

SHUKR – THANKFULNESS

QUR'AN - (The Qur'an with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English by Ali Ünal)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُلُوا مِن طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لِلَّهِ إِن
كُنْتُمْ إِيَّاهُ تَعْبُدُونَ

O you who believe! (Without concern for the rules the unbelievers contrive in regard to food,) eat of the pure, wholesome things that we have provided for you, and (in return) give thanks to God, if you worship Him alone (Surah Al-Bakara, 172)¹

فَاذْكُرُونِي أَذْكُرْكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لِي وَلَا تَكْفُرُونِ

So always remember and make mention of Me (when service to Me is due), that I may remember and make mention of you (when judgment and recompense are due); and give thanks to Me, and do not be ungrateful to Me. (Surah Al-Bakara, 152)²

Explanation: Thankfulness or gratitude is the door to faith, and ingratitude is the way to unbelief. The Qur'an uses the same word – kufr – for both unbelief and ingratitude. Kufr (unbelief) literally means overlaying or concealing, and as a term, it means concealing and rejecting, or denying, any of the pillars of faith and the established religious commandments denying God, or not recognizing Him with His essential Attributes, such as His being the Creator, the Provider, the absolute ruler and Governor of the universe, the sustainer, and the self-subsisting one, etc., is primarily included in kufr. Those who do not recognize God, with His Attributes, will attribute anything good or praiseworthy in their lives to themselves, instead of attributing it to God. Such an attitude is obviously identical with ingratitude.

وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكُمْ لَئِن شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ وَلَئِن كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ

And (remember also) when your Lord proclaimed: "If you are thankful (for My favors), I will most certainly give you more; but if you are ungrateful, surely My punishment is severe." (Surah Ibrahim, 7)³

¹ http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=2&min=170&show=10

² http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=2&min=150&show=10

³ http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=14

وَمَا كَانَ لِنَفْسٍ أَنْ تَمُوتَ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ كِتَابًا مُؤَجَّلًا وَمَنْ يُرِدْ ثَوَابَ
الدُّنْيَا نُؤْتِهِ مِنْهَا وَمَنْ يُرِدْ ثَوَابَ الْآخِرَةِ نُؤْتِهِ مِنْهَا وَسَنَجْزِي
الشَّاكِرِينَ

It never occurs that a soul dies save by God's leave, at a time appointed. So whoever desires the reward of this world, We give him of it (in the world); and whoever desires the reward of the Hereafter, We give him of it; and We will soon reward the thankful. (Surah Al – Imran, 145) ⁴

قَالَ فِيمَا آغْوَيْتَنِي لَأَقْعُدَنَّ لَهُمْ صِرَاطَكَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ () ثُمَّ لَأَتِيَهُمْ مِنْ
بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ وَعَنْ أَيْمَانِهِمْ وَعَنْ شَمَائِلِهِمْ وَلَا تَجِدُ أَكْثَرَهُمْ
شَّاكِرِينَ

(Iblis) continued: "Now that You have allowed me to rebel and go astray, I will surely lie in wait for them on Your Straight Path (to lure them from it)." Then I will come upon them from before them and from behind them, and from their right and from their left. **(See note below)** And You will not find most of them thankful. "(Surah Al – Ar'af, 16 -17)

Note: That is:

- I will come upon them from before them, and sow in them worry and hopelessness concerning their future; I will invite them not to pay the Zakāh or do any supererogatory forms of charity in fear of becoming poor; I will urge them to hoard their wealth; I will provoke them to disbelieve in the Hereafter and show them a dark future; I will present to them the way of the Prophets as reactionary and regressive; and I will call them into valleys of misguidance through the promises I make to them about their future.
- I will come upon them from behind them, and show them the past as a dark cemetery; and by showing them both the past and the present as dark, I will drive them to pessimism and distress after distress; I will incite them to turn away from the way of the Prophets, and to condemn and reject their past while following this way, encouraging them to revive their former (ancient) past, when they had worshipped many so-called deities and had lived a corrupt life of sheer ignorance, and to see all this as progress.
- I will come upon them from their right and show them their religious devotions as being perfect, driving them to ostentation, self-pride, and to the desire that their religious life be known and praised by others, thereby causing all their good deeds to go to waste. I will also provoke them to attach more importance to secondary matters in religion, while neglecting the essentials, thus provoking them to disagree and causing conflict. Again, I will cause them to use religion for their worldly interests and ambitions, and for the satisfaction of their carnal desires, but will whisper to them that they do so for the sake of religion, and try my best in order that they may go to the Hereafter devoid of any good deeds.

⁴ http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=3&min=140&show=10

- I will come upon them from their left, and incite them to reject God's existence, the Hereafter, and other essentials of faith, and to search different systems of belief or ideology; I will urge them to struggle and even fight against God's religion and those who follow it; I will invite them to dive into the swamp of sins, such as adultery, prostitution, drinking alcohol, and gambling and similar games of chance; I will pro-voke them to unlawful transactions, like bribery, usury, corruption, theft, robbery, and deception, and other forms of wrong, such as injustice, oppression, murder, disrespect to parents, and the violation of basic human rights, and I will call them to present all these under the titles of justice, peace, humanism, progress, and civilization, etc.

يَعْمَلُونَ لَهُ مَا يَشَاءُ مِنْ مَحَارِبَ وَتَمَائِيلَ وَجِفَانٍ كَالْجَوَابِ
وَفُؤُورٍ رَاسِيَاتٍ اِعْمَلُوا اِلَ دَاوُدَ شُكْرًا وَقَلِيلٌ مِّنْ عِبَادِيَ الشُّكُورُ

They made for him whatever he wished sanctuaries, and figures (of inanimate objects), and carvings, as well as basins like ponds and boilers built into the ground. "Work, O family of David, in thankfulness to Me!" Few are the truly thankful among My servants. (Surah Saba, 13)⁵

HADITH

Narrated: Zaid bin Khalid Al-Juhani

Allah's Apostle led the morning prayer in Al-Hudaibiya and it had rained the previous night. When the Prophet (p.b.u.h) had finished the prayer he faced the people and said, "Do you know what your Lord has said?" They replied, "Allah and His Apostle know better." (The Prophet said), "Allah says, 'In this morning some of My worshipers remained as true believers and some became non-believers; he who said that it had rained with the blessing and mercy of Allah is the one who believes in Me and does not believe in star, but he who said it had rained because of such and such (star) is a disbeliever in Me and is a believer in star.'"⁶

Narrated: Al-Mughira:

The Prophet used to stand (in the prayer) or pray till both his feet or legs swelled. He was asked why (he offered such an unbearable prayer) and he said, "Should I not be a thankful slave."⁷

⁵ http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=34&min=10&show=10

⁶ <http://ahadith.co.uk/hadithbynarrator.php?n=Zaid%20bin%20Khalid%20Al-Juhani&bid=1>

⁷ <http://ahadith.co.uk/hadithbynarrator.php?n=Al-Mughira&bid=1>

Suhaib reported that Allah's Messenger (May peace be upon him) said:

Strange are the ways of a believer for there is good in every affair of his and this is not the case with anyone else except in the case of a believer for if he has an occasion to feel delight, he thanks (God), thus there is a good for him in it, and if he gets into trouble and shows resignation (and endures it patiently), there is a good for him in it.⁸

Narrated Abdullah ibn Ghannam:

The Prophet (peace_be_upon_him) said: If anyone says in the morning: "O Allah! whatever favour has come to me, it comes from Thee alone Who has no partner; to Thee praise is due and thanksgiving,"! he will have expressed full thanksgiving for the day; and if anyone says the same in the evening, he will have expressed full thanksgiving for the night.⁹

Abu Hurairah narrated that the Prophet (s.a.w) said:

"The one who eats and is grateful is like the status of the patient fasting person."¹⁰

Narrated AbuBakrah:

When anything came to the Prophet (ﷺ) which caused pleasure (or, by which he was made glad), he prostrated himself in gratitude to Allah.¹¹

Anas Radiyallahu 'Anhu relates from Rasulullah Sallallahu 'Alayhi Wasallam that:

Allah Ta'aala is pleased with that servant who eats one morsel (bite) or drinks one sip and gives thanks to Him.¹²

Abu Malik Al-Ash'ari (may Allah be pleased with him) reported:

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: "Purity is half of iman (faith). 'Al-hamdu lillah (all praise and gratitude belong to Allah)' fills the scales, and 'subhan-Allah (how far is Allah from every imperfection) and 'Al-hamdulillah (all praise and gratitude belong to Allah)' fill that which is between heaven and earth."¹³

Narrated Usama bin Zaid (RA):

Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said. "If one is done a kindness and [expresses his gratitude] to his benefactor by saying 'May Allah give you a good reward', he has fully expressed his appreciation." [at-Tirmidhi reported it, and Ibn Hibban graded it Sahih (authentic)].¹⁴

⁸ <http://sunnah.com/muslim/55/82>

⁹ <http://sunnah.com/abudawud/43/301>

¹⁰ <http://sunnah.com/urn/677920>

¹¹ <http://sunnah.com/abudawud/15/298>

¹² <http://sunnah.com/urn/1801840>

¹³ <http://sunnah.com/riyadussaliheen/16/6>

¹⁴ <http://sunnah.com/bulugh/13/10>

It was narrated from Shadad bin Aws that:

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) used to say in his prayer: "Allahumma inni as'aluka at-thabbuta fi al-amr wal-'azimata 'alar-rushdi wa as'aluka shukr ni'matik wa husna 'ibadatik wa as'aluka qalban saliman wa lisanan sadiqan wa as'aluka min khairi ma at'lamu wa author bika min sharri ma at'lamu wastaghfiruka lima ta'lam (O Allah, I ask You for steadfastness in all my affairs and determination in following the right path, I ask You to make me thankful for Your blessings and to make me worship You properly. I ask You for a sound heart and a truthful tongue. I ask You for the best of what You know and I seek refuge in You from the worst of what You know and I seek Your forgiveness for what You know.)"¹⁵

Narrated Abu Huraira:

Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said, "There is a (compulsory) Sadaqa (charity) to be given for every joint of the human body (as a sign of gratitude to Allah) everyday the sun rises. To judge justly between two persons is regarded as Sadaqa, and to help a man concerning his riding animal by helping him to ride it or by lifting his luggage on to it, is also regarded as Sadaqa, and (saying) a good word is also Sadaqa, and every step taken on one's way to offer the compulsory prayer (in the mosque) is also Sadaqa and to remove a harmful thing from the way is also Sadaqa."¹⁶

COMMENTARIES

Tafseer by Ibn Kathir – a verse by verse tafseer

And whoever does a good work voluntarily (such as additional going-round the Kabah and running between as-Safa and Marwah, and other kinds of good works), surely God is All-Responsive to thankfulness, All-Knowing (Surah Al-Baqarah, 158)

Allah states:

(And whoever does good voluntarily.)

It was said that the Ayah describes performing Tawaf more than seven times, it was also said that it refers to voluntary `Umrah or Hajj. It was also said that it means volunteering to do good works in general, as Ar-Razi has stated. The third opinion was attributed to Al-Hasan Al-Basri. Allah knows best.

Allah states:

(...then verily, Allah is All-Recognizer, All-Knower.) meaning, Allah's reward is immense for the little deed, and He knows about the sufficiency of the reward. Hence, He will not award insufficient rewards to anyone. Indeed:

¹⁵ <http://sunnah.com/nasai/13/126>

¹⁶ <http://sunnah.com/bukhari/56/198>

(Surely, Allah wrongs not even of the weight of an atom, but if there is any good (done), He doubles it, and gives from Him a great reward.) (4:40)¹⁷

What should God punish you if you are grateful (to Him) and believe (in Him)? God is Ever-Responsive to gratitude, All-Knowing (Surah An-Nisa, 147)

Allah then states in ayah 147 that He is too Rich to need anyone and He only punishes the servants because of their sins,

وَأَمَّا أَنْتُمْ تَشْكُرْتُمْ إِنْ بَعَدَ إِلَيْكُمْ اللَّهُ فَعَلْ مَا

“Why should Allah punish you if you have thanked (Him) and have believed in Him.”

What does this tell us? That doing shukr can save us from Allah’s punishment. No matter what we have been blessed with or in what condition we are, we should humble ourselves before Allah and do shukr. A tongue that does His shukr and dhikr invites His mercy. One way to do His shukr is by using the talents and abilities that we have been blessed with in His way. Got a beautiful voice? Instead of wasting yourself singing songs do shukr by beautifying your Qur’anic recitation. Love talking? Instead of chatting or talking on phone, do da’wah; call people to the path of Allah. Too much wealth? Utilize that wealth for some productive work; spend it on the welfare of the underprivileged. Instead of going to the mall every time you get your paycheck or pocket money utilize it for some productive cause. The more we use Allah’s blessings wisely and humbly, the more pleased He will be with us.

عَلِيمًا شَكْرًا اللَّهُ وَكَانَ

“And Allah is Ever All-Appreciative (of good), All-Knowing.”

Allah appreciates those who appreciate Him, and has knowledge of those whose hearts believe in Him, and He will give them perfect reward. How is Allah Shakir? He is so pleased with the sincere act of His servant that He rewards one good deed with the reward of ten deeds.¹⁸

From the Risale-I Nur Collection by Beduizzam Said Nursi – a thematic tafseer

The Letters, Twenty-Eight Letter, The Fifth Matter, which is the Fifth Part, On Thanks

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

¹⁷ http://ibnkhirtafsir.com/tafsirspecial/fullset/Part_2.htm#_Toc244950491

¹⁸ <https://versebyversequranstudycircle.wordpress.com/2012/12/14/tafseer-surah-an-nisa-ayah-145-147/>

And there is nothing but it glorifies Him with praise.

Will they not then give thanks? (36:35, 73) Will they not then give thanks? And we shall surely reward those who give thanks. (3:145) If you give thanks, I shall increase my favours to you. (14:7) Worship God and be of those who give thanks. (39:66)

By repeating verses like these, the Qur'an of Miraculous Exposition shows that thanks is what the Most Merciful Creator wants most from His servants. The Qur'an, the All-Wise Distinguisher between Truth and Falsehood, calls on men to offer thanks, giving it the greatest importance. It shows ingratitude to be a denial of bounties and in Sura al-Rahman utters a fearsomely severe threat thirty-three times with the verse,

So which of the favours of your Sustainer do you deny? (55:13, etc.)

It shows ingratitude to be denial and negation.

Indeed, just as the All-Wise Qur'an shows thanks to be the result of creation; so the universe, which is a mighty Qur'an, shows the most important result of the world's creation to be thanks. For if the universe is observed carefully, it is seen from the way it is arranged that everything results in thanks; each looks to thanks to an extent and is turned towards it. It is as though thanks is the most important fruit of the tree of creation, and gratitude is the most elevated product of the factory of the universe. The reason for this is as follows:

We see in the creation of the world that its beings are arranged as though in a circle with life as its central point. All beings look to life, and serve life, and produce the necessities of life. That is to say, the One who created the universe chose life from it, giving it preference.

Furthermore, the exquisitely adorned forms, the fragrant smells, the wonderfully delicious tastes in the bounties that are sustenance invite thanks; they awake an eagerness in animate beings, and through eagerness urge a sort of appreciation and respect, and prompt thanks of a sort. They attract the attention of conscious beings and engender admiration. They encourage them to respect the bounties; through this, they lead them to offer thanks verbally and by act, and to be grateful; they cause them to experience the highest, sweetest pleasure and enjoyment within thanks. That is, they show that, as well as a brief and temporary superficial pleasure, through thanks, these delicious foods and bounties gain the favours of the Most Merciful One, which provide a permanent, true, boundless pleasure. They cause conscious beings to ponder over the infinite, pleasurable favours of the All-Generous Owner of the treasuries of mercy, and in effect to taste the everlasting delights of Paradise while still in this world. Thus, although by means of thanks sustenance becomes such a valuable, rich, all-embracing treasury, through ingratitude it becomes utterly valueless

As is explained in the Sixth Word, when the sense of taste in the tongue is turned towards sustenance for the sake of Almighty God, that is, when it performs its duty of thanks, it becomes like a grateful inspector of the numberless kitchens of divine mercy and a highly-esteemed supervisor full of praise. If it is turned towards it for the sake of the soul, that is, without thinking of giving thanks to the One who has bestowed the sustenance, the sense of taste is demoted from being a highly-esteemed supervisor to the rank of a watchman of the factory of the stomach and a doorkeeper of the stable of the belly. Just as through ingratitude these servants of sustenance descend to such a level, so does the nature of sustenance and its other servants fall; they fall from the highest rank to the lowest; they sink to a state opposed to the Creator of the universe's wisdom.

The measure of thanks is contentment, frugality, and being satisfied and grateful. While the measure of ingratitude is greed, wastefulness and extravagance; it is disrespect; it is eating whatever one comes across, whether lawful or unlawful.

Like ingratitude, greed causes both loss and degradation. For example, it is as though because of greed that the blessed ant even with its social life is crushed underfoot. For although a few grains of wheat would suffice it for a year, it is not contented with this and collects thousands if it can. But the blessed honey-bee flies overhead due to its contentment, and at a divine command bestows honey on human beings for them to eat.

The name of All-Merciful – the greatest name after the name of Allah, which signifies the divine essence and is the greatest name of the Most Pure and Holy One – looks to sustenance, and is attained to through the thanks provoked by sustenance. Also, the most obvious meaning of All-Merciful is Provider.

Moreover, there are different varieties of thanks, the most comprehensive of which are the prescribed prayers. The prescribed prayers are a universal index of the sorts of thanks.

The heedless man incurs serious loss through ingratitude for bounties. We shall describe only one of its many aspects. It is as follows:

If someone eats a delicious bounty and gives thanks, by virtue of his thanks the bounty becomes a light and a fruit of Paradise in the hereafter. If, because of the pleasure, he thinks of it as the work of Almighty God's favour and mercy, it yields a true, lasting delight and enjoyment. He sends kernels and essences of its meanings and immaterial substances like these to the abodes above, while the material husk-like residue, that is, the matter that has completed its duty and now is unnecessary, becomes excreta and goes to be transformed into its original substances, that is, into the elements. If he fails to give thanks, the temporary pleasure leaves a pain and sorrow at its passing, and itself becomes waste. Bounty, which is as precious as diamonds, is transformed into coal. Through thanks, ephemeral sustenance produces enduring pleasures, everlasting fruits. While bounty that is met with ingratitude is turned from the very best of forms into the most distasteful. For according to the heedless person, after producing a fleeting pleasure, sustenance ends up as waste-matter.

Sustenance is indeed in a form worthy of love, and this form is to be seen through thanks. However, the passion of the misguided and heedless for sustenance is animality. You can make further comparisons in this way and see what a loss the heedless and misguided suffer.

Among animate species, man is the most needy for all the varieties of sustenance. Almighty God created man as a comprehensive mirror to all His names; as a miracle of power with the capacity to weigh up and recognize the contents of all His treasures of mercy; and as His vicegerent on earth possessing the faculties to draw to the scales and evaluate all the subtleties of His names' manifestations. He therefore made man utterly resourceless, rendering him needy for the endless varieties of sustenance, material and immaterial. Thanks is the means of raising man to "the best of forms," which is the highest position in accordance with this comprehensiveness. If he does not give thanks, he falls to "the lowest of the low," and perpetrates a great wrong.

In Short: Thanks is the most essential of the four fundamental principles of the way of worship and winning God's love, the highest and most elevated way. These four principles have been defined as follows:

"Four things are necessary on the way of the impotent, my friend:

“Absolute impotence, absolute poverty, absolute fervour, and absolute thanks, my friend.”

O God, through Your mercy, appoint us among those who give thanks, O

Most Merciful of the Merciful!

Glory be unto You! We have no knowledge save that which You have taught us; indeed, You are All-Knowing, All-Wise. (2:32)

O God, grant blessings and peace to our master Muhammad, master of those who offer thanks and praise, and to all his Family and Companions. Amen.

And the close of their cry will be, “All praise be to God, Sustainer of All the Worlds.”(10:10)¹⁹

The Flashes, The Twenty-Fifth Flash, Eighteenth Remedy

EIGHTEENTH REMEDY

O sick person who gives up offering thanks and takes up complaining! Complaint arises from a right, and none of your rights have been lost that you should complain. Indeed, there are numerous thanks which are an obligation for you, a right over you, and these you have not performed. Without Almighty God giving you the right, you are complaining as though demanding rights in a manner which is not rightful. You cannot look at others superior to you in degree who are healthy, and complain. You are rather charged with looking at the sick who from the point of view of health are at a degree lower than yourself, and should offer thanks. If your hand is broken, look at theirs, which is severed. If you have only one eye, look at the blind, who lack both eyes, and offer thanks to God!

For sure, no one has the right to look to those superior to him in regard to bounties and complain. Concerning tribulations, it is everyone’s right to look to those above themselves in that regard, so that they should offer thanks. This mystery has been explained in a number of places in the Risale-i Nur with a comparison; a summary of it is as follows:

A person takes a wretched man to the top of a minaret. On every step he gives him a different gift, a different bounty. Right at the top he gives him the largest present. Although he wants thanks and gratitude in return for all those various gifts, the peevish man forgets the presents he has received on each of the stairs, or considers them to be of no importance, and offering no thanks, looks above him and starts to complain, saying, “If only the minaret had been higher, I could have climbed even further. Why isn’t it as tall as that mountain over there or that other minaret?” What great ingratitude it would be if he begins to complain like this, what a wrong!

In just the same way, man comes into existence from nothing, not as a rock or a tree or an animal, but as a human being and a Muslim, and most of the time experiences good health and acquires a high level of bounties. Despite all this, to complain and display impatience because he is not worthy of some bounties, or because he loses them through wrong choices or abuse, or because he could not obtain them, and to criticize divine dominicality saying “What have I done that this has happened to me?”, is a state of mind and spiritual sickness more calamitous than the physical one.

¹⁹ <http://www.erasale.com/index.jsp?locale=en#content.en.202.419>

Like fighting with a broken hand, complaint makes his illness worse. Sensible is the person who in accordance with the meaning of the verse,

Those who when struck by calamity say: To God do we belong, and to God is our return (Surah Al-Bakara, 156)

submits and is patient, so that the illness may complete its duty, then depart.²⁰

The Words, Thirty - Second Word, Third Stopping Place

In short: Love this world and the creatures in it as pointing to a meaning beyond themselves, like a word. Do not love them just for themselves. Say, "How beautifully they have been made." Do not say, "How beautiful they are." Do not give any opportunity to other loves to enter into your inner heart because the inner heart is the mirror of the Eternally Besought One and pertains only to Him. Say, "O God, grant us love for You, and love for that which will draw us closer to You."²¹

Thus, if in this form, all the loves that you have enumerated will give a pain-free pleasure, and, in one respect, an unending union. Moreover, they will increase love of God. They are licit loves. And are, furthermore a sort of gratitude which is pure pleasure, and thought, which is pure love.

For example, if a mighty king²² were to bestow an apple on you, there would be two loves for that apple and two pleasures in it. The first of these is that the apple would be loved because it is an apple, and there would be a pleasure peculiar to and to the extent of the apple. This love does not concern the king. On the contrary, the man who puts the apple to his mouth and eats it in the king's presence loves the apple itself and his own soul rather than the king. It sometimes happens that the king is not pleased with that love which nourishes the instinctual soul; in fact, he detests it. Moreover, the pleasure that the apple gives is very limited and passes quickly. After the apple is eaten it is gone, only regret remains.

As for the second love, it is for the royal favour that is demonstrated by means of the apple. One who holds the apple precious as if it were the sample and embodiment of a royal favour shows that he loves his king. Moreover, the pleasure in that fruit, which is a sort of container for the favour, is such that it is far greater than the pleasure obtained from a thousand apples. This pleasure, then, is the essence of thankfulness. This love is a respectful love for the king.

In exactly the same way, if all bounties and fruits are loved for themselves, if they are thoughtlessly delighted in only for the material pleasures that they yield, that love is merely love of self. Also, those pleasures are transient and bring pain. But, if they are loved as favours proceeding from Almighty God's mercy and as fruits of His munificence, and if pleasure is obtained from them with good appetite by appreciating the degree of kindness in that munificence and favour, then it

²⁰ <http://www.erasale.com/index.jsp?locale=en#content.en.203.278>

²¹ Kanz al-'Ummal, i, 195; Waliuddin Tabrizi, Mishkat al-Masahth, i, 762

²² Once two tribal chiefs entered the presence of a king. They were in exactly the same situation as is described here.

has both the meaning of gratitude and is a pain-free pleasure.²³

Fethullah Gulen - Sufism 1 – a thematic tafseer

Shukr -Thankfulness

Literally meaning gladness felt about and gratitude shown for the good done to one, Sufis use shukr to mean using one's body, abilities, feelings, and thoughts bestowed upon one to fulfill the purpose of his or her creation: being thankful to the Creator for what He has bestowed. Such thankfulness is to be reflected in the person's actions or daily life, in speech and in the heart, by admitting that all things are directly from Him, and by feeling gratitude for them.

One may thank God verbally by only depending upon His power and strength, as well as upon His bestowal or withholding of favours, and acknowledging that all good and bounties come from Him. As He alone creates all good, beauty, and bounty, as well as the means by which they can be obtained, only He sends them at the appropriate time.

Since He alone determines, apportions, creates, and spreads [all our provisions] before us as "heavenly tables," He alone deserves our gratitude and thanks. Attributing our attainment of His bounties to our own or to another's means or causes, in effect thereby proclaiming that He is not the true Owner, Creator, and Giver of all bounty, is like giving a huge tip to the servant who lays before us a magnificent table and ignoring the host who is responsible for having it prepared and sent to us. Such an attitude reflects sheer ignorance and ingratitude, as mentioned in: They know only the outward face of the life of the world (apparent to them), and they are completely unaware of (its face looking to) the Hereafter (30:7).

True thankfulness in one's heart is manifested through the conviction and acknowledgment that all bounties are from God, and then ordering one's life accordingly. One can thank God verbally and through one's daily life only if personally convinced, and if one willingly acknowledges that his or her existence, life, body, physical appearance, and all abilities and accomplishments are from God, as are all of the bounties obtained and consumed. This is stated in: Do you not see that God has made serviceable unto you whatsoever is in the skies and whatsoever is in the earth, and has loaded you with His bounties seen or unseen? (31:20), and: He gives you of all that you ask Him; and if you reckon the bounties of God, you can never count them (14:34).

Bodily thankfulness is possible by using one's organs, faculties, and abilities for the purposes for which they were created, and in performing the duties of servanthood falling on each. On the other hand, some have stated that verbal thankfulness means daily recitation of portions of the Qur'an, prayers, supplications, and God's Names. Thankfulness by the heart means that one is certain or convinced of the truth of the Islamic faith and straightforwardness. Practical or bodily thankfulness, according to others, means observing all acts of worship. Since thankfulness relates directly to all aspects or branches of belief and worship, it is regarded as half of the faith. With respect to this

²³ <http://www.erasale.com/index.jsp?locale=en#content.en.201.670>

inclusiveness, it is considered together with patience, meaning that according to some people, thankfulness and patience are considered as the two halves of religious life.

In His eternal Speech, God Almighty repeatedly commands thankfulness and, as in the phrases so that you may give thanks (2:52) and God will reward the thankful (3:144), presents it as the purpose of creation and of sending religion. In such verses as: If you are thankful I will add more unto you. But if you show ingratitude My punishment is terrible indeed (14:7), He has promised abundant reward to the thankful and threatened the ungrateful with a terrible punishment. One of His own Names is the All-Thanking, which shows us that the way to obtain all bounties or favours is through thankfulness, which He returns with abundant reward. He exalts the Prophets Abraham and Noah, upon them be peace, saying: (Abraham was) thankful for His bounties (16:121) and Assuredly, he (Noah) was a grateful servant (17:3).

Although thankfulness is a religious act of great importance and significant "capital," few people truly do it: Few of My servants are thankful (34:13). Very few people live in full awareness of the duty of thankfulness, saying: Shall I not be a servant grateful (to my Lord)?, and try their best to perform their duty of thankfulness and order their lives accordingly.

The glory of humanity, upon him be peace and blessings, whose soles swelled because of his long supererogatory prayer vigils (tahajjud), was a matchless hero of thankfulness. On one occasion, he told his wife 'A'isha: Shall I not be a servant grateful to God? He always thanked God and recommended thankfulness to his followers, and prayed to God every morning and evening, saying: O God. Help me mention You, thank You, and worship You in the best way possible.¹¹⁴

Thankfulness is the deep gratitude and devotion of one who, receiving His bounties or favours, directs these feelings toward the One Who bestows such blessing, and the subsequent turning to Him in love, appreciation, and acknowledgment. The above Prophetic saying expresses this most directly.

People are thankful for many things: the provisions, home, and family with which they have been favoured; wealth and health; belief, knowledge of God, and the spiritual pleasures bestowed on them; and the consciousness with which God favoured them so they could open themselves to the knowledge that they must be thankful. If those who are thankful for such a consciousness use their helplessness and destitution as "capital" and thank Him continuously, they will be among the truly thankful. It is narrated from God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, that

The Prophet David, upon him be peace, asked God Almighty: O Lord. How can I be thankful to You, since thanking You is another favour that requires thankfulness? The Almighty responded: Just now you have done it.

I think this is what is expressed in: We have not been able to thank You as thanking You requires, O All-Thanked One.

One can be thankful by recognizing and appreciating Divine favours, for feeling gratitude to the One Who bestows favours depends to a great extent on due recognition and appreciation of them. Belief and Islam (including the Qur'an) lead one to recognize and appreciate favours and thus turn to God in gratitude. One can be more aware of these favours, and that they are given to us by God out of His mercy for our helplessness and inability to meet our own needs, in the light of belief and Islamic practices. This awareness urges us to praise the One Who bestows upon us those favours and bounties that we consume. Awakening to the meaning of: As for the favour of Your Lord, proclaim it (93:11), we feel a deep need to be grateful and thankful.

Everyone is naturally inclined to praise the good and the one who does good to him or her. However, until this feeling is aroused there is no awareness of being favoured by someone else, just as fish are not conscious of living in water. Furthermore, these favours may be attributed to the means and causes used to obtain them. If it is blindness and deafness not to see and appreciate the favours we continuously receive, then it must be an unforgivable deviation to attribute them to various blind, deaf, and unfeeling means and causes. The Prophetic statements: One who does not thank for the little does not thank for the abundant, and: One who does not thank people does not thank God, express blindness and deafness to favours and remind us of the importance of being thankful. Such verses as: Mention Me so that I will mention you, and give thanks to Me and do not be ungrateful to Me (2:152), and: Worship Him and give Him thanks (29:17) tell us that it is God Who truly deserves to be thanked, and also remind us of His absolute Unity.

Thankfulness can be divided into three categories. The first category consists of thankfulness for those things that everyone, regardless of religion or spiritual attainment, desires. The second category consists of thankfulness for those things that, although apparently disagreeable or displeasing, reveal their true nature to those who can see them as favours requiring gratitude.

The third category of thankfulness is that kind performed by those who are loved by God and view favours or bounties from the perspective of the One Who bestows them. They spend their lives in spiritual pleasure that begins in observing God's manifestation of Himself through His favours, and take the greatest pleasure in worshipping Him. Although they are always enraptured with the spiritual delight flowing from their love of Him, they are extremely careful of their relationship with Him. Such people constantly strive to preserve the Divine blessings that have been bestowed upon them, and always search for what they have missed. While they constantly deepen their belief, love, and gratitude along the way toward Him, the "nets of their sight" are filled with different blessings and gifts.

O God! Include us among Your servants whom You love, have made sincere, and have brought unto You. Grant peace and blessings to our Master, the Master of those loved, made sincere, and brought near unto You.²⁴

²⁴ May 1994, Vol 16, Issue 184, <http://fgulen.com/en/fethullah-gulens-works/sufism/key-concepts-in-the-practice-of-sufism-1/24745-shukr-thankfulness>