

TAWADU– HUMILITY

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

لَا تَمُدَّنَّ عَيْنَيْكَ إِلَىٰ مَا مَتَّعْنَا بِهِ أَزْوَاجًا مِنْهُمْ وَلَا تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَاخْفِضْ جَنَاحَكَ
لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

Do not strain your eyes toward what We have given some groups among them (the unbelievers) to enjoy (in the life of this world), nor grieve over them (because of their attitude toward your mission); and lower your wings (of compassion and protection) for the believers. (Surah Al-Hijr, 88)¹

وَاخْفِضْ جَنَاحَكَ لِمَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

Spread your wings (to provide care and shelter) over the believers who follow you (in practicing God's commandments in their lives). (Surah Ash-Shu'ara, 215)²

وَعِبَادُ الرَّحْمَنِ الَّذِينَ يَمْشُونَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ هَوْنًا وَإِذَا خَاطَبَهُمُ الْجَاهِلُونَ قَالُوا
سَلَامًا

The (true) servants of the All-Merciful are they who move on the earth gently and humbly, and when the ignorant, foolish ones address them (with insolence or vulgarity, as befits their ignorance and foolishness), they respond with (words of) peace (without engaging in hostility with them) (Surah Al-Furqan, 63)³

وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ جَعَلْنَا مَنْسَكًا لِيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَىٰ مَا رَزَقَهُمْ مِنْ بَهِيمَةِ الْأَنْعَامِ فَإِلَهُكُمُ
إِلَهُ وَاحِدٌ فَلَهُ أَسْلِمُوا وَبَشِّرِ الْمُخْبِتِينَ

For every believing community, We have laid down sacrifice as an act of worship to be performed at a certain time and place. So they must pronounce God's Name over what We have provided for them of cattle (while offering it). And (bear in mind that) your God is the One and Only God, so to Him alone submit yourselves wholly. And give glad tidings to the deeply devoted, humble servants. (Surah Al-Hajj, 34)⁴

إِنَّ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْقَانِتِينَ وَالْقَانِتَاتِ وَالصَّادِقِينَ
وَالصَّادِقَاتِ وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّابِرَاتِ وَالْخَاشِعِينَ وَالْخَاشِعَاتِ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ

¹ http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=15&min=80&show=10

² http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=26&min=210&show=10

³ http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=25&min=60&show=10

⁴ http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=22&min=30&show=10

وَالْمُتَصَدِّقَاتِ وَالصَّائِمِينَ وَالصَّائِمَاتِ وَالْحَافِظِينَ فُرُوجَهُمْ وَالْحَافِظَاتِ وَالذَّاكِرِينَ
اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا وَالذَّاكِرَاتِ أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

Surely all men and women who submit to God (whose submission is attested by their words and deeds), and all truly believing men and truly believing women, and all devoutly obedient men and devoutly obedient women, and all men and women honest and truthful in their speech (and true to their words in their actions), and all men and women who persevere (in obedience to God through all adversity), and all men and women humble (in mind and heart before God), and all men and women who give in alms (and in God's cause), and all men and women who fast (as an obligatory or commended act of devotion), and all men and women who guard their chastity (and avoid exposing their private parts), and all men and women who remember and mention God much for them (all), God has prepared forgiveness (to bring unforeseen blessings) and a tremendous reward. (Surah Al-Ahzab, 35)⁵

HADITH

It was narrated from Ibn 'Abbas that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

"Allah the Glorified, says: 'Pride is My cloak and greatness My robe, and whoever competes with Me with regard to either of them, I shall throw him into Hell.'⁶

It was narrated from Abu Sa'eed that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

"Whoever humbles himself one degree for the sake of Allah, Allah will raise him in status one degree, and whoever behaves arrogantly towards Allah one degree, Allah will lower him in status one degree, until He makes him among the lowest of the low."⁷

Anas bin Malik said:

"Any of the female slaves of Medina could take hold of the hand of Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) and take him wherever she wished."⁸

COMMENTARIES

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

The Words, The Eighteenth Word, First Point

⁵ http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=33&min=30&show=10

⁶ <http://sunnah.com/urn/1292770>

⁷ <http://sunnah.com/urn/1292770>

⁸ <http://sunnah.com/bukhari/78/102>

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

Think not that those who exult in what they have thus contrived, and who love to be praised for what they have not done – think not that they will escape suffering: for grievous suffering does await them.

A Chastening Slap for my Evil-Commanding Soul:

O my foolish soul, charmed at glory, enamoured of fame, addicted to praise, and without equal in egotism! If it is a just claim that the source of the fig and its thousands of fruits is its tiny seed, and that all the grapes in their hundred bunches hanging from a dry branch of the vine are produced through the skill of the branch, and that those who benefit from them should praise and esteem the branch and the seed, then perhaps you have the right to be proud and conceited about the bounties with which you are loaded. But in fact you deserve to be constantly chided, because you are not like the seed and the branch: since you have the faculty of will, you reduce the value of those bounties through your pride. Through your conceit, you destroy them; through your ingratitude, you nullify them; through claiming them as your own, you lay hands on them unlawfully. Your duty is not to glory in your deeds, but to offer thanks. What is fit for you is not fame, but humility. Your right is not praise, it is repentance and to seek forgiveness. Your perfection lies not in self-centredness, but in recognizing God.

Yes, you in my body resemble ‘nature’ in the world. Both of you were created to receive good and be the thing to which evil is referred. That is to say, you are not the agent and source, but the recipient and passive. You have only an effect, and that is being the cause of evil because you did not accept as you should have done a good arising from absolute good. Also you were both created as veils, so that things that are apparently ugly, whose beauty is not obvious, would be attributed to you, and you would be means of the Most Holy Divine Essence being acknowledged free of defect. But you have taken on a form entirely contrary to the duty of your natures. Although out of your incapacity you have transformed good into evil, you as though act as partners to your Creator. That means one who worships himself and worships nature is extremely foolish and perpetrates a great wrong.

And do not say: ‘I am a place of manifestation, and one who manifests beauty becomes beautiful.’ For you have not assimilated it, so are not a place of manifestation but a place of passage.

And do not say: ‘Among people I was chosen. These fruits, these fine works, are shown through me. That means I have some merit.’ No! God forbid! Rather they were given to you first because you are more bankrupt, needy, and sad than everyone else!⁹

The Letters, The Twenty-Sixth Letter, Second Topic

I see that some of the perfections which properly pertain to the truths of the All-Wise Qur’an are attributed to the instruments who proclaim those truths. And this is wrong. For the sacredness of the source demonstrates effects as powerful as many proofs; it is through these that it makes everyone accept its injunctions. Whenever the herald or deputy obscures it, that is, whenever attention is turned to the herald, the sacredness loses its effectiveness. It is because of this that I shall explain a truth to my brothers who show me greater regard than is my due. It is as follows:

⁹ <http://www.erisale.com/index.jsp?locale=en#content.en.201.239>

One person may have numerous personalities, all of which display different qualities. For example, when a high official is in his office, his position necessitates dignity and requires a stance that will preserve its loftiness. If he is humble before his visitors, it will be lowering and will debase the position. But when in his own house, his position requires – contrary to his official position – that he should be as modest as he can. If he stands on his dignity, it will be arrogant. And so on. That is to say, a person assumes a personality when performing his duty or work that in many respects contradicts his true personality. If such a person is truly worthy of his duty and truly capable of it, the two personalities are close to each other. But if he lacks the capacity; if, for example, a common soldier is put in the position of a field marshal, the two personalities are far apart; the individual, lowly, inferior qualities of the soldier are incompatible with the elevated, superior character demanded by the position of field marshal.¹⁰

The Letters, The Twenty-Eighth Letter, Seventh Matter, Fourth Reason

Sometimes modesty suggests ingratitude for bounties, indeed, is ingratitude for bounties. Then sometimes recounting bounties is a cause of pride. Both are harmful. The only solution is for it to be neither. To admit to virtues and perfections, but without claiming ownership of them, is to show them to be the works bestowed by the True Bestower. For example, suppose someone were to dress you in a robe of honour embroidered and encrusted with jewels and you became very beautiful. The people then said to you: “What wonders God has willed! How beautiful you are! How beautiful you have become!”, but you modestly replied: “God forbid! Don’t say such a thing! What am I? This is nothing!” To do this would be ingratitude for the bounty and disrespectful towards skilful crafts man who had dressed you in the garment. While if you were to reply proudly: “Yes, I am very beautiful. Surely there is no one to compare with me!”, that would be conceited pride.

In consequence, to avoid both conceit and ingratitude one should say: “Yes, I have grown beautiful. But the beauty springs from the robe, and thus indirectly from the one who clothed me in it; it is not mine.”

Like this, if my voice were strong enough, I would shout out to the whole earth: “The *Words* are beautiful; they are truth, they are reality; but they are not mine. They are rays shining out from the truths of the Noble Qur’an.”

In accordance with the principle of:

I cannot praise Muhammad with my words, rather my words become praiseworthy through Muhammad,

I say:

I cannot praise the Qur’an with my words, rather my words become praiseworthy through the Qur’an.

That is to say, I did not beautify the truths of the Qur’an’s miraculousness, I could not show them beautifully; rather, the Qur’an’s beautiful truths made my words beautiful and elevated them. Since it is thus, it is acceptable to recount divine bounties and to make known in the name of the beauty of the Qur’an’s truths, the beauties of its mirrors known as the Words, and the divine favours which comprise those mirrors.¹¹

¹⁰ <http://www.erisale.com/index.jsp?locale=en#content.en.202.370>

¹¹ <http://www.erisale.com/index.jsp?locale=en#content.en.202.425>

Mathnawi Al Nuri, The Ninth Treatise

God's blessings upon oneself, for doing so sometimes gives rise to pride and arrogance. Thus, avoid exaggeration and excessive description. The middle way in one's proclaiming God's blessings on him or her is as follows: Every blessing has two aspects. The first pertains to the one on whom God has bestowed it. This blessing distinguishes one in a community and leads to pride and forgetting the One Who gave it. Such people arrogate it to themselves, attributing it to their abilities or merits, and become haughty. The second pertains to the Bestower of blessings. The blessing displays His Munificence and Mercy, and testifies to His Names. By bestowing blessings, He pronounces "verses" of His manifestations. Humility should be shown in the first case, while it becomes ingratitude if shown in the second one. If one attributes all the blessings that have been bestowed to God and His Munificence, and feels no self-pride, one's proclaiming God's blessings on himself or herself becomes a praiseworthy gratitude. O Yusuf Kishri.⁹² When you wear splendid clothes, Said says to you: "How beautiful you are." You say: "Beauty belongs to the clothes, not to me." This is both humility and a proclamation of blessing.¹²

Fethullah Gulen - The Messenger of God: Muhammad – a thematic tafseer

His Modesty

In society, each person has a window—status—through which he or she looks out to see others and be seen. If the window is built higher than their real stature, people try to make themselves appear taller through vanity and assumed airs. If the window is set lower than their real stature, they must bow in humility in order to look out, see, and be seen. Humility is the measure of one's greatness, just as vanity or conceit is the measure of low character.¹³

The Messenger had a stature so high that it could be said to touch the "roof of the Heavens." Therefore, he had no need to be seen. Whoever travels in the realm of virtues sees him before every created being, including angels. In the words of Said Nursi, the Messenger is the noble aide-de-camp of God. He lowered himself to stay in the world for a while so that people might find the way to God. Since he is the greatest of humanity, he is the greatest in modesty. This follows the well-knowing adage: "The greater one is, the more modest one is."

The Messenger never regarded himself as greater than anybody else. The only way he could be distinguished from his Companions was by his radiant face and attractive person. He lived and

¹² https://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/sgia/imeis/masnavinuriye_ingilizce_23_02_07.pdf

¹³ Said Nursi, Letters 2,315.

dressed like the poorest people and sat and ate with them, just as he did with slaves and servants. Once a woman saw him eating and remarked: "He eats like a slave." The Messenger replied: "Could there be a better slave than me? I am a slave of God."¹⁴

One time when he was serving his friends, a bedouin came in and shouted: "Who is the master of this people?" The Messenger answered in such a way that he introduced himself while expressing a substantial principle of Islamic leadership and public administration: "The master of the people is the one who serves them." Ali says that among people the Messenger was one of them. When he and Abu Bakr reached Quba while emigrating to Madina, some Madinese who did not know what the Prophet looked like tried to kiss Abu Bakr's hands. The only external sign distinguishing one man from the other was that Abu Bakr seemed older than the Messenger.

While the Muslims were building their mosque in Madina, the Prophet carried two sun-dried bricks; everyone else carried one.¹⁵ While digging the trench to defend Madina, the Companions bound a stone around their stomachs to quell their hunger; the Messenger bound two. When a man seeing him for the first time began trembling out of fear, because he found the Prophet's appearance so awe-inspiring, the Messenger calmed him: "Brother, don't be afraid. I am a man, like you, whose mother used to eat dry bread."¹⁶ Another time, an insane woman pulled him by the hand and said: "Come with me and do my housework." He complied with her request.¹⁷ 'A'isha reported that the Messenger patched his clothes, repaired his shoes, and helped his wives with the housework.¹⁸

Although his modesty elevated him to the highest rank, he regarded himself as an ordinary servant of God: "No one enters Paradise because of his or her deeds." When asked if this was true for him as well, he replied that he could enter Paradise only through the Mercy of God.

His Companions always asked for his advice or permission before any action. Once 'Umar asked his permission to go for the minor pilgrimage. The Messenger allowed this, and even asked 'Umar to include him in his supplications. 'Umar rejoiced so much that later he would say: "If the worlds had been granted to me that day, I wouldn't have felt the same happiness."

Humility was one of the Prophet's greatest qualities. As he attained a higher rank each day, he increased in humility and servanthood to God. His servanthood is prior to his Messengership, as seen in the declaration of faith: "I bear witness that there is no god but God; I also bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger." He preferred being a Prophet-slave to being a Prophet-king.

One day, while sitting with Archangel Gabriel, the Messenger mentioned that he had not eaten for several days. As soon as he said this, another angel appeared and asked: "O Messenger of God, God greets you and asks if you wish to be a Prophet-king or a Prophet-slave?" Gabriel advised him to be humble toward his Master. As humility was a fundamental part of his character, the Messenger replied: "I wish to be a Prophet-slave."¹⁹ God praises his servanthood and mentions him as a servant in several verses: When the servant of God stood up in prayer to Him, they (the jinn) were well nigh

¹⁴ Haythami, *Majma'*, 9:21.

¹⁵ Bukhari, 1:111; Muslim, 2:65; Semhudi, *Wafa'*, 1:237; Ibn Sa'd, 1: 240.

¹⁶ Ibn Maja, "At'lma," 30; Haythami, 9:20.

¹⁷ Qadi 'Iyad, *al-Shifa'*, 1:131, 133.

¹⁸ Tirmidhi, *Shama'il*, 78; Ibn Hanbal, 6:256.

¹⁹ Ibn Hanbal, 2:231; Haythami, 9:18.

upon him in swarms (to watch his prayer) (72:19), and: If you are in doubt concerning that which We have sent down on Our servant, then bring a sura of the like thereof, and call your witnesses beside God if you are truthful (2:23).

After Khadija and Abu Talib died, the Messenger became convinced that he could no longer expect any victory or security in Makka. So before things became too critical, he sought a new base in Ta'if. As the townspeople proved to be quite hostile, he felt that he had no support and protection. But then God manifested His Mercy and honored him with the Ascension, raising him to His Presence. While narrating this incident, God mentions him as His servant to show that he deserves Ascension through his servanthood: Glory be to him, Who carried His servant by night from the Holy Mosque to the Furthest Mosque, the precincts of which We have blessed, that We might show him some of Our signs. He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing (17:1).

Humility is the most important aspect of the Messenger's servanthood. He declared: "God exalts the humble and abases the haughty." 'Ali describes the Messenger in the following terms:

He was the most generous person in giving, and the mildest and the foremost in patience and perseverance. He was the most truthful in speech, the most amiable and congenial in companionship, and the noblest of them in family. Whoever sees him first is stricken by awe, but whoever knows him closely is deeply attracted to him. Whoever attempts to describe him says: 'I have never seen the like of him.'²⁰

Fethullah Gulen – The Broken Jug – a thematic tafseer

In Pursuit Of Perfection With The Wings Of Humbleness Lowered Down

Question: It's stated that it is necessary for a believer to make the best of his or her willpower and constantly seek perfection. At the same time, while pursuing these goals, they must self-criticize in the face of these achievements, remaining humble. Could you elucidate how it is possible to combine these two pursuits?

Answer: A real believer is a resolute and strong-willed person who has belief in God with doubt-free conviction. A believer does not lose hope even in the face of the most daunting circumstances. For this reason, such a person never gives in to hopelessness but always stands firm, even when all roads are blocked, and keeps walking toward his ideals; he knows that God Almighty has never left those who walk on His path with no ways to reach their goals. For example, during a period when it was not possible to live in Mecca, God opened the way of Ascension to his glorious and beloved Prophet, along which every one of the greatest Prophets saluted him. The Messenger of God reached such a point that even Gabriel the Trustworthy said, "I will be perished if I take one more step."

²⁰ <http://fgulen.com/en/fethullah-gulens-works/faith/prophet-muhammad/24815-his-modesty>

Seeking to Achieve the Perfect is a Result of Having Adopted Divine Morality

God Almighty never let down those who walked on His path; He held their hands even at the most unexpected moments, delivering them safe and sound. You may fall down a well, but when you least expect it, a strong rope will be dropped down. There may be times when you are mistreated by a few jealous brothers. However, after a term of spiritual journeying, you just see that God sets thrones in hearts for you. In this respect, no matter what hardships are faced, believers who always feel the Divine help and support behind them will seek out great achievements, and try to give their willpower its due in terms of fulfilling those accomplishments in accordance with their worth. They will thus try to produce the most perfect works, because the Prophet commanded believers to be equipped with the morality of God.

The Divine morality of this issue is related to us by statements like, *“He who makes excellent everything that He creates,”* (as-Sajdah 32:7) and, *“This is the pattern of God who has perfected everything”* (an-Naml 27:88). Thus it is pointed out that He brings everything into existence in the best, most beautiful, soundest, and perfect fashion. If He created something out of nothing, built it up, and breathed life to it, those who witnessed His works could not help but say, *“There could not be anything better.”*

Bediüzzaman relates the following remark of Imam al-Ghazali about this: *“There is no possibility of anything more wondrous than what exists in this universe.”* A person who beholds this universe with a comprehensive perspective, and moves his shuttle of wisdom between the cause and effect, will have to make the following confession: *“God created the universe so beautifully that, had I been given a life of thousand years long and assigned to build a little piece of existence, I could never do it.”*

Thus Divine morality shows us this: while striving on the path of God, believers should do their best and try to carry out their tasks in the best and soundest fashion.

Fulfill Your Deeds as if You Are Presenting Them to the Supervision of God and His Messenger

Concerning the fact that a believer should seek the perfect for the sake of gaining God’s good pleasure, the following is stated in the chapter at-Tawbah: *“Say: ‘Work, and God will see your work, and so will His Messenger and the true believers; and you will be brought back to the Knower of the Unseen (of all that lies beyond sense-perception) and the witnessed (the sensed realm), and He will make you understand all that you were doing (and call you to account for it)’”* (at-Tawbah 9:105). God Almighty does not command as *“if’alu”* (do), but as *“i’malu,”* which means to *“fulfill a certain deed.”* The Qur’an frequently refers to deeds by putting emphasis on *“righteous deeds,”* so we understand that the term *“deed”* refers to fulfilling a certain task positively and flawlessly, within a certain plan, and by considering the results.

The verse also commands fulfilling deeds with the consciousness that God, His Messenger, and all true believers will see these deeds. Namely, a believer should fulfill their deeds so that God Almighty will approve, the Pride of Humanity will express appreciation, and believers will wish to have fulfilled their own deeds in such a way.

At this point, although it is not our main subject, I would like to draw attention to the following:

The purpose of a believer who seeks perfection in his deeds is not to cause envy in others. On the contrary, they try to gain God's good pleasure by giving the task its proper due. In this respect, it is good to aspire to do the same good deeds another person has done, but this issue should not be approached with a feeling of jealousy or rivalry.

Angels Are Beautiful Examples for Us!

Concerning the angels, the Qur'an states: *"(They) do not disobey God in whatever He commands them, and carry out what they are commanded (to carry out)"* (at-Tahrim 66:6). That is, they fulfill every command scrupulously and do not disobey His orders in the least bit. They are important examples for us in this respect. Believers should fulfill their tasks comparably to the archangel Gabriel and seek Divine appreciation. If need be, they should exert themselves for the sake of giving the willpower God granted them its due, and fulfilling the duties they are responsible for in the best way. They should feel a pulsing in their temples, as if their brains would come out through their noses. It is said that whoever does his best for the sake of accomplishing a certain task, God will grant that person what he seeks.

The Heavy Trial Entailed by Success

A person who exerts himself in this degree may attain very good accomplishments, by God's permission and grace. Thousands, or hundred thousands, of people may gather around that person and shower him with thanks and praises. The greatest trial for the person starts at this very point: will he lay claim to the good results or give them to their rightful owner? Will the achievements trigger feelings of thanksgiving or cause dizziness and blurring of vision? Those who pass this heavy trial successfully and keep their ego in check in order to tame their carnal soul are the heroes of the heart who are fixed on the consideration of humbleness and modesty. They know to keep their place at this critical point, while other people might become addicted to success or winning. Just as they give their willpower its due at the beginning, here as well they give their conscience its due and appropriately determine the correct place they are supposed to stand. According to this perspective, they never credit themselves but say, "It was Him that made these things happen," and run like the plague from vices such as pride and self-satisfaction. Let alone indulging self-satisfaction, from their horizons of self-criticism they see the failures of their work, regret these, and suffer over not having performed even better.

To expound on this, individuals who serve in different areas of life may make different achievements in the fields of their responsibility. They may put stamps of excellence on every task they fulfill, in a way that evokes admiration in dwellers in the high assembly of the heavens. Individuals may perform perfectly—some with speeches they deliver, some with the articles they write, some with their abilities of advising and administration, and some with their artistic talents. However, a genuine believer should say, "had there been some sensible person with an immense conscience, he would have probably performed much more perfectly and efficiently." Considering the impossible—if an act of this person's parted the moon in two, changed the sun's course, united all people in the world for a lofty truth, or made an accomplishment comparable to that of Gabriel, the sound of the conscience would still say: "Had there been someone else in my place, who knows how much better he would have done this work! To tell the truth, since this work came out of my foul hands, it

remained much lower than where it should have been; it remained derelict, poor, and undeveloped.”

The Apocalypse and the Self-Accusing Soul

Why is it so important for a believer to revile himself in this degree? Because, there is the risk of experiencing the greatest loss in a zone of winning. After swearing on the Day of Judgment, God Almighty swears on the self-accusing human soul (al-Qiyamah 75:1). As it is known, valuable things of significance are sworn upon. The Day of Judgment is important, for on that day all of those galaxies, constellations, and solar systems that look so impressive to people will be in utter chaos before God’s all-comprehensive Knowledge, overwhelming Will, and supreme acts. That day, everything will be thrown to the air like pieces of straw. By swearing on the Day of Judgment, it is brought to attention that this glorified act of God is a great happening.

Right after this, there is a swear upon the self-accusing soul (*an-nafs lawwamah*), which refers to one that never likes his own works, but constantly questions and criticizes himself. In this respect, it is the first step of progress on one’s spiritual journey. It is not possible for a person who does not ascend this first step to progress to the level of the soul receiving inspiration (*an-nafs al-mulhimah*); or from there to its two wings—the soul with which God is pleased and the soul pleased with God; and particularly from there to the soul perfected or pure (*safiyah or zakiyyah*). The Self-accusing soul can be compared to a ladder, stairway, or an elevator to help a person reach these soul levels on their spiritual journey. It is for this reason that it is very important for a person to constantly confront himself, attribute the negative outcomes to himself, and always criticize himself.

The Safest Way to Purification from Sins

Bediüzzaman’s approach on how to avoid the pitfalls of arrogance that can come about after victories and accomplishments is noteworthy. At the end of the Twenty-sixth Word, he virtually addresses his soul like speaking to another person and says:

“O my ostentatious carnal soul! Do not be proud of your services to God’s religion. As stated in a Prophetic Tradition,²¹ God may strengthen this religion by means of a dissolute person. You are not pure, so regard yourself as that dissolute person.”

As a spiritual discipline he suggests, “We should never hold ourselves pure; instead, we should regard ourselves as fallible and susceptible to error.”

Accordingly, a person who does not see his own soul as impure does not feel any need to purify it. Thus, he will not purify his soul and cannot be pure. As the carnal soul is not pure in essence, a person should ascribe all negative things to himself.

What happens if a person holds himself responsible for defects and faults? Such a person genuinely turns to God Almighty and asks guidance from Him. Also, God Almighty takes such considerations as remorse and repentance, and paves the ways leading to forgiveness for that person. If a person does

²¹ Sahih al-Bukhari, Jihad, 182; Abdurrazzaq, Al-Musannaf, 5/270.

not have such considerations at all, he commits various kinds of mistakes unawares and still attaches importance to himself; just like the way people do in our time in spite of their being nothing.

Consider that Umar ibn al-Khattab was a person who successfully dealt with the superpowers of his time, who spent his days and nights in obedience to God and had nothing to do with sins. During a time of draught, he placed his head on the ground by prostrating himself and cried in sobs, praying, "O God, please do not ruin Muslims because of my sins!"

On another day, when they asked him to lead a prayer for rain, he probably said to himself, "How can a sinful person like me pray for rain?" With such a consideration, he held the hand of the Prophet's uncle Abbas and climbed a hill with him. Then he made his wish by utterly humbling himself, raising the latter's hand as an intercessor and saying, "O God, this is the hand of your beloved servant's uncle. Grant us rain for its sake!" Sources relate that a heavy rain began afterwards.

This should be the attitude of an ideal believer. Along with fulfilling every task perfectly, and always seeking to achieve the best at everything and using his willpower to the ultimate degree, one must see various defects in those works in his own sight and constantly criticize himself. As it is expressed in a saying attributed to Umar ibn al-Khattab, a person must continuously call himself to account before the Day of Reckoning comes.

To conclude, if a person performs perfectly in a way that does not bring him shame when presented to God Almighty; if still sees faults in himself by saying, "Had someone else realized these works, they would have done it better, but I have messed it up;" then by God's permission and grace, this will render that person impeccably pure.²²

Fethullah Gulen – Endeavor for Renewal— a thematic tafseer

Perfection and modesty

Question: It is stated that the devoted souls who will realize a new revival are supposed be no different than ordinary people. On the other hand, they are continuously encouraged to be the cultured people who represent the best way by personal example. How can we strike the balance between these seemingly conflicting aspects?

Answer: If we evaluate the issue from the perspective of guiding others and conveying the Divine message to them, it is essential to believe that the following two qualities constitute the "must" of this path: targeting perfect standards along with adopting an understanding of nullifying oneself. For being able to convey relevant points to others and making an impact on consciences by God's grace, it is essential to make an effort to be well-equipped with the knowledge and practices of faith, as well as possessing humility and modesty, and viewing oneself as an ordinary person among other

²² <http://fgulen.com/en/fethullah-gulens-works/thought/the-broken-jug/49225-in-pursuit-of-perfection-with-the-wings-of-humbleness-lowered-down>

people. Any attempt to guide that is not based on knowledge and actual spiritual depth will not evoke any trust in those being addressed. Word polluted with arrogance and pride will never diffuse into hearts; and even if they do, their effect will never be permanent. Consider the works of Bediüzzaman: He highlighted how serious a problem ignorance was.²³ On the other hand, he also emphasized that arrogance has become a widespread disease in our time.²⁴

Two-winged spirit of guidance, with knowledge and humility

Let us expound on these two aspects a bit. In order to achieve a thorough representation, a Muslim, first, needs to “read” very well the contemporary age, social structure, contemporary events, and Divine principles operating in the universe, and then interpret them correctly. On the other hand, a Muslim also needs to know religious commandments and what they mean in our age, and thus become a “child of the time.” Otherwise, so many truths will be victimized by their poor representation, and their values will be condemned to seem worthless in the eyes of others. As “everything is, by its nature, essentially dependent on knowledge,”²⁵ it is very important for Muslims to express their own values well. What we mean by knowledge (*ilm*) here is not having information about a particular subject as it is commonly used in our day; it is the knowledge based on an evaluation of realities with their internal and external dimensions, which can help us draw a conclusion and deepen in knowledge of God. In fact, it is not possible for a believer to make any individual progress without such knowledge, let alone guide others. Until the moment people are equipped with knowledge, including knowledge of God, they will not be able to refuse their carnal self, and not be able to rid themselves of confusion and instability. Individuals who do not solve the problems of their own heart and mind will have real difficulty conveying the truths of faith to others; unaware, they will probably resort to demagoguery and dialectics. Until the moment they overcome the doubts and suspicions in their own mind, they will not be able to avoid faltering at their statements. For this reason, we firstly need to have insight into our own matters, knowing them deeply, with their spirit, essence, background, and basis. After that, we need to feel and sense in our conscience that, with the initial theoretical knowledge we have, we can attain knowledge of God (*marifah*), then love of God through that knowledge, and then zeal and yearning for God through their totality. If we can truly make these ingrained in ourselves, and behold in our heart and mind a picture of what comes out of our mouth, then we can be saved from having inner conflicts and falling into contradictions. For this reason, those who wish to guide others and share the beauties of their teaching with others must definitely do everything they can to have a profound and multi-dimensional knowledge that will be pleasing to God Almighty. However, mere knowledge does not suffice for conveying the message to others. At the same time one needs to be conscious of the fact that these very important inspirations and gifts are pure blessings and bestowals of God Almighty. As Bediüzzaman points out in *The Letters*, all of these blessings can be compared to a fur coat presented by a king.²⁶ Their value should not be overlooked. On the other hand, we should never give up the consideration that they do not essentially belong to us. That is, what we need to do is to direct the appreciation to the One who truly deserves it. If we can attain this perspective, we will have started opening the doors of modesty, humbleness, and humility. Thus we will have realized the truth expressed by Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib: “Live among people as one of them.” And this means

²³ Nursi, *Tarihçe-i Hayat*, p. 61

²⁴ Nursi, *The Words*, p. 206

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 332

²⁶ Nursi, *Mektubat*, pp. 416–417

combining absolute humility and perfection. Ingraining this feeling and thought in ourselves depends on acknowledging the True Owner of everything we possess, and making our conscience accept the fact that we are nothing. I would like to reiterate one point I previously made. If we were to be asked to put aside what essentially belongs to God and stand before Him with what remains, nothing would be left, I think. For this reason, what befalls on us is constantly being oriented to him in humbleness, modesty, and humility. As a matter of fact, it can be said that these points are related to the wisdoms behind the command to pray five times a day. Standing in awe of God five times a day at Prayer is an expression of submission to Him. As bowing before God is a form of modesty, prostrating oneself before Him is an expression of humbleness; it is a person's closest state to God Almighty, as related in a hadith.²⁷ Actually, the time of prostration is the moment when a person is freed from one's own self and dyed with the hue of manifestations from Him. That is, you reach such a state of "I" during prostration that, this "I" is nothing but a work of His manifestations. Then, closeness to God depends on a person's nullifying oneself.

The most modest person

As it is stated in the Qur'an: "*Assuredly you have in God's Messenger an excellent example to follow...*" (al-Ahzab 33:21), the Messenger of God presented the best example in every respect in all of his attitudes and behaviors. The Prince of both worlds was honored with the Divine address "Had it not been for you, I would not have created the worlds."²⁸ In the words of the poet Necip Fazil: "He, for whose sake we exist." As his blessed light was the first light that appeared in the realm of existence,²⁹ he is the most perfect fruit of the tree of existence. In other words, the light of Muhammad is the seed of the tree of universe and the ink of the pen of Divine Power that writes this "book of universe." And he is the curator in this great exhibition of the universe. In the words of insightful scholars, the blessed Prophet is a person who was gifted with the beginning and end of wisdom, with respect to the knowledge of the Divine. By God's grace, every kind of problem was solved in the hands of that blessed settler of problems. He is the teacher for everybody to learn how to evaluate the world and its contents with the eye of wisdom. In addition to being such a distinguished person, God's Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, is at the same time a monument of modesty and humility. When somebody addressed him as "our master," he expressed his protest for such address—even though it was true.³⁰ At another case when the following Divine command was revealed, "*So wait patiently for your Lord's judgment, and do not be like the companion of the fish, when he called out choking inwardly (with distress)...*" (al-Qalam 68:48), he stated, not assuming superiority, "Do not prefer me over Yunus ibn Matta."³¹ At another time, he told someone who felt overawed before him "Do not be afraid, I am the child of a woman who ate dried meat."³² During the construction of the Prophet's Mosque in Medina, he carried two bricks on his back while others carried a single brick.³³ While they needed to cook during travel, as all of his Companions contributed to it, he undertook the task of collecting firewood;³⁴ he always made an effort to not avoid at any kind of responsibility. So the Perfect Guide, under whose blessed feet the

²⁷ *Sahih Muslim*, Salah, 215; *Sunan Abu Dawud*, Salah, 148; *Sunan an-Nasa'i*, Tatbik, 78

²⁸ Aliyyulqari, *Al-Masnu*, 150; *Al-Asraru'l-Marfua*, 295; Al-Ajluni, *Kashfu'l-Khafa*, 2/214

²⁹ As-Suyuti, *Al-Hawi*, 1/325; Al-Halabi, *As-Siratu'l-Halabiyya*, 1/240

³⁰ *Sunan Abu Dawud*, Adab, 9; *An-Nasa'i*, *As-Sunanu'l-Kubra*, 6/70

³¹ *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Anbiya, 35; *Sahih Muslim*, Fazail, 166–167

³² *Sunan ibn Majah*, At'ima, 30; Tabarani, *Al-Mu'jamu'l-Awsat*, 2/64

³³ Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *Al-Musnad*, 2/381; Ibn Sa'd, *At-Tabaqatu'l-Kubra*, 2/66

³⁴ At-Tabari, *Khulasatu Siyari Sayyidi'l-Bashar*, 87; As-Safadi, *Al-Wafi bi'l-Wafayat*, 1/7

stars were like a stairway, combined such opposite virtues in his person, and thus he reached into souls with his most perfect and trustworthy example. Then what befalls believers should be faithfully following the footsteps of that Perfect Guide.³⁵

Fethullah Gulen – Recent Articles— a thematic tafseer

Humility (Tawadu)

Tawadu (modesty and humility) is the opposite of arrogance, pride, and haughtiness. It can also be interpreted as one's awareness of one's real position before God, and as letting that realization guide one's conduct toward God and with people. If one sees oneself as an ordinary, individual part of creation, a threshold of a door, a mat spread on a floor or a pavement stone, a pebble in a stream or chaff in a field, and if one can sincerely confess, as did Muhammad Lutfi Effendi: Everybody else is good but I am bad; everybody else is wheat but I am chaff, the inhabitants of the heavens will kiss him or her on the head.

In a narration attributed to the truthful, confirmed one, upon him be peace and blessings, it is said: Whoever is humble, God exalts him; whoever is haughty, God humiliates him. Thus, one's true greatness is inversely proportional to behaving as if one were great, just as one's true smallness is inversely proportional to behaving as if one were small.

Humility has been defined in many ways: seeing oneself as devoid of all virtues essentially originating in oneself, treating others humbly and respectfully, seeing oneself as the worst of humanity (unless being honored by a special Divine treatment), and being alert to any stirring of the ego and immediately suppressing it. Each definition expresses a dimension of humility. However, the last definition relates to those made sincere by God Himself and who are near to Him.

A Companion saw Caliph 'Umar, may God be pleased with him, carrying water in a pitcher on his shoulder. He asked him: What are you doing, O Caliph of God's Messenger? 'Umar, one of the foremost in nearness to God, answered: Some envoys have come from other countries. I felt some conceit in my heart and wanted to suppress it. 'Umar used to carry flour on his back. Once he accused himself while giving a sermon from the pulpit, and kept silent when people questioned and criticized his action.

Abu Hurayra carried wood while he was the deputy governor of Madina. When he was the chief judge in Madina, Zayd ibn Thabit kissed Ibn 'Abbas' hand, and Ibn 'Abbas, known as the Interpreter of the Quran and the Scholar of the Umma, helped Zayd get on his horse. Hasan, the grandson of the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, sat with some children who were eating bread crumbs and ate with them. Once Abu Dharr offended Bilal al-Habashi and, to obtain his forgiveness, put his head on the ground and declared: If the blessed feet of Bilal do not tread on this sinful head, it will not rise from the ground. All of these events and many similar ones are instances of humility.

³⁵ <http://fgulen.com/en/fethullah-gulens-works/thought/endeavor-for-renewal/48816-perfection-and-modesty>

Both God Almighty and His Messenger emphasized humility so much that one who knows of it does not doubt that servanthood consists of humility. The Quranic verse: The servants of the All-Merciful are those who walk on the earth in modesty, and if the impudent offend them, they continue their way saying: "Peace" (25:63) praises humility, and the Divine statements extremely humble toward believers (5:54) and merciful among themselves; you find them bowing down and falling prostrate (48:29) are expressions of praise for the ingrained humility reflected in their conduct.

Concerning humility, the glory of humanity, upon him be peace and blessings, declared: God has told me that you must be humble, and that no one must boast to another ; Shall I inform you of one whom Hellfire will not touch? Hellfire will not touch one who is near to God and amiable with people, and mild and easy to get along with ; God exalts one who is humble. That one sees himself as small while he is truly great in the sight of people ; and O God, make me see myself as small.

The glory of humanity, upon him be peace and blessings, lived as the most humble of people. He stopped at the places where children were gathered, greeted them, and played with them. If someone held him by the hand and wanted to lead him somewhere, he never objected. He helped his wives with the housework. When people were working, he worked with them. He mended his shoes and clothes, milked sheep, and fed animals. He sat at the table with his servant. He always welcomed the poor warmly, looked after widows and orphans, visited the ill, followed funeral processions, and answered the call of slaves in his community.

The beloved servants of God, from God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, to Caliph 'Umar and the Umayyad Caliph 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz and from him to numerous saints, purified and perfected scholars, and those honored with nearness to God, have held that the signs of greatness in the great are humility and modesty, while the signs of smallness in the small are arrogance and vanity. Based on this understanding, they sought to show men and women how to become perfect.

True humility means that people must know the full extent of their worth before God's infinite Grandeur, and then make this fully realized potential an ingrained, essential part of their nature. Those who have done this are humble and balanced in their relations with others. Those who have realized their nothingness before God Almighty are balanced in both their religious lives and their relations with people. They obey the commandments of religion, for they have no objection to the revealed truths of religion, nor do they criticize its method of addressing or relating to human reason. They are convinced that what is contained in the Quran and the authentic Traditions of the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, is true.

If there is an apparent contradiction between these two sources and human reason or established rational or scientific facts, such people seek to learn the truth of the matter. Therefore, it is nonsense for those without humility and modesty to assert, when confronted with an apparent contradiction between reason or rational premises and the revealed and narrated principles of religion, that reason or what is rational must be preferred. Their further assertion that judgments based on reasoning and analogy must be given priority over revealed principles is also mistaken. The wonders worked and spiritual pleasures felt by following ways not followed by the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, is God's way of leading people to perdition, for "success" in such endeavors leads to sin.

Those who have achieved humility are completely convinced of the truth of whatever the Prophet said or did. They never doubt it, and seek to practice it in their lives. If something else, such as a wise saying or a great accomplishment, appears to them as more beautiful or acceptable, they accuse themselves of being unable to discern the incomparable superiority of the revealed truths and expressions, saying:

There are many people who find fault with the words having no defects.

However, the fault lies in their defective understanding.

They are certain that one cannot prosper in the Hereafter by following ways opposed to the Quran and the Sunna. They find the greatest source of power in servanthood to God. In reality, one who worships God never adores anyone else, and one who serves others cannot be a true servant of God. How apt are the following words of Bediuzzaman:

Do not see anything or anybody else other than God as so much greater than you as to deserve adoration or servanthood. Do not boast of yourself in a way to see yourself as greater than others. As creatures are equal in being distant from being worshipped, so also are they equal in that they are all created.

Those who are truly humble do not attribute the fruits of their work and efforts to themselves, nor do they regard their successes or efforts in the way of God as making them superior to others. They do not care how other people regard them, and do not demand a return for their services in the way of God. They regard their being loved by others as a test of their sincerity, and do not exploit God's favors to them by boasting to others about them.

In short, just as humility is the portal to good conduct or being characterized with the qualities of God (such as generosity, merciful, helpful, forgiving, and so on), it is also the first and foremost means of being near to both the created and the Creator. Roses grow on the earth, and humanity was created on the earth and not in the heavens. A believer is nearest to God when prostrating before Him. While recounting the Prophet's Ascension (to the heavens), the Quran refers to him as God's servant, as a sign of his humility and utmost modesty.³⁶

³⁶ <http://fgulen.com/en/fethullah-gulens-works/thought/recent-articles/26962-fethullah-gulen-humility-modesty-tawadu>