "Our Lord, Mighty and Glorious is He, descends every night to the heaven which is nearest to us during the last third of the night and says, 'Is there anyone who is calling on Me, so that I may answer his prayer? Is there anyone who is asking of Me, so that I may grant his request? Is there anyone who is seeking My forgiveness, so that I may forgive him?'"

5. This is supported by a *hadith* related by al-Bukhari in his *Sahih*, on the authority of Abu Huraira, who said, "The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, 'Allah ta'Ala has said, "Whoever displays enmity towards a friend of Mine, I shall be at war with him. My servant does not draw near to Me with anything more loved by Me than what I have made *fard* for him, and My servant continues to draw near to Me with *nawafil* until I love him – and when I love him, I am his hearing with which he hears, and his seeing with which he sees, and his hand with which he grasps, and his foot with which he walks – and if he were to ask of Me, I would surely give it to him, and if he were to ask Me for refuge, I would surely grant him it.'" Also contained in an-Nawawi, *al-Arba'in an-Nawawi*, *hadith* no. 38.

## SEVENTEEN

### CONTENTMENT WITH THE DECREE OF ALLAH

The servant may experience one of two states as regards what he dislikes: the state of being content, or that of being patient. Being content is a praiseworthy quality, while being patient is a duty which the believer must fulfil.

At some times, the people of contentment witness the Wisdom and Beauty of the One Who Tests when He tests His servant, and they see that He is always Right in whatever He decrees.

At other times, they witness the Might and Majesty and Perfection of the One Who Tests, to such an extent that they become completely immersed in these Attributes of Allah, Exalted is He, so that they do not experience any pain.

This station can only be attained by those who have great knowledge and love. And so it is possible that they find pleasure in whatever they have been afflicted with – because it has come to them from their Beloved.

#### *The Difference between Contentment and Patience*

Being patient involves restraining the self and preventing it from giving in to resentment, in spite of any suffering that it experiences – in the hope that the misfortune which afflicts it will come to an end – as well as restraining the limbs from behaving badly, out of impatience.

Being content, on the other hand, involves feeling at ease in accepting the Divine Decree, and being unconcerned with when any suffering will stop, even though it is being experienced. Being content alleviates any suffering by reason of the heart's immersion in the spirit of certainty and knowledge. If the contentment increases in its intensity, then it removes the experiencing of any suffering altogether.

It has been related on the authority of Anas ibn Malik that the Prophet ﷺ said, "When Allah loves someone then He tests him: as for whoever is content – Allah will be pleased with him; and as for whoever is discontented – Allah will be displeased with him." <sup>1</sup>

Ibn Mas'ud, may Allah be pleased with him, said, "Allah the Almighty has, in His Justice and Wisdom, placed refreshment and joy in certainty and contentment, and He has placed sadness and sorrow in doubt and discontentment."

When commenting on the *ayah*,

◀ No misfortune happens without the permission of Allah – and as for whoever believes in Allah, He guides his heart; and Allah Knows all things, (64:11) ▶

'Alqama said, "This concerns the misfortune which afflicts the servant: he knows that it has come from Allah, and so he comes to terms with it and feels content with it."

As regards the *ayah*,

◀ Whoever acts righteously, whether male or female, and is a believer, We will surely give him life with a good life, and We will surely give them their reward in accordance with the best of what they used to do, (16:97) ▶

Abu Mu'awiyya al-Aswar said, "A good life' means being satisfied and content."

Ali ibn Abi Talib, may Allah be pleased with him, once saw 'Adiyy ibn Hatim looking sorrowful and so he asked him, "Why are you so sad, O 'Adiyy?" 'Adiyy replied, "How can I not be in such a state, when both of my sons have been killed and my eye gouged out?" So Ali said to him, "O 'Adiyy, whoever is content with the Decree of Allah will surely experience it and be rewarded for it; and whoever is not content with the Decree of Allah will surely experience it and Allah will make his actions worthless."

Abu'd-Darda' visited a man on his death-bed and found him praising Allah, so he said to him, "You are right! Allah, Mighty and Glorious is He, likes us to be content with whatever He decrees."

Al-Hasan al-Basri said, "Whoever is content with what he has, Allah will make it enough for him and give it blessing; and whoever is not content, Allah will neither make it enough for him nor give it blessing."

Umar ibn Abdal-Aziz said, "I have nothing that gives me any joy, except when what has been decreed by Allah happens." He was once asked, "What do you desire?" He replied, "Whatever Allah, Mighty and Glorious is He, decrees."

Abdal-Wahid ibn Zaid said, "Being content is the greatest door to Allah, the Garden of this life, and a place of rest for the worshippers."

It has also been said, "There will be no station in the *akhirah* better than that of those who are content with whatever Allah decrees, at all times. Whoever enjoys the quality of contentment will be raised to the best of stations."

On discovering one morning that he had lost a great many camels, an Arab of the desert said, “By Him of Whom I am one of His slaves, were it not for some envious and malicious enemies, I would not have been pleased to see my camels still alive and in their pen – and something which Allah had decreed not taking place.”

## *Notes*

1. At-Tirmidhi, *Kitab az-Zuhud*, 7/77, classified as *hasan gharib*; as-Suyuti, *al-Jami' as Saghir*, 2/459, classified as *hasan*.

## EIGHTEEN

### HOPE IN ALLAH

This is the peaceful state of a heart that awaits what is dear to it. If the means – by which what the heart awaits may come – are not present, then stupidity and folly would be more accurate descriptions of its state. If, on the other hand, what it awaits is certain to happen, then neither can certain hope be the term to use in describing its state: one cannot say, “I wish the sun would rise at sunrise”, but one can say, “I wish it would rain”.

Those who study the heart have taught that this world is like land which is cultivated for its fruits in the next world: that the heart is like the earth, that belief is like the seeds, and that acts of obedience are like ploughing up the soil and clearing it for planting and digging channels to bring water to it.

The heart which is in love with this world is like barren earth in which seeds cannot sprout. The Day of Resurrection is like the day of the harvest, and no one reaps what he did not sow. No seed other than the seed of belief can grow, and belief rarely brings forth any fruit if the heart is rotten and lacking morality.

In the same way that seeds do not sprout in barren earth, so a servant’s hope for Allah’s forgiveness can be compared to the hope of a farmer:

If anyone searches for fertile soil, sows it with good healthy seeds, supplies it with what it needs when it needs it, pulls out the weeds and anything else that might hinder

or ruin the growth of the crop, and then sits waiting for Allah's blessings in the form of His keeping unfavourable weather and destructive pests away until the crop has finished growing and is ripe – then his waiting can be described as hope.

If, however, he sows the seeds in hard, barren soil which is too high up for water to reach it, and does nothing to care for the seedlings, and then sits waiting for a harvest – then his waiting can only be described as folly and stupidity, not hope.

So, the term hope only applies to waiting with longing and yearning for something to happen, after all the means which will assist in the realisation of this desire – that is, all those means which are within the servant's power and choice – have been utilised.

The things which are not within the servant's control, and which are entirely within the domain of Allah's generosity, also play a part. Allah, Exalted is He, is able to prevent all harmful phenomena and obstacles, if He so wishes.

If the servant sows the seeds of belief, and waters them with obedience to and worship of Allah, and purifies his heart of bad elements, and then waits for Allah's blessings in the form of His keeping him steady in that state until his death, and then granting him an excellent end and His forgiveness – then his waiting is truly hoping for the best.

Allah, the Exalted, says:

◀ Surely those who believe and those who make *hijra* and struggle in the way of Allah, these are the ones who have hope of the mercy of Allah; and Allah is Forgiving, Compassionate. (2:218) ▶

This means that such people are worthy of hoping for

Allah's mercy. Allah did not intend to restrict hope in Him to them alone, for others can also have hope, but He distinguishes them as the only people whose hope is really well-founded.

The one whose hope guides him to obedience of Allah and deters him from rebelling against Him has true hope; whereas the hope which leads a person on to idleness and being immersed in wrong actions is only stupidity in disguise.

It should be pointed out that anyone who hopes for something must satisfy three conditions:

First, he should hold dear what he hopes for.

Second, he should be afraid of missing it.

Third, he should strive to achieve what he hopes for.

If hope is not connected to any one of these prerequisites, then it is only wishful thinking – hope is a different matter all together.

Everyone who is hopeful is fearful. Whoever walks a path, makes haste when he fears that he may miss the goal that he hopes for.

It has been related by Abu Huraira that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "Whoever is afraid of being plundered by the enemy sets out in the early part of the night, and whoever sets out early reaches his goal. Be on your guard! The treasures of Allah are dear and precious. Wake up! The treasure of Allah is the Garden."<sup>1</sup> Allah, Glorious and Exalted is He, says:

﴿ Say: "O My servants who have wronged their souls, do not despair of the mercy of Allah, for surely Allah forgives all sins; surely He is Forgiving, Compassionate. (39:53) ﴾

And also:



◀ And surely your Lord is full of forgiveness for mankind for their wrongdoing. (13:6) ▶

Umar ibn Abdal-Aziz reported on the authority of his father, may Allah be pleased with both of them, that the Prophet ﷺ said, "Whenever a Muslim dies, Allah casts a Jew or a Christian into the Fire in his place." <sup>2</sup>

It has been transmitted on the authority of Umar ibn al-Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him, that some prisoners were brought before the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. Amongst them there was a woman who was searching for someone in the crowd. When she found a baby amongst the prisoners, she took it in her arms, cradled it next to her breast, and allowed it to suckle.

Then the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Do you think this woman would ever throw her child into the Fire?" We said, "By Allah, as long as it was in her power, she would never throw her child into the Fire!"

Then the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Allah is more merciful to His servants than this woman is to her child." <sup>3</sup>

It has been related on the authority of Abu Huraira that he heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say, "When Allah created the creation, He decreed something for Himself, and a clear record is with Him confirming that, "Truly, My mercy prevails over My wrath." <sup>4</sup>

It has been reported on the authority of Anas that he heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say, "Allah, Exalted is He, has said, 'O son of Adam, as long as you call on Me and ask of Me, I will forgive you for what you have done, and I shall not mind. O son of Adam, were your sins to reach the clouds of the sky and were you then to ask forgiveness of Me, I would forgive you. O son of Adam, were you to come to Me with sins nearly as great as the earth, and

were you then to face Me without having associated anything with Me, I would bring you forgiveness nearly as great as it.”<sup>5</sup>

Yahya ibn Mu'adh said, “In my opinion, the worst kind of self-delusion is for someone to sin excessively and then to hope for forgiveness without feeling any remorse; or it is to expect to draw near to Allah, the Exalted, without obeying or worshipping Him; or it is to hope for the fruits of the Garden after having only planted the seeds for the Fire; or it is to seek the abode of the obedient through committing wrong actions; or it is to expect a reward after having done nothing worthwhile; or it is to place hope in Allah, Glorious and Mighty is He, after having exceeded all the limits.”

Do you hope for forgiveness when you have not trodden its paths? A ship does not sail on dry land.<sup>6</sup>

## Notes

1. *Hasan*, at-Tirmidhi, *Sifat al-Qiyyama*, 7/146, classified as *hasan gharib*; also al-Hakim, *Kitab ar-Raqa'iq*, 4/307.
2. Muslim, *Kitab at-Tawba*, 17/85.
3. Al-Bukhari, *Kitab al-Adab*, 10/426; Muslim, *Kitab at-Tawba*, 17/70.
4. Al-Bukhari, *Kitab Bad' al-Wahiy*, 6/287; Muslim, *Kitab at-Tawba*, 17/68.
5. *Hasan*, at-Tirmidhi, *Kitab ad-Da'awat*, 9/524; classified as *hasan gharib*.
6. Ibn Hibban has related in his book, *Rawdhat al-'Uqala'*, p.284, that the poet Abu'l-'Atahiyya said, “I went to see Harun ar-Rashid, the commander of the faithful, and when he saw me, he said, ‘Are you Abu'l-'Atahiyya, the poet?’ I said, ‘Yes.’ Then he said to me, ‘Give me some