

# *Concepts in Islam*



# CONCEPTS

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# IKHLĀŞ

The verb *khalāṣa* means to become pure, clear, free or safe, and *akhlaṣa* is to purify something. So *ikhlaṣ* means purification – the purification of one's belief and intention, which leads to sincerity in worship. *Ikhlaṣ* can also indicate the purification of one's deeds from *riyaa'* (showing off), in complete obedience to Allah alone.

Every Muslim has to focus on knowing the true meaning and purpose of life. Then he must formulate an all-encompassing intention to utilize his moral, spiritual, mental, emotional and physical resources to purify his soul. A person making decisions based on this higher purpose, aspiring to attain Allah's approval is living and striving; otherwise he is just existing and wasting his efforts.

قُلْ هَلْ نُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِالْأَخْسَرِينَ أَعْمَالًا الَّذِينَ ضَلَّ سَعِيَّهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ يَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ يُحْسِنُونَ صُنْعًا

Say, "Shall we inform you of the greatest losers as to their deeds? They are those whose effort is lost in the life of this world, while they think that they are doing good in [their] work." (18:103-104)

Ibn Katheer said, "This is general, referring to everyone who worships Allah in a way that is not acceptable, thinking he is correct in doing so and that his deeds will be accepted. But he is mistaken, and his deeds will be rejected."

*Ikhlaṣ* (sincerity) is a condition for Allah's acceptance of the righteous actions that are done in accordance with the Qur'ān and Sunnah. It is when the worshipper intends all of his deeds for the acceptance of Allah, for His rewards and His favours.

As Allah said:

وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ

And they were not commanded except to worship Allah, sincere to Him in religion. (98:5)

## The concept of *ikhlaṣ* is explained in several places in the Qur'ān

Allah addressed His Messenger (ﷺ) saying:

أَحْسِبَ النَّاسُ أَنْ يُتْرَكُوا أَنْ يَقُولُوا آمَنَّا وَهُمْ لَا يُفْتَنُونَ

Indeed, We have sent down to you the Book in truth. So worship Allah, [being] sincere to Him in religion. (39:2)

قُلْ إِنِّي أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ مُخْلِصًا لَهُ الدِّينَ

Say, "Indeed, I have been commanded to worship Allah, [being] sincere to Him in religion. (39:11)

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُكُمْ يُوحَى إِلَيَّ أَنَّمَا إِلَهُكُمُ إِلَهُ وَاحِدٌ فَمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا لِقَاءَ رَبِّهِ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ أَحَدًا

Say, "I am only a man like you, to whom has been revealed that your god is one God. So whoever would hope for the meeting with his Lord – let him do righteous work and not associate in the worship of his Lord anyone." (18:110)

Ibn Taymiyyah said, "Without doubt, *ikhlaṣ* removes the cause for entering the Hellfire. So anyone who enters the Fire from those who said, '*Lā ilāha ill-Allah*' proves that he had not implemented the sincerity of *lā ilāha ill-Allah*, which would have prohibited him from the Fire."

So sincerity is to single out Allah in one's intention – to obey and please Him alone. This means sincerity in our acts of worship, in our repentance, in our supplication, in our striving, in our trusting and relying on Allah, in our recitation of the Qur'ān, and in all our activities, dealings and relationships. In the words of the Qur'ān:

وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ دِينًا مِمَّنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ

And who is better in religion than one who submits himself to Allah and is a doer of good. (4:125)

Sincerity is known to Allah and cannot be judged by people, especially when it relates to intention. A Muslim is required to be constant in observation of his intention and always keep it pure. Of particular significance is our treatment of the weak members of society who cannot obtain their rights on their own, be it domestic help, subordinates at work, assistants, or even in family hierarchies where some are under the authority of others. Respect, honour and good treatment are of utmost importance in Islam. Hearts lacking sincerity are seen disregarding these matters.

Ibn Qudāmah al-Maqdisi wrote: "Indeed, all of mankind are destroyed except those with knowledge, and those with knowledge are destroyed except those who act upon it, and those who act are destroyed except those who are sincere in their action, and those who are sincere are in great danger of *shirk* in their action."

So we must first purify our deeds by avoiding *shirk* (i.e., doing an act of worship for other than Allah).

Allah said to His Messenger (ﷺ):

وَلَقَدْ أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ وَإِلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكَ لَئِنْ أَشْرَكَتَ لَيَجْبُطَنَّ عَمَلُكَ وَلَتَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ.

And it was already revealed to you and to those before you that if you should associate [anything with Me], your work would surely become worthless and you would surely be among the losers. (39:65)

Umar bin al-Khaṭṭāb reported, "I heard the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), say, *"Deeds are only by intention, and every man shall have only what he intended. So one whose hijrah was to Allah and His Messenger – his hijrah was to Allah and His Messenger. But one whose hijrah was to achieve a worldly aim, or to a woman he would marry – then his hijrah was to that for which he emigrated."* (Al Bukhari and Muslim)

And there is a *ḥadīth qudsī* in which Allah says, *"I am the most self-sufficient of partners, needing no partnership; so if one does a deed for Me and for another [simultaneously], then I am disassociated from it, and it is [only] for the [other] partner."* (Muslim and Ibn Mājah)

Abu Umāmah related, "Once a man came to Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) and said, 'What do you think about a person who joins us in battle only to seek fame and wealth?' He replied, 'He receives nothing.' The man repeated the question three times, and each time Allah's Messenger said, 'He receives nothing.' Then he (ﷺ) said, 'Indeed, Allah does not accept an action unless it is done with *ikhlaṣ*, seeking nothing but His acceptance.'" (An-Nasā'i - ḥasan)

This is confirmed further in the Prophet's saying, *"Possibly one who fasts gains nothing from his fast but hunger, and possibly one who stands in [night] prayer gains nothing from it but wakefulness."* (Ibn Mājah and al-Ḥākim – ṣaḥeeḥ)

Then we must purify our deeds by avoiding *riyaa'*. *Riyaa'* means show or display. It is doing acts of goodness and piety so that people will see or hear of them in order to win their praise and admiration, to gain position and status among them or to obtain some of the goals and objectives of this world. Thus, the Prophet (ﷺ) called it hidden *shirk*.



Ibn Rajab said, "No one shows his actions to creation except out of ignorance of the greatness of the Creator." And 'Ali bin Abi Ṭālib said, "You should be more concerned with the act being accepted than with performing the act itself."

Among the real dangers threatening a Muslim's relationship with Allah is a tendency to want others to know of his good deeds. If this desire is present while performing the deed, one's sincerity may well be questioned and the deed itself is greatly devalued and perhaps even annulled.

Ibn al-Qayyim said, "Sincerity is not combined in the heart with the love of praise by people and being admired by them or greed for what people possess, except as water is combined with fire." He also observed that any deed we do is predisposed to three defects:

- Consciousness that others are observing our action
- Seeking a compensation (benefit or reward) for an action
- Being pleased with the action

He said, "The level of the servant's sincerity in his intention, determination, aim and fervent desire will determine Allah's enabling its accomplishment and His support for him. Assistance from Allah depends upon the sincerity of His servants in their determination."

A lesser form of *riyaa'*, is to make the deed known after its completion, although it was initially done for Allah alone. This might reduce the reward of the deed in the Hereafter to a certain degree.

When asked how to obtain sincerity, Ibn al-Qayyim explained, "The method of putting an end to hunger for praise and facilitating the development of indifference to it is your certain knowledge that there is no one who can adequately benefit you and praise you or disgrace you and condemn you but Allah."

### **Certain clarifications can serve as reassurance for a believer:**

Abu Dharr reported that someone said to the Prophet (ﷺ), "Have you considered a man who does a good deed and people praise him for it?" He replied, "*That is an immediate sign of good tidings for the believer.*" (Muslim)

When offered payment for a job initially done for the cause of Allah, the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, "*Whatever Allah has granted you from this wealth without your asking or seeking it – take it, and either keep it or give it in charity.*" (Al-Bukhārī)

"*When Allah blesses His servant with a blessing, He likes to see it upon him.*" (Aṭ-Ṭabarānī – ṣaḥeeḥ)  
This demonstrates that good clothes can be worn as long as it is not done for show off or out of conceit, and do not entail extravagance and waste.

### **Giving up a good act due to fear of *riyaa'* is falling into the trap of Shayṭān.**

When unable to corrupt the believer's intention and thereby invalidate his deeds, the Shayṭān may try to discourage him from doing some of them by suggesting to him that it is for show. If one suspects it could be partially true, he should check his intention, amend it when necessary and continue his work. A deed should not be abandoned due to the possibility of *riyaa'*.

Just check the intent and motive of an action. If it is correct, righteous and in agreement with what has been legislated, then it is fine. Rather, it is obligatory upon the Muslim to strive against this threat by making his heart humble before Allah and fearful of Him, preferring His praise and approval over that of humanity.

An act which is sincere will not allow us to expect gratitude or admiration. We cannot feel pride and self-importance, but should know that a deed done for Allah is for His acceptance only and for His

reward alone. Hence, there should be no regret over being unappreciated or criticized by people in this world. The knowledge that He enabled it and allowed it and that He will reward it is sufficient.

Reflection and taking account of ourselves regularly is required to help us be more sincere. We must work to amend our faults so they don't pull us down and we should work to help others overcome theirs. All of us have been given certain strengths and weaknesses as individuals and believers, and it is for us to recognize our strengths as gifts from Allah, to use them appropriately for ourselves and for the benefit of others.

We cannot belittle anyone who does not fit into the worldly success model of achievement, outstanding performance, dynamic personality, and so on. This applies in the work-place, in offices, academic institutions, study groups, or any place where people gather to do decent work for survival in life while striving hard to be sincere believers. Avoiding excessive criticism as well as excessive praise will disable many of the strategies used by the Shayṭān to undermine sincerity.

Only with a sincere attitude can we make positive attempts and work hard to please our Creator. Thus, we will effectively remove from our minds the desire to seek the praise of others or recognition for work which should be done exclusively and completely for the approval of Allah. His appreciation, acceptance and reward must be the only objective.

The aim of achieving sincerity should give every believer the urge to strive hard. Awareness of this aim gives clarity to the mind, enlivens the heart, purifies the soul, controls desires and makes the living of this life rich, meaningful, purposeful and full of benefit, for it is the very essence of worship – serving His cause to obtain His pleasure.

# TAQWĀ

**Taqwā** has been variously defined as: fear of Allah, piety, righteousness or God-consciousness. During the farewell pilgrimage, Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) had said, "*Taqwā is here*," pointing to his heart.

What follows from this God-consciousness is love of pleasing Him and hope for His mercy, balanced by fear of displeasing Him or earning His wrath. What emerges from this love and fear of Him is the natural inclination to virtuous thoughts, words and deeds.

In Ayahs 3-5 of Surah al-Baqarah the concept of taqwā is clarified by explaining who the people are who have it:

الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ. وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنْزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ وَبِالْآخِرَةِ  
هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ. أُولَئِكَ عَلَى هُدًى مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ.

They who believe in the unseen, establish prayer and spend out of what We have provided for them. And who believe in what has been revealed to you, [O Muhammad], and what was revealed before you, and of the Hereafter they are certain. Those are upon [right] guidance from their Lord, and it is those who are the successful.

Ibn `Abbas said, "They are the believers who avoid shirk with Allah and who strive to obey Him, those who fear Allah's punishment which would result if they abandoned the true guidance that they recognize and know. They hope for Allah's mercy by believing in what He revealed."

In Surah al-Baqarah, Ayah 177, those with correct belief confirmed by their deeds are described as *muttaqeen* (those who have taqwā):

لَيْسَ الْبِرَّ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ وَآتَى  
الْمَالَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَى وَالْيَتَامَى وَالْمَسَاكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَالسَّائِلِينَ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَالْمُوفُونَ  
بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا عَاهَدُوا وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي الْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَحِينَ الْبَأْسِ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ

Righteousness is not that you turn your faces toward the east or the west, but [true] righteousness is [in] one who believes in Allah, the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets and gives wealth, in spite of love for it, to relatives, orphans, the needy, the traveler, those who ask [for help], and for freeing slaves; [and who] establishes prayer and gives zakah; [those who] fulfill their promise when they promise; and [those who] are patient in poverty and hardship and during battle. Those are the ones who have been true, and it is those who are the *muttaqeen*.

Indeed, those who have taqwā of Allah, obeying what He ordained and abstaining from what He forbade, will be guided to differentiate between truth and falsehood. This will be an achievement, a security and a way out for them in the affairs of this life, all the while acquiring for them happiness in the Hereafter. They will gain forgiveness, thus having their sins erased, and pardon, having their sins concealed from other people, as well as being directed to a means of gaining Allah's tremendous rewards.

Once recognized, the divine standard of taqwā serves as a powerful tool and weapon to cut through the dense growth, strangling vines and thorny bushes which can obstruct the path of Islam. And once the path is cleared, one will no longer measure an individual's worth by wealth, intelligence, beauty, talent, lineage, race, colour, gender etc. These are favours from Allah, given so that each person might feel gratitude towards his Lord and demonstrate that gratitude by using whatever gift has been

bestowed on him in ways which bring purity and soundness to his own heart and benefits and betterment to his fellow humans.

Taqwā is an inner virtue, the extent of which is known only to Allah. One recognizes that his abilities, talents, intelligence and wealth carry a responsibility. The Quran says:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted. (49:13)

Allah mentions taqwā in connection with the issues on which the foundation of society rests: the orphan's rights, marriage, divorce, inheritance, etc.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَتَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا.

O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women. And fear Allah, through whom you ask one another, and the wombs. Indeed Allah is ever, over you, an Observer. (4:1)

Justice is to be done. Fairness is to be maintained. Rights are to be given. To whom is this addressed? To the people who fear Allah, because love and fear of Allah is the basis of worship and obedience.

Who can attain taqwā?

إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ غَفُورٌ.

Only those fear Allah from among His servants who have knowledge. Indeed, Allah is Exalted in Might and Forgiving. (35:28)

It is only those who have knowledge among His servants who fear Allah as He should be feared, because the more they know about the Almighty, the All-Powerful, the All-Knowing, who has the most perfect attributes and the most beautiful names, the more they fear Him. And then, when they convey the Message of Allah to His creation and fulfill that with which they have been entrusted, they can fear no one but Him.

الَّذِينَ يَبْلُغُونَ رَسُولَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَخْشَوْنَهُ وَلَا يَخْشَوْنَ أَحَدًا إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ حَسِيبًا

[Allah praises] those who convey the messages of Allah and fear Him and do not fear anyone but Allah. And sufficient is Allah as Accountant. (33:39)

Examples of former peoples are given in the Qur'an, with the results of faith and obedience to Allah and the results of disbelief and disobedience. The lesson will be derived from them only by those who have taqwā.

وَلَقَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكُمْ آيَاتٍ مُبِينَاتٍ وَمَثَلًا مِنَ الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ

And We have certainly sent down to you distinct verses and examples from those who passed on before you and an admonition for those who fear Allah. (24:34)

And Allah has said:

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ وَأَسْمِعُوا وَأَطِيعُوا وَأَنْفِقُوا خَيْرًا لِّأَنْفُسِكُمْ وَمَنْ يُوقِ شَحْنَفَهُ فَإُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ



So fear Allah as much as you are able, and listen and obey and spend [in the way of Allah]; it is better for your souls. And whoever is protected from the stinginess of his soul - it is those who will be the successful. (64:16)

"As much as you are able" means as much as you can bear or endure. It pertains to the obedience of orders. When ordered by Allah to do something, we must do as much of it as we are able. For example, when sick we can pray sitting or even lying down, when fasting we can break the fast if we fall ill, etc. Prohibitions, however, are those acts that are forbidden to do. There is nothing to prevent us from not doing them, so we must stop immediately. So what Allah is saying is that when I command you to do something, do as much of it as you can, but whatever I forbid you, avoid it.

Allah loves those with taqwā, who obey Allah, avoid what He prohibited and adhere to the Shari'ah that He sent with His final Messenger, Muhammad (ﷺ).

بَلَىٰ مَنْ أَوْفَىٰ بَعْدَهُ وَاتَّقَىٰ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ

But yes, whoever fulfills his commitment and fears Allah - then indeed, Allah loves al-muttaqeen. (3:76)

We can say that Allah (ﷻ) provides right guidance, and some accept and follow His message while others deny or ignore it. Those who close their eyes and refuse are not guided, while those who apply the guidance they receive and confirm their belief through obedience and worship are strengthened in faith and granted further guidance.

وَالَّذِينَ اهْتَدَوْا زَادَهُمْ هُدًى وَآثَاهُمْ تَقْوَاهُمْ

And those who are guided - He increases them in guidance and gives them their taqwa. (47:17)

And in order for guidance to enter a heart, it must be open and receptive. So when one deliberately closes his eyes, ears and his heart to Allah's guidance, He deprives himself of guidance as a consequence of his own choice.

Because of its acute importance, we find that the Prophet's companions were preoccupied with taqwā and used to exhort one another to it. That is because they understood that the best of provisions for this world and the Hereafter is taqwā. It was said of Abu Bakr: "Abu Bakr does not excel you by fasting and prayer, but he excels you by something that has settled in his heart."

When things come into perspective and the goal is clear, we need to take measures; put it topmost in our priority list, start working towards it and help and support each other to achieve it. Goals need planning and hard work. Merely wishing and giving lip-service to them is not a panacea, a cure-all or a solution for all problems. (In Greek mythology, Panacea was a goddess of universal remedy.)

Especially when "diseases of the heart" are as severe as unbelief (kufr), hypocrisy (nifaaq) and doubt. And other lesser diseases such as injustice, hate, envy, pride, selfishness, anger, blame, fault-finding and disdain are all waiting in the wings to tarnish and taint the heart. Especially so since the shayateen (devils) are working overtime, making sin attractive, planting in our hearts the seeds of love of the world, competition for possessions, immorality, feasting of the eyes upon the unlawful, etc...

Our task is laid out: taqwā is the key. A key that will open doors to help us change ourselves, and be agents of change – to release from imprisonment that intrinsic quality of human nature called 'goodness' for which the whole world is searching.

Leo Tolstoy, the Russian moral thinker and novelist said, "It is amazing how complete is the delusion that beauty is goodness." The English language dictionary defines goodness as: "The quality of being good in any of its various senses; excellence; virtue; kindness; benevolence; goodness of character, of disposition, of conduct, etc." In trying to define the good that is within mankind, Aristotle said that

man is inherently good and that his tendency for it is deliberate and pre-destined. He felt that if man is truly good within his soul he will be happy. Not necessarily joyful, but content and satisfied. He had spent a large amount of time examining different virtues and behaviors and then determining what the outcome of these attributes would be.

But the search ends with Islam. Goodness is defined by the Shari'ah and not any man-made system. Islam is the only solution and means to reclaim that upright nature.

It is taqwā which renders a person valuable and worthy, a wholesome role model, a gracious companion, a sincere advisor, a qualified leader. As role models for our children, we should inculcate taqwā in their hearts and motivate them to pursue their life goals in whichever specialty or field of halaal work they wish, and to be callers to truth in their behavior – by being kind, caring and generous; in words and deeds; by not lying, cheating, being unjust or deceiving. Armed with taqwā they can protect themselves from the constant bombardment by evil forces trying to rob them of that very striving – with a single-minded focus, a whole-hearted endeavour to tread the path of Islam, liberate the soul from the depths of ignorance and sin and reach the only goal worth striving for with sincerity: the acceptance and pleasure of Allah.

The Prophet himself used to ask Allah to grant him taqwā. Ibn Mas'ood reported that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) would supplicate: "*Allāhumma innī as'alukal-hudā wat-tuqā wal-'afāfa wal-ghinā*. (O Allah, I ask you for guidance, taqwā, chastity, and self-sufficiency.)

May Allah accept from us.

# TAWAKKUL

"*At-tawakkul 'alAllāh*" is the Islamic concept of complete reliance on Allah or trusting in Allah's plan. The root word in Arabic is وَكَّلَ (*wakala*). It means to entrust, charge or authorize. Among the names of Allah is *al-Wakeel*, the Disposer of affairs: the one entrusted, relied upon, depended upon and sufficient to take care of all matters.

*Tawakkul* means putting trust in Allah while also implementing the means that have been permitted. Scholars have made an important distinction between *tawakkul* (توكل) and *tawaakul* (تواكل). *Tawakkul* is a Muslim's trust and acceptance of the divine will, which no one knows, understands or controls except Allah. The meaning of *tawaakul*, on the other hand, comprises elements of laziness, inability, a resigned, careless attitude. It indicates refusal to strive in accordance with the laws and ways which Allah has laid down for humankind. Those who misunderstand it wait for a miracle to 'drop from the sky' without striving towards it in any way. Such people expect Allah to send down their provisions, feed them and take care of their affairs and concerns while they do nothing.

The negative attitude of *tawaakul* contradicts every aspect of the life of the Prophet (ﷺ) and his companions – their *jihād*, the efforts they expended in accordance with natural laws, their planning and their way of thinking. For example, when migrating to Madinah, the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) took all the precautions that were humanly possible. He planned the journey secretly, leaving when least expected, telling 'Ali to sleep in his bed, selecting a hiding place, arranging for provisions, arranging for a faithful guide, etc. But once he had done whatever was humanly possible, he had such trust in Allah that he was never worried about the consequences.

It was reported that when a Bedouin who had confused *tawakkul* for *tawaakul* came to the Prophet (ﷺ) and asked about the matter, he explained that it was to take the appropriate action and then trust in Allah. He asked, "Should I tie my camel and rely upon Allah, or should I leave her untied and rely upon Allah?" The Messenger (ﷺ) replied, "*Tie her and then rely upon Allah.*" (Narrated by at-Tirmidhi from Anas bin Mālik) Although the scholars have stated that this hadith is weak, its meaning is correct as both the Qur'an and Sunnah advocate the use of appropriate means along with reliance on Allah. (Dār al-Iftā, KSA)

The following hadith is significant, and is most quoted to explain the concept of *tawakkul*: 'Umar bin al-Khattāb (رضي الله عنه) heard the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) saying, "*If you trusted Allah with due tawakkul, He would provide you sustenance as He provides for the birds; they go out in the morning with empty stomachs and come back in the evening with full stomachs.*" (Narrated by at-Tirmidhi and Ibn Mājah - saheeh) A bird sitting in his nest and praising Allah will not have its stomach filled. It has to go out and work hard to find food from morning to evening. One who goes out and expends effort while knowing that Allah provides will obtain what he desires.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah observed, "The heart's neglect to seek something from Allah and place hope in Him leads inevitably to it drifting away from the worship of Him. This is especially so when one places his hopes in created beings and is diverted from placing them in the Creator. Thus, his heart becomes attached to his political power, his armed forces, his followers, his servants, his 'Shaykh' or others among those who have either already died or are bound to die.

Obedience is the key to *tawakkul*. The praiseworthy are those who have actualized Allah's words in Surah al-Fātiḥah: 'It is You (alone) we worship, and You (alone) we ask for help' – and thus worshipped Him and relied upon Him. They sought assistance from Him by obeying Him, confirming that He is their Lord and that He must be worshipped alone through obedience to Him and to His Messenger (ﷺ)." (*Majmoo' al-Fatāwā*, vol. 10, p. 32)

There are numerous verses in the Qur'an which command and explain *tawakkul*:

We are told to rely on Allah in all our affairs.

وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى الْحَيِّ الَّذِي لَا يَمُوتُ

And rely upon the Ever-Living who does not die. (25:58)

When we rely on Allah, He suffices.

وَمَنْ يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ

And whoever relies upon Allah – He will be sufficient for him. (65:3)

When Allah's rulings are obeyed In cases of divorce, and that is when one is likely to fall into error and behave in an improper manner, He then promises: He will provide him from where he does not expect, i.e., from where he never imagined or anticipated.

We are told to consult and then take a decision.

فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ

And when you have decided, then rely upon Allah. (3:159)

You should then trust in Allah regarding your decision.

We are told to recognize that none should be worshipped but Him and then rely on Him.

رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَاتَّخِذْهُ وَكِيلًا

[He is] the Lord of the East and the West; there is no deity except Him, so take Him as a wakeel (disposer of affairs). (73:9)

Allah alone is the owner and controller of all affairs everywhere. So just as you single Him out for worship, you should also single Him out for reliance and take Him as your guardian and trustee.

Believers obey Allah and then trust in Him as the best manager of their affairs. They say:

حَسْبُنَا اللَّهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيلُ

Sufficient for us is Allah, and [He is] the best wakeel (disposer of affairs). (3:173)

Al-Bukhari recorded that Ibn `Abbas said about these words: حَسْبُنَا اللَّهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيلُ (*Sufficient for us is Allah and He is the best Disposer of affairs*), "Prophet Ibrāheem (عليه السلام) said it when he was thrown into the fire. Prophet Muḥammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said it when people said, 'Indeed, the people have gathered against you, so fear them.' This was on the day of Uhud. But it only increased them in faith and they said, 'Sufficient for us is Allah and He is the best Disposer of affairs.' Thereafter this āyah was revealed."

So as believers we need to know what our Lord wants from us and then do what is right in obedience to Him. Then we should put our trust in Allah, not merely saying that He is the best disposer of our affairs but believing it from the depths of our hearts. It is then that our reliance on Him will have meaning and take effect.

The Messenger of Allah (صلى الله عليه وسلم) was ordered to tell the believers that no calamity or difficulty will befall them unless Allah wills it. Hence, they should rely on Him.

قُلْ لَنْ يُصِيبَنَا إِلَّا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَنَا هُوَ مَوْلَانَا وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ

Say, "Never will we be struck except by what Allah has decreed for us; He is our protector." And upon Allah let the believers rely. (9:51)

Allah directed His Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) to reply to the hypocrites and tell them that nothing will ever happen except what Allah has decreed, for we are under His control and command and He is our

master and protector; therefore, the true believers support the cause of Allah and then put their trust in Him.

Allah is sufficient to protect and manage the affairs of His servants.

وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا

And sufficient is Allah as a wakeel (disposer of affairs). (33:48)

True believers have faith and then rely on Allah.

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُهُ زَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ

The believers are only those who, when Allah is mentioned, their hearts become fearful, and when His verses are recited to them, it increases them in faith; and upon their Lord they rely. (8:2)

Ibn 'Abbas said about this āyah, "The quality of a true believer is that when Allah is mentioned, he feels a fear in his heart and therefore obeys His orders and prohibitions; then he relies upon Allah.

After understanding the meaning of *at-tawakkul 'alAllāh*, we can discern that it is an important branch of faith and a form of *'ibādah* (worship). Practicing it produces strength, patience, forbearance, determination, contentment, happiness and an acceptance of His will and decree. It keeps worry, distress, disappointment and depression at a minimum. And it gives the believer renewed energy to take account of himself and lead a life of obedience, to exert effort, to repent from sins and to contemplate the power and majesty of the Lord he worships, depends upon and trusts.

This concept, when not understood properly can either lead to laziness in the form of *tawaakul*, or trap one in a delusion of self-sufficiency, leading him to the erroneous conclusion that whatever he achieves is by his own effort or merit. Thus, a kind of arrogance and pride takes root in the heart. It should be remembered that one can be tried not only with hardships, but also by being given extensive wealth and resources.

A valuable instruction is given in Surah al-Kahf, which is that whenever one is pleased with an accomplishment or material possession, he should say:

مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ

What Allah willed [has occurred]; there is no power except in Allah. (18:39)

Each one of us is totally dependent upon Allah at every moment, and no one can achieve anything by his own efforts and abilities unless He wills it.

The delusion of self-sufficiency needs to be uprooted from our minds and hearts. It is that false sense of self-worth, constantly evaluated by worldly standards, and craving for approval which weakens the heart's striving to connect with Allah, cling to Him, beseech Him and implore Him to enrich us from Himself with a richness that no one can steal or harm through envy – the richness of a clear perception and understanding that everything belongs to Him, to be given at will to whomever He wills and to be taken at will.

So we must trust and rely on Him. But this requires that we free our minds to do Allah's will, to obey Him and to make our choices in all of life's decisions within the framework of Islam, by means of *du'aa*, *istikhārah* and the counsel of sincere believing friends. Along with the permissible physical means, this is the spiritual means available to us to accomplish what is required. Success in this world means to survive, manage and live within the limits set by Allah. But true success is in obtaining His approval, and that will be fully manifested in the next life.

Ibn Taymiyyah said, "The more a servant's expectations are set on the favour and mercy of his Lord as the means to fulfill his needs and repel his misfortunes, the stronger his servitude to his Lord becomes. And in this is freedom from everything other than Him. And since it is the case that the more a person's hopes are fixed on created beings, the more he is compelled to serve them, it follows that not having hope in them provides independence from them."

Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali said, "The fruit of *tawakkul* is contentment with Allah's decree. Whoever leaves his affairs to Allah and then is accepting of what he is given has truly relied on Allah."

حَسْبِيَ اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَهُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ.

*Hasbi Allaahu, laa illaaha illa huwa; 'alayhi tawakkaltu wa huwa rabbul-arshil-atheem.*

Sufficient for me is Allah; there is no deity except Him. On Him I have relied, and He is the Lord of the Great Throne. (9:129)



## ŞABR

Allah (ﷻ) does not accept words, deeds or attitudes except those which are good. So a believer strives for the best of deeds and words, preferring his Lord's acceptance to his own whims and desires in order to draw closer to Allah. In this endeavour he tries to acquire those traits most beneficial to him, such as gentleness, compassion, honesty and a sincere heart. He guards himself against submission to anyone other than Allah. Practicing şabr is of great significance.

The linguistic meaning of the root verb, *şa-ba-ra*, is to confine, detain, retain, restrain, restrict or withhold something. Usually, when used in the religious sense, its object is the self or soul. As a concept in Islam, *şabr* is often translated as patience, but it also includes aspects of restraint, self-discipline, steadfastness, firmness, perseverance, endurance and determination – depending on the context in which it is used.

It conveys a very active, dynamic, positive quality in Islam. It is the quality of surging forward, striving, and not slackening in our purpose to purify the soul. It is a strong foundation, the firm lowermost rung of the ladder which holds firm come what may.

A scholar said, "To have şabr means that one's common sense and religious motives are stronger than his whims and desires." The Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said, "*The helpless one is he who follows his whims and desires and indulges in wishful thinking.*" (At-Tirmidhi - ḥasan) And Ibn al-Qayyim wrote: "When a man's patience is stronger than his whims and desires, then he is like an angel; but when his whims and desires are stronger than his patience, then he is like a devil. If his desire for food, drink and physical relations is stronger than his patience, then he is no better than an animal. Lying, cheating and self-admiration are his most common traits and his reason is held prisoner by Shaytan, who directs it to serve evil purposes. The main cause for his sorry fate is that he ran out of patience."

This means that despite what we like and prefer, what Allah wants us to do takes top priority. In obedience to Him is mercy. Our limited minds cannot always comprehend that whatever is given to us is good for us. The trials and difficulties that are destined for us are also good, for they draw us closer to Allah.

**Three aspects of şabr have been outlined by scholars for us to comprehend and put into practice:**

Prophet Luqman's advice to his son conveys them:

يُنَى أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَانْهَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأَصْبِرْ عَلَى مَا أَصَابَكَ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ مِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ

O my son, establish prayer, enjoin what is right, forbid what is wrong and be patient over what befalls you. Indeed, [all] that is of the matters [requiring] determination. (31:17)

1. **Şabr meaning endurance and perseverance**, which is required to fulfil the commands of Allah. The directing of oneself toward obedience and worship is of benefit to the soul. Knowing that the soul likes ease, comfort and the company of others and dislikes being controlled helps us in managing it with full awareness and resolve; e.g., to establish prayer under all circumstances of heat and cold, busy work schedules and health constraints. Similarly for zakāh, şaum, jihād, as well as understanding and implementing all the concepts outlined in the Qur'an in our lives, a determined effort is required.

2. **Şabr meaning restraint**, which is required for refraining from what Allah has prohibited and from all kinds of disobedience and sin. Examples of this are pre-marital relations, stealing, cheating, murder, dealings in riba, eating pork, drinking alcohol, backbiting, gossiping, devouring inheritance, not giving rights and injustice in general. Most difficult to overcome among these are the sins that are done secretly and those that others tolerate due to a comfort factor it creates for them.

'Abdur-Rahmān bin Zayd bin Aslam said, "Ṣabr has two parts: patience for the sake of Allah concerning what He is pleased with (i.e., acts of worship and obedience), even if it is hard on the heart and the body, and patience when avoiding what He dislikes, even if it is desired.

3. **Ṣabr meaning acceptance of Allah's decree in our lives**, such as the death of a loved one, illness, the loss of wealth or of a job. Allah reminds us:

قُلْ لَنْ يُصِيبَنَا إِلَّا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَنَا

Say, "Never will we be struck except by what Allah has decreed for us." (9:51)

Harm or injustice done to us by heedless, selfish people, especially those supposed to be dear ones, is the toughest to bear in a composed manner. Allah said:

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَعْبُدُ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ حَرْفٍ فَإِنْ أَصَابَهُ خَيْرٌ اطْمَأَنَّ بِهِ وَإِنْ أَصَابَتْهُ فِتْنَةٌ انْقَلَبَ عَلَىٰ وَجْهِهِ خَسِرَ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةَ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْخُسْرَانُ الْمُبِينُ.

And of the people is he who worships Allah on an edge. If he is touched by good, he is reassured by it; but if he is struck by trial, he turns on his face [to the other direction]. He has lost [this] world and the Hereafter. That is what is the manifest loss. (22:11)

Lack of strength and resolve for the deen leads to turning away from Allah by giving up prayer and other duties or complaining about Him instead of complaining to Him, as did Prophet Ya'qub:

قَالَ إِنَّمَا أَشْكُو بَثِّي وَحُزْنِي إِلَى اللَّهِ

He said, "I only complain of my suffering and my grief to Allah." (12:86)

And some even abandon the deen by denial of Him.

However, ṣabr is not fatalistic resignation to our difficulties. It is not the belief that since everything is written one just has to let time go by – to patiently endure through the unfolding of time. Rather, it is actively tackling life's problems and difficulties and striving to overcome obstacles. It is making choices purposefully and consciously, within the limits of our ability; either living up to our covenants or forgetting and side-lining them. These choices will determine the direction of our souls in life and their destination in the Hereafter.

The only way to proceed through life is to strengthen that first step which has been long neglected and misunderstood: ṣabr.

We can be unorganized and careless, working in a haphazard manner. Or we might be of those who complain, brood, are bitter, reactive and temperamental. Or we might choose to be emotionally wounded and mentally trapped. Or, on the other hand, we can decide to work toward absorbing all those aspects of ṣabr in our lives as our Rabb meant us to do – to be accepting of our decrees, make the best of them and convey this knowledge to others.

Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri reported that the Prophet ﷺ said, "*No one is given a better and more abundant gift than patience.*" (Al-Bukhāri and Muslim)

### Ṣabr in the Qur'an:

Allah (ﷻ) has informed us that our life is a test, and that ṣabr will be rewarded:

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالثَّمَرَاتِ وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ

And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient (ṣābireen). (2:155)

الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا

[He] who created death and life to test you [as to] which of you is best in deed. (67:2)

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ حَتَّى نَعْلَمَ الْمُجْتَهِدِينَ مِنْكُمْ وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَنَبْلُوَ أَخْبَرَكُمْ

And We will surely test you until We make evident those who strive among you [for the cause of Allah] and the patient, and We will test your affairs. (47:31)

وَاسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ إِنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلَّا عَلَى الْخَاشِعِينَ

And seek help through patience and prayer, and indeed, it is difficult except for the humbly submissive [to Allah ]. (2:45)

وَاصْبِرْ وَمَا صَبْرُكَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ

And be patient, [O Muhammad], and your patience is not but through Allah.<sup>1</sup> (16:127)

إِنَّمَا يُوفَّى الصَّابِرُونَ أَجْرَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ

Indeed, the patient will be given their reward without account. (39:10)

وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الصَّابِرِينَ

And Allah loves the steadfast. (3:146)

وَاصْبِرُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ

And be patient. Indeed, Allah is with the patient. (8:47)

Ease and comfort do not give strength as difficulties do. Difficulties make us physically and mentally strong. Too much comfort only weakens us. When we trust in the inherent good of Allah's decrees, we continually prepare ourselves for the possibility of examination through painful experiences. This helps us to practice şabr.

How does one attain şabr? Through willful training and practice. Early scholars observed that one becomes patient by being patient, i.e., by repeatedly practicing patience and forcing it upon himself in difficult circumstances.

Şabr is not just a support to lean on. It is that strength which makes us stand firm against all odds with mind focused and heart striving with faith and trust in Allah – accepting His decrees, His plan for our lives – fully aware that He is Owner of the universe and that His knowledge of khayr for us and His justice are unquestionable, infallible and complete.

Hence, the Prophet ﷺ used to say, "O Allah, I ask You for steadfastness in all my affairs and determination in following the right path." (An-Nasā'i - ḥasan)

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<sup>1</sup> Meaning that it can be achieved with the help of Allah.

## SHUKR (GRATITUDE) AND HAMD (PRAISE)

**Shukr:** Thanks, acknowledgement, appreciation, gratitude. Thanks are due for specific recognized favours. The root letters *shīn kāf rā* (ش ك ر) occur 75 times in the Qur'an.

Do we know the real meaning of this word? The dictionary meaning is the quality of being grateful; readiness to show appreciation for something.

Islamically, shukr is thankfulness or gratitude for blessings as bestowed by the Bestower; our Rabb. It can be a feeling in the heart, words expressed on the lips, or gratitude expressed in physical actions. It is proven by obedience to Allah and by using what one has been blessed with of wealth, talents, abilities, intelligence, wisdom, etc. for the benefit of others. From this it can be understood that we are an ummah which is supposed to live in co-operation. Our wealth, our abilities our talents are all given to us by our Creator.

Some ayahs in this regard are:

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَى لِقَوْمِهِ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ أَنْجَاكُمْ مِنْ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ يَسُومُونَكُمْ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ وَيُذَبِّحُونَ أَبْنَاءَكُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيُونَ نِسَاءَكُمْ وَفِي ذَلِكُمْ بَلَاءٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ عَظِيمٌ

And [recall, O Children of Israel], when Moses said to His people, "Remember the favour of Allah upon you when He saved you from the people of Pharaoh, who were afflicting you with the worst torment and were slaughtering your [newborn] sons and keeping your females alive. And in that was a great trial from your Lord. (14:6)

وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكُمْ لَئِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ وَلَئِنْ كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ

And [remember] when your Lord proclaimed, "If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favour]; but if you deny, indeed, My punishment is severe." (14:7)

**Knowing our Creator** brings into perspective the whole scheme of life in relation to our Creator's Plan. Within it is the journey of the soul struggling striving. Without this knowledge one is still in darkness. '*Thulumaat*' is the word, a plural form, meaning 'many darknesses' – darknesses of doubt, uncertainty, hypocrisy or the arrogance to rely only on one's own intellect while considering oneself a Muslim. As stated in Sūrah Ibrāheem:

كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ لِتُخْرِجَ النَّاسَ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ

[This is] a Book which We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], that you might bring mankind out of darknesses into the light. (14:1)

Among the names of Allah are:

*Al-Wahhāb* - *The Bestower* – He who grants provisions, favours and blessings.

*Ar-Razzāq* - *The Provider* – He who continually provides everything required by His creations during their decreed existence. His provision includes guidance.

*Al-Hakeem* - *The Wise* – He whose wisdom includes precise, perfect and absolute knowledge of all realities and outcomes, according to which He decrees and causes circumstances and occurrences.

These names will evoke gratitude in the mind of anyone who recognizes his complete dependence on Allah for the blessing of his continued existence.

### Understanding Shukr further from the Qur'an

Gratitude recognises a reason and purpose to creation. Several ayahs illustrate various aspects of shukr:

فَاذْكُرُونِي أَذْكُرْكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لِي وَلَا تَكْفُرُونِ.

Then remember Me; I will remember you. Be grateful to Me, and do not reject Me. (2:152)

إِنَّا هَدَيْنَاهُ السَّبِيلَ إِمَّا شَاكِرًا وَإِمَّا كَفُورًا.

Indeed, We guided him to the way, be he grateful or be he ungrateful. (76:3)

Believing in Allah implies *shukr* or gratitude as opposed to not believing which is *kufur* or ingratitude.

وَاللَّهُ أَخْرَجَكُمْ مِنْ بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ شَيْئًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

It is He Who brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers when you knew nothing; and He gave you hearing and sight and intelligence - that you perhaps might give thanks. (16:78)

Allah has created these faculties in man to enable him to worship his Lord, and he uses all these sense organs, abilities and strengths to obey his Master.

Favours are multiplied with gratitude:

وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكُمْ لَئِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ وَلَئِنْ كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ

If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favour]; but if you deny, indeed, My punishment is severe." (14:7)

Prophet Luqmān, when teaching and advising his son, said:

وَمَنْ يَشْكُرْ فَإِنَّمَا يَشْكُرُ لِنَفْسِهِ

And whoever is grateful is only grateful for [the benefit of] himself. (31:12)

*Shukr* is by action:

اعْمَلُوا آلَ دَاوُدَ شُكْرًا

Work, family of Dāwūd, in gratitude. (34:13)

Allah did not tell the family of Dāwūd to be grateful. Rather, He said to work in gratitude.

And He has told us that His pleasure may be attained through gratitude:

وَإِنْ تَشْكُرُوا يَرْضَهُ لَكُمْ

And if you are grateful, He is pleased with it for you..." (39:7)

وَسَجْزِي الشَّاكِرِينَ

... And We will reward the grateful. (3:145)

Allah has described the people of gratitude as being very few.

وَقَلِيلٌ مِنْ عِبَادِيَ الشَّكُورُ.

... But few of My servants are grateful. (34:13)

Allah praised Prophet Ibrāheem for being grateful for His favours:

شَاكِرًا لِنِعْمِهِ اجْتَبَاهُ وَهَدَاهُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

[He was] grateful for His favours. Allah chose him and guided him to a straight path. (16:121)

We should remind ourselves of the Day when Allah shows His appreciation, saying:

إِنَّ هَذَا كَانَ لَكُمْ جَزَاءً وَكَانَ سَعْيُكُمْ مَشْكُورًا

Indeed, this for you is a reward, and your effort has been appreciated. (76:22)

Gratitude is the way we should live. It provides a perspective by which we can view life in its entirety and not be overwhelmed by temporary circumstances. Live with what has been given you of favours, blessings, trials and afflictions. Accept His decrees in your lives. And let us work to build contentment in our minds and hearts, because Allah has said:

>وَأَتَاكُمْ مِنْ كُلِّ مَا سَأَلْتُمُوهُ وَإِنْ تَعُدُّوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ لَا تُحْصُوهَا إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَظَلُومٌ كَفَّارٌ.

And He gave you from all you asked of Him. And if you should count the favours of Allah, you could not enumerate them. Indeed, mankind is [generally] most unjust and ungrateful. (14:34)

We need to ask Allah for the ability to have shukr for the blessings He gave us.

### Supplications for Shukr from the Qur'an and Sunnah:

"My Lord, enable me to be grateful for Your favour which You have bestowed upon me and upon my parents, and to do righteous good deeds of which You will approve, and make my offspring good. Indeed, I have turned to You in repentance, and indeed, I am of the Muslims." (46:15)

Mu'adh bin Jabal (may Allah be pleased with him) reported:

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) held my hand and said, "Mu'adh, by Allah, I love you. And I advise you not to miss supplicating after every prayer: *Allāhumma a'innī 'ala dhikrika wa shukrika wa ḥusni 'ibādatik*. (O Allah, help me to remember You, be grateful to You and worship You well)." (Abu Dāwūd and an-Nasā'i)

### The Relationship between Ṣabr and Shukr

Appreciation of blessings (*shukr*) is complementary to patience (*ṣabr*). Patience begins with control, but acceptance is better; and gratitude for recognized blessings is good, but thankfulness during trials of hardship is better. Thus, ṣabr and shukr merge at the highest level in the soul of the Muslim believer.

In every affliction there are points to remember which require shukr as well as ṣabr:

- That Allah prevented the ordeal from being greater than it was.
- That since it was decreed for the servant and therefore inevitable, it has now occurred and is no longer before him.
- That this trial was an expiation for sins, and as such, the penalty was not postponed until the Hereafter, where it would have been much more severe.
- That even in one's own lifetime, certain benefits may be gained from such an experience, for example, the strengthening of character or a lesson learned – In any case, the reward is always greater than the adversity.
- That the casualty was not the servant's religion, i.e., he did not lose his faith or his resolve.

وَاسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ إِنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلَّا عَلَى الْخَاشِعِينَ

And seek help through patience and prayer, and indeed, it is difficult except for the humbly submissive [to Allah]. (2:45)



Suhayb reported: The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, "Amazing is the affair of the believer for there is good for him in every matter, and this is not except for the believer. If something good happens to him, he thanks Allah and that is good for him, and if something bad befalls him, he shows patience and that is good for him." (Muslim)

Satan's primary mission is to make human beings ungrateful. The Qur'an quotes him as saying:

ثُمَّ لَأَتِيَنَّهُمْ مِنْ بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ وَعَنْ أَيْمَانِهِمْ وَعَنْ شَمَائِلِهِمْ وَلَا تَجِدُ أَكْثَرَهُمْ شَاكِرِينَ

"Then I will certainly come to them from before them and from behind them, and from the right and from the left, and You will not find most of them grateful." (7:17)

## The Difference between Shukr and Ḥamd

*Ḥamd* (root letters: ح م د) means praise, commendation, glorification, exaltation.

*Ḥamd* (praise) has a wider meaning than *shukr* (thanks) and includes it. Praise is in gratitude for all blessings in general, apparent and unapparent, as well as acknowledgement of the Lord's perfect attributes. It shows us our humble position and the path to achieve His acceptance.

وَهُوَ اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ لَهُ الْحَمْدُ فِي الْأُولَى وَالْآخِرَةِ وَلَهُ الْحُكْمُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ.

And He is Allah; there is no deity except Him. To Him is [due all] praise in the first [life] and the Hereafter. And His is the [final] decision, and to Him you will be returned. (28:70)

Praise implies recognition of Allah's favours, what is known of them and what is not known. The āyah confirms that all kinds and forms of praise are due to Allah alone and that He alone is worthy to praise Himself. And it teaches how Allah should be praised.

*Al-ḥamd* (praise accompanied by reverence) is due to Allah at all times and in all conditions. To praise Him at the beginning and end of every action and every effort is a fundamental principle of Islam, for it expresses recognition of His innumerable favours.

Praise and thanks to Allah are the basis of happiness. Grateful doesn't mean complacent. When being grateful we strive to improve but we are content. It is about creating in us a positivity which doesn't come about if we continue to see the proverbial 'glass' as 'half empty'. When we see it as at least 'half full' we would have corrected our attitude, which translates as the biggest blessing of all. To be able to appreciate everything, from raindrops to the sounds of chirping birds at fajr to our trillions of healthy cells which Allah is protecting to all the countless favours Allah has bestowed on us eliminates sadness and depression.

"O Allah, I seek refuge in Your acceptance from Your anger, in Your forgiveness from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot adequately praise You. You are as You have praised Yourself." (Muslim, Abū Dāwūd and at-Tirmidhi)

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