

Thankfulness towards Allah

"That is because Allah will never change the grace which He hath bestowed on a people until they change what is in their (own) souls" {Soorah al-Anfal (8):53}

This is one of the ways in which Allah Ta'ala deals with His servants, for He made the condition of people directly related to their belief. If they change their belief, Allaah Ta'ala will change their condition. Allah Ta'ala will replace their security with fear and their sustenance with poverty. And security and sustenance are two of Allah Ta'ala's greatest graces. Allah Ta'ala says in the Quraan: **"So let them worship Allah the Lord of this House (the Kaaba) Who provides them with food against hunger and with security against fear (of danger)" {Soorah Quraish (106:3-4)}**

Suhaib ibn Sinan narrated that the Prophet said: "How remarkable is the case of the believer! There is good for him in everything, but this is not the case for anyone except for the believer. When the believer receives any good, he is thankful to Allah, and gets a reward. And when some misfortune befalls him, he endures it patiently, for which he is (also) rewarded." {Fiqh as-Sunnah, vol.4, p.1.}

What is Thankfulness?

In Islamic terminology, Thankfulness is the acknowledgment of the fact that Allah Ta'ala is the only Grantor of graces, and full submission to Allah Ta'ala in a way that assures that acknowledgment. The graces (favors) of Allah Ta'ala are endless and countless. Allah Ta'ala says in His Book: **"And if you were to count the blessings of Allah, you will never be able to count them." {Soorah Ibrahim (14): 34}**

He, the All Mighty also says: **"And whatever blessings and good you have, it is from Allaah .." {Soorah an-Nahl, (16): 53}**

How can a servant (Abd) thank Allaah Ta'ala? {The word 'slaves' represents mankind, for all of mankind are expected to totally submit to the will of Allah}The servant can thank Allaah Ta'ala in many ways. These include:

1. Prostrating to Allaah, when the servant receives a blessing from Allaah or when Allaah saves him from a disaster. The Messenger of Allaah (salallahu alaihi wasallam) used to prostrate to Allah whenever he received a pleasant thing or was told good news. This prostration is conducted for the sole purpose of giving thanks to Allaah, the Granter of the grace and benefit that the servant received. [see Fiqh as-Sunnah by Sayyid Sabiq (English trans.) vol.2, p.45]

Abdur-Rahman ibn 'Auf relates that the Messenger of Allah (sallaahu alayhi wasallam) went out once and he followed him until he entered a grove of palm trees and prostrated. His prostration was so long that 'Abdur-Rahman feared that Allah had taken his soul.

'Abdur-Rahman came to look at him and he raised his head and said: "What is wrong, Abdur-Rahman'?" Abdur rahman mentioned what had happened, and he (sallallahu alaihi wa-sallam) said: "Gibra'el came to me and said: 'Shall I not give you glad tidings'? Allah says to you, Whoever prays upon you, I pray upon him. Whoever salutes you, I salute him.' Therefore, I prostrated to Allah in thanks." {This is related by Ahmad and by Al-Haakim who says: "It is sahih according to the criterion of al-Bukhari and Muslim}

2. Thanking Allah in words: The majority of the scholars agreed that if the servant does not thank Allaah Ta'ala for the grace he has, then that grace will go away and may never come back. Allah's Messenger (sallaahu alayhi wasallam) said: "It is a fine thing when a believer praises and thanks Allah if good comes to him, and praises Allah and shows endurance if smitten by affliction. The believer is rewarded for everything, even for the morsel he raises to his wife's mouth." {Bayhaqi transmitted it in Shu'ab al-Iman. Sunan at-Tirmidhi no.1733 See also Saheeh Muslim (7138)}

3. Talking about the benefits Allah has granted him. This is because concealing the benefits of Allah Ta'ala is ungrateful. Allaah says in the Quraan: **"Do they believe in the false deities and deny the favor of Allaah."** {Soorah an-Nahl (16):72}

Ibn Katheer commented that denying the favors of Allah Ta'ala means hiding his grants and/or relating them to others than Allah Ta'ala.

Narrated by Zaid bin Khalid Al Juhani : The Prophet led us in the Fajr prayer at Hudaibiya after a rainy night. On completion of the prayer, he faced the people and said, "Do you know what your Lord has said (revealed)?" The people replied, "Allah and His Apostle know better." He said, "Allah has said, **'In this morning some of my slaves remained as true believers and some became non-believers; whoever said that the rain was due to the Blessings and the Mercy of Allah had belief in Me and he disbelieves in the stars, and whoever said that it rained because of a particular star had no belief in Me but believes in that star.'**" {Saheeh al-Bukhari (1:807)}

4. Helping people in need. It was mentioned in a Hadeeth of Prophet Muhammad (sallaahu alayhi wasallam) that: "As the grants from Allah to a servant increase, so will the people's needs of that blessed servant's services. If the servant ignores their needs, it will cause those grants to be removed" (Ibn Hibban)

The Prophet (sallaahu alayhi wasallam) said, "If anyone strokes an orphan's head, doing so only for Allah's sake, he will have blessings for every hair over which his hand passes; and if anyone treats well an orphan girl or boy under his care, he and I shall be like these two in Paradise," putting two of his fingers together." {Sunan at-Tirmidhi no.4974}

Why does the servant not thank Allah?

The servant may not thank Allaah for several reasons:

1. The servant may be unaware of the general grants that were bestowed by Allah Ta'ala on the creatures. Many people wrongly think that money is the only thing to be considered and ignore the other general grants such as hearing, vision, sanity and health. The Prophet (sallaahu alayhi wasallam) said, "There are two blessings which many people lose: (They are) health and free time for doing good." {Saheeh al-Bukhari vol 8: 421}

Aaishah, the Prophet's wife said: "Whenever a servant drinks a drop of water which gets into his body and leaves it with no harm, then a thanks is due."

A man came to a good Muslim and complained that Allah Ta'ala made him very poor. The good man said: "Would you like to have ten thousand dinars and be insane?" The Complainer answered: "No." The good man said: "Would you like to have ten thousand dinars but have your legs chopped off" The complainer answered: "No." The good man then said: "Aren't you ashamed of yourself complaining about your Lord while all of these grants which are His; have been bestowed on you?"

2. The servant may not give thanks to his Lord because he is unaware of the people who have less bounties than him. This is mentioned in a Hadeeth in Saheeh Muslim, that:

Allaah's Messenger (sallaahu alayhi wasallam) said, "Look at those people who have less than you and never look at those who have more grants than you, this will ensure that you will not depreciate Allah's grants." {Saheeh Muslim no.1530}

At times of hardship, one should turn his eyes towards a person who owns less worldly things than him. He will then be calmed and his ungratefulness will disappear. One will then thank his Lord and say: "**Thanks to Allah who has guarded me against the harm which He has afflicted others, and who has chosen not to afflict me**" {Sunan at-Tirmidhi}

3. The servant may not give thanks to his Lord because he is unaware of Allah Ta'ala's names, attributes and laws. The real ignorant person is the one who gets deceived by the amount of money he has or by his position or his power. He forgets the fact that as Allah Ta'ala has granted, He may also take the blessings away. Allaah Ta'ala says in His Book, "**Say, O Allah! Lord of Power (and Rule) You give Power to whom You will and You take away power from whom You will, and you endue with honor whom you will, and humiliate who you will. In Your Hand is the good. Verily, You are Able to do all things.**" {Soorah al-Imran (3):26}

When does Allaah take His grants away from His servants?

1. When one commits sins: The Messenger of Allaah (sallaahu alayhi wasallam) said, "The servant will be deprived a provision because he committed a sin" (Musnad Ahmed)

On the other hand, fearing Allaah causes His provisions to come forth, Allah says in the Quraan: **"And whoever fears Allaah and keeps his duty to Him, Allaah will make way for him out of every difficulty, And He will provide for him from sources he never imagined"** {Soorah at-Talaq (65):2-3}

2. When the servant relates the grants to himself and does not acknowledge that Allah Ta'ala is their Grantor as Qaroon (a tyrannical king mentioned in the Qur'aan al-Qasas (28): 78) said: **"This has been given to me only because of knowledge I possess."**

Consequently, his punishment was, **"So We caused the earth to swallow him and his dwelling place. Then he had no group or party to help him against Allaah."** {Soorah al-Qasas (28): 81}

3. When the servant does not give Zakaat. The Messenger of Allaah (sallaahu alayhi wasallam) said, "Indeed Allaah the Most High said, **'We have sent down the wealth for the prayer to be established and that Zakaat be given; and if the son of Aadam had a valley, he would love to have a second; if he had two valleys, he would love to have a third, and nothing will fill the belly of the son of Aadam except dust ...'**" {Musnad Ahmed & at-Tabaraanee. Saheeh al-Jaami, no.1777}

So the money is actually Allaah Ta'ala's money, and we have been entrusted with it. And he (sallaahu alayhi wasallam) said, "Do not shut your money bag; otherwise Allah too will withhold His blessings from you. Spend (in Allah's cause) as much as you can afford. " {Saheeh al-Bukhari 2/515}

The Prophet of Allaah (sallaahu alayhi wasallam) also said, "Do not withhold your money by counting it (i.e. hoarding it), (for if you did so), Allah would also withhold His blessings from you." {Saheeh al-Bukhari vol.2: 514}

4. When the servant of Allaah becomes arrogant due to the large amount of money he has. If the person feels superior to other people, and his wealth becomes his only business, if he talks about it and only about it wherever he goes, and forgets to remember Allaah Ta'ala and praise Him; if he starts evaluating people based on their wealth, then Allaah Ta'ala will remove his grants. Allaah Ta'ala says in the Quraan:

"Woe to every slanderer and back biter. Who has gathered wealth and counted it. He thinks that his wealth will make last forever. Nay! Verily, he will be thrown into the crushing fire." {Soorah al-Humazah (104):1-4}

And finally there is no better example for us than the Messenger of Allaah (sallaahu alayhi wasallam) who used to offer night prayers till his feet became swollen. Somebody said to him, "Allah has forgiven you, your faults of the past and those to follow." On that, he said, "Shouldn't I be a thankful slave (of Allah)?" {Saheeh al-Bukhari vol.6: 360}