

Gratitude

This is divided into three topics:

1. Gratitude and its reality
2. Blessing and its subdivisions
3. Clarifying that which is better than both gratitude and steadfastness

The Merit of Gratitude

Allah associates gratitude with remembrance in the Qur'an: {Therefore, remember Me, I will remember you. Give thanks to Me and do not reject Me;} and also states: {What concern hath Allah for your punishment if ye are thankful [for His mercies] and believe [in Him]}; {We shall reward the thankful}; and {Few of My bondmen are thankful}. Allah emphasises that He increases rewards when thanked: {If ye give thanks, I will give you more}. Satan mocks creation for ungratefulness: {... and most of them wilt Thou find ungrateful}. Allah clarifies that Paradise inhabitants will initially express gratitude: {They say: Praise be to Allah, who hath fulfilled His promise unto us'}.

The Reality of Gratitude

Please note that gratitude is considered a stage for spiritual travelers, comprising knowledge, emotional state, and actions. Knowledge involves acknowledging that all blessings come from the Most Generous Bestower. The emotional state reflects the joy from Allah's blessings, while actions are performed in line with the blessings, motivated by awareness of the Bestower. These actions involve the heart, speech, and all limbs. Together, these aspects are vital for fully understanding the true nature of gratitude.

The heart's primary purpose is to foster sincere intentions and wish for the goodness of all creation. The tongue should be used to articulate praise and gratitude directed towards Allah, reflecting this acknowledgement. The limbs are to utilize Allah's blessings in acts of obedience and abstain from misusing them in disobedience. For instance, expressing gratitude with the eyes involves concealing faults observed in fellow Muslims, while gratitude of the ears entails refraining from acknowledging faults heard about others. Furthermore, expressing satisfaction with Allah verbally is considered an act of gratitude.

When inquiring about his condition, an individual may offer praise to Allah, articulate grievances, or remain silent. Praising Allah constitutes an act of obedience, whereas grievances are regarded as gross disobedience, particularly among the righteous. How can any complaint addressed to the King of kings, who possesses all authority, be deemed respectful? It is preferable for the servant, when confronted with hardship or feeling so vulnerable that they wish to complain, to direct their supplication solely to Allah, exalted be He, who alone has the power to alleviate difficulties. Demonstrating humility before Him is esteemed, whereas complaining to others is merely an act of humiliation.

Gratitude towards Allah

Understanding what Allah, exalted is He, desires and dislikes is crucial for showing gratitude and avoiding ingratitude. Gratitude means expressing appreciation through actions that Allah approves, while ingratitude involves either neglecting to do so or using blessings in ways He disapproves. There are two primary sources for understanding His preferences: **first**, the knowledge conveyed through the Qur'an and Prophetic traditions, which is why Allah sent messengers to clarify His guidance. This knowledge depends on understanding all the rulings of the Sacred Law related to human actions. Without awareness of these rulings, true gratitude cannot be properly demonstrated. **The second** source is the heart's insight, which involves careful reflection and consideration—a challenging yet highly valued skill.

Understanding Allah's wisdom in every creation means recognizing that nothing in this universe is without purpose. Each being reflects some form of wisdom, either apparent or hidden. For example, the visible wisdom of the sun's creation is to differentiate day from night—day for work and night for rest—facilitating daily activities and suitable stillness. This is just one of many subtle wisdoms related to the sun, which has numerous other meaningful reasons for its existence.

The Qur'an holds many clear wisdoms accessible to people, yet it also contains hidden ones beyond human comprehension. As Allah, exalted is He, says: {How We pour water in showers, then split the earth in clefts and cause the grain to grow therein and grapes and green fodder.

Hidden wisdom includes the knowledge of the fixed and moving planets, which not everyone fully understands. Most people see them only as sky decorations, providing fleeting joy when gazed upon. This is reflected in Allah's words: {Lo! We have adorned the lowest heaven with an ornament, the planets.} Consequently, every element of the universe—its sky, planets, oceans, mountains, minerals, plants, animals, and every atom—contains abundant wisdom.

Similarly, animal parts are classified based on understood functions, like recognising that eyes are for seeing rather than catching. Regarding internal organs such as the intestines and liver, not everyone knows their purposes. Even among those who do, their understanding is limited compared to Allah's divine knowledge of these parts.

Anyone who uses something contrary to its intended purpose, or in an inappropriate way, shows ingratitude to Allah, exalted is He. For example, when someone hits another with their hand, they are ungrateful for the hand's blessing, which was created to defend against harm and seize benefits, not to cause harm. Similarly, looking at someone outside of marriage or with someone forbidden is a lack of gratitude for the blessing of eyesight and sunlight, through which we see. Eyes are meant to help us recognise beneficial things in both religious and worldly matters and to avoid harm; using them otherwise is a misuse. Likewise, if you use your right hand to clean yourself from urine, you are ungrateful for both hands' blessings. Allah designed your right hand for noble tasks, like holding the Qur'an, and your left hand for unclean tasks, like removing filth. Using the right hand for such unworthy tasks is an injustice and a violation of its noble purpose.

The main message is that Allah, exalted is He, embodies wisdom in all things. He has also created some actions of servants that either facilitate this wisdom or act as barriers to its realisation. Thus, any act that meets the essential conditions for a particular wisdom, allowing it to manifest and serve its purpose, is seen as gratitude. On the other hand, any action that opposes or obstructs these natural causes is considered ungratefulness. In short, understanding Allah's wisdom guides proper gratitude.

What Gratitude is for (i.e. Blessing)

The Reality of Blessing

Be advised that any goodness, delight, or happiness—indeed, anything that is sought and preferred—is regarded as a blessing. However, the true blessing is felicity in the hereafter. Any other instances labelled as blessings or felicity are either erroneous or metaphorical in nature, such as describing worldly happiness—which does not contribute to the hereafter—as a blessing, which constitutes a clear error. Moreover, it may be valid to identify certain things as blessings; yet this designation is more accurate when it pertains to felicity in the hereafter. Consequently, to designate a blessing as any means that lead to the attainment

of felicity in the hereafter and facilitate its achievement via one or multiple intermediaries is correct, for it results in true blessing.

In delineating the various forms of blessings, it is observed that all matters pertaining to us can be categorized into those that are advantageous both in this world and the hereafter, such as knowledge and virtuous conduct, which are undoubtedly blessings; those that are detrimental in both realms, such as ignorance and immoral manners, which are unequivocally afflictions; those that are beneficial in the short term but detrimental in the long run, such as deriving pleasure from pursuing one's desires, which constitutes pure affliction; and those that are harmful in the immediate but advantageous in the future, such as restraining one's desires and overcoming the ego, which are regarded as blessings by those who possess wisdom.

If we consider another division, blessings can be seen as anything pleasurable. Pleasures related to humans, whether specific to an individual or shared with others, fall into three categories: (1) intellectual; (2) physical and shared with some animals; (3) physical and shared with all animals.

1. The intellectual pleasure resembles the delight of knowledge and wisdom, as these are not experienced through hearing or sight but through the intellect itself. Such pleasures are rarer because they are the noblest, enjoyed only by knowledgeable individuals or sages. They are also more enduring because knowledge and wisdom do not fade over time and are innate qualities that remain constant, preventing boredom.

2. The attributes shared between humans and certain animals include qualities such as leadership, conquest, and dominance, exemplified by lions and tigers.

3. Conversely, attributes common to all animal species comprise fundamental needs such as sustenance and reproduction. These latter needs are widespread, as they are regarded as the most basic and essential pursuits.