

THE ILLUMINATION

ON ABANDONING SELF-DIRECTION

*Crown of the Faith, Abu'l Fadl
Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Abdul Karim
bin Ata'illah Al-Sakandari*

Foreword by Abu Bakr Sirajuddin Cook

Shikr

Dhikr. Publications
First Published August, 2022
Sydney

Title: The Illumination on Abandoning
Self-Direction, Al Tanwir fi Isqat Al-Tadbir.

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ISBN Print: 978-0-6450379-4-4
ISBN Ebook: 978-0-6450379-5-1

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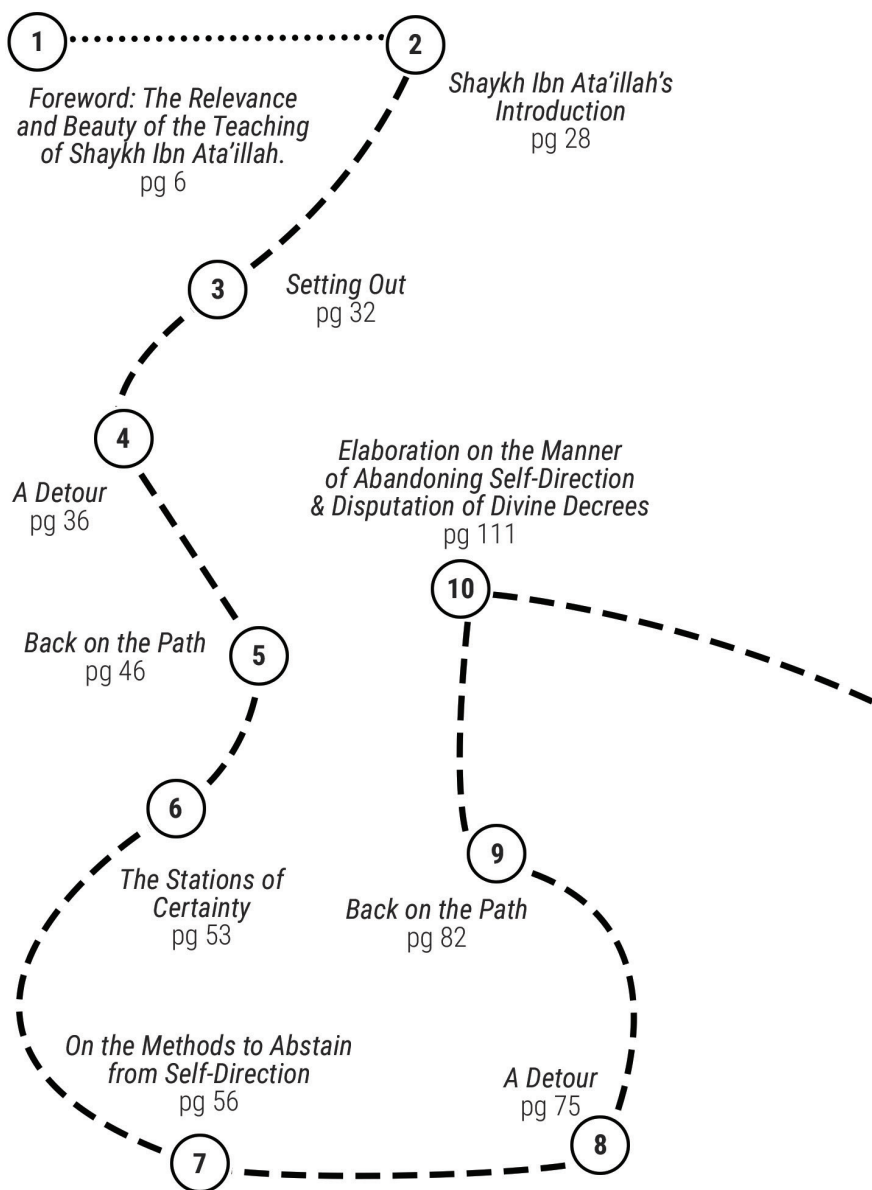
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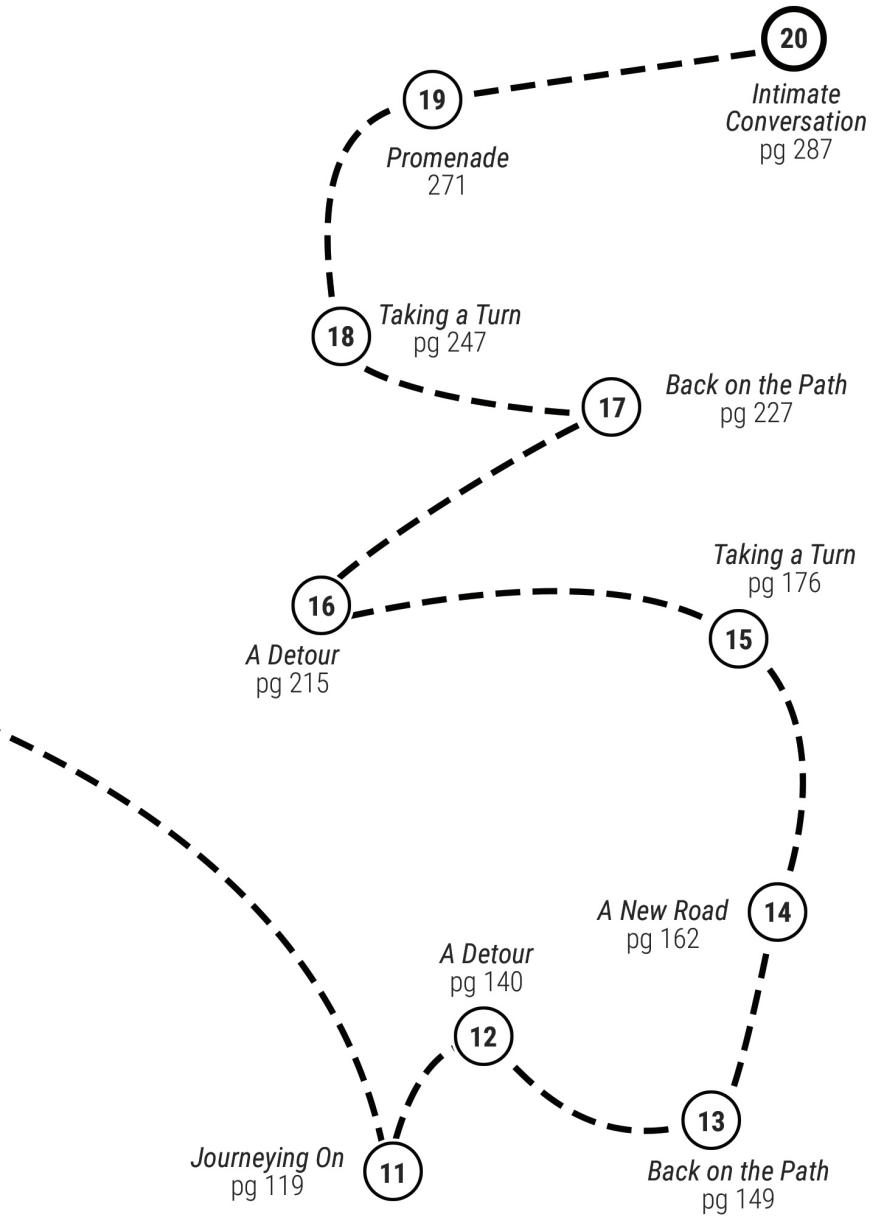
When the heedless man wakes up in the morning, he considers what he will do. While the intelligent one looks to what Allah will do with him.

*- Kitab al-Hikam (Aphorisms)
Ibn Ata'illah Al-Sakandari*

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2. Shaykh Ibn Ata'illah's Introduction

The praise belongs to Allah, who alone is responsible for creating and managing all affairs. He is Alone in commandment and decree. The King, in whose kingdom neither assistant nor minister is known. Who possess all – nothing escapes His ownership, be it big or small. The Sacred One, so perfect in His Attributes, there remains no similarity nor peer with His creation. The Knowing of All, from whose glance the deepest of thoughts are not hidden. **“Does He who created not know? He is the Subtle, the Aware.”**¹ He who encompasses the beginning of all things as well as their final outcomes. The All-Hearing, it makes no difference to Him if voices are pronounced or less than whispered. The perpetual Provider, who favours His creation by bringing to them their nourishment. The Self-Sufficient, who alone suffices for them in all their states and conditions. The Bestower, the One who gifted the living their life. The All-Powerful, and He returns life to them after their deaths. The Reckoner, and He will repay them in full for their good and their evil on the Day they arrive before Him.

Glorified be He as God, who so generously enriches His slaves even before they come into existence. He undertook the distribution of their sustenance whether they accepted Him or not. To every existent thing He outstretched His gifts and bestowals. He preserves the existence of the

universe by way of His eternity.² He is clearly visible through His wisdom on His earth and by His power in His heaven.

I testify that there is no god, except Allah ﷻ alone, without partner – in the manner of a slave who has entrusted his affairs to His judgement and surrendered to His decree and plan. And I testify that Muhammad ﷺ is His slave and messenger, chosen above all His prophets. He was distinguished by acquiring an overflowing of Allah's gifts and bounties, he is both precursor and seal, and none other than he can claim this honour. He is the intercessor of all slaves, on the Day when *Al-Haqq*³ ﷻ gathers them to allot His judgement. May Allah continually bless him, his family, and his loyal companions and grant them abundant peace.

Pay heed, my brother, may Allah make you from those He loves, and gift you with His closeness, and allow you to experience the sweetness of the drink of His beloved slaves, and safeguard you by preserving the connection between Him and you. May He not turn away from you, and may He unite you with the slaves He favoured with His glad tidings, those who became broken-hearted on their understanding the reality of **"Sight comprehends Him not..."**⁴ Then He consoled them with His lights, He opened for them the garden of His friendship and bestowed on their hearts the wafting of its breezes. He made them recognise His managing of their affairs since pre-eternity and so they surrendered the reins over to Him. He revealed to them the subtle kindnesses in His decrees, so they transcended

2 If His assistance was cut-off from His creation for even an instant, all creation would cease to exist.

3 From the beautiful names of Allah. Literally – The Reality.

4 Quran 6:103

disputation and stubbornness against Him. Thus, they surrendered to Him and entrusted all their affairs to Him, fully knowing that no slave attains the pleasure of Allah ﷻ except by being pleased with Him. None reaches sincere slave-hood except by submitting to His decree. So, the thought of (seeking the aid of) other than Him does not come to their minds, nor are they touched by unease and distress. As the poet said:

*The calamities of the age do not strike them
Upon their mouths are bridles halting complaint*

Allah's decrees flow over them and all the while they praise His majesty and surrender to His command. As the poet said:

*He sends misfortunes to strike down upon you
Yet your heart is to Him in complete prostration*

Now, whoever seeks closeness with Allah ﷻ must do so by its proper door and gain access via the proper means. The most pressing matter, which is necessary for you to rid yourself of and be purified from, is your desire to control your affairs and disagree with Allah's decrees. To expound on this point, I have put together this book and have named it '*Al-Tanweer fi Isqat Al-Tadbeer*'⁵ – so that its name be in accordance with its contents and its words match its meanings. I ask Allah ﷻ that He make it only for the purpose of pleasing His Noble Self, that He accept it by His

5 The title is difficult to render into English but carries the meaning of being a light-giving manual on how to abolish the desire to manage or control our affairs according to our own wishes and instead hand them over to Allah, especially when His decree contradicts what we wish for and to entirely trust His decisions regarding them. The desired outcome is to increase the state of slave-hood (*'ubudiyya*) within the aspirant.

all-embracing and ever-flowing kindness, that He benefits through it both the elite (in faith) and the common man – May He accept by His love for Muhammad, upon him be peace.

Indeed, to bring about His Will, He is All-Powerful, and He is most worthy and capable of responding.

3. Setting Out

Allah, the Most High, states, **“But no, by your Nurturing Lord⁶ (O Muhammad), they will not believe until they make you the judge between them in their disputes, and find no resistance in their selves to what you have decreed, and they surrender will full submission”⁷** And He, be He Glorified states, **“And your Nurturing Lord creates what He wills, and chooses, no choice have they. Glory be to Allah and exalted is He above the partners they ascribe!”⁸** And the Glorious states, **“Or shall man have whatsoever he longs for? Yet unto Allah belong the Hereafter and this world.”⁹**

The Messenger ﷺ said, *“He who tastes the sweetness of faith is the one pleased with Allah as Lord, Islam as religion, and Muhammad as Prophet.”¹⁰* And said the Messenger ﷺ, *“Worship Allah with contentment, and if you cannot, then with patience over what you dislike.”* There are other such verses and *hadiths*¹¹ that, whether explicitly or by alluding to, point to the abandoning of a desire to control, and worry over, the running of one’s affairs in opposition to Allah’s decrees.

6 The word *Rabb* has been translated throughout this work as ‘Nurturing Lord’ as it is a more precise translation than simply ‘Lord’. See al-Baydawi’s exegesis (*tafseer*) on Surah Fatihah, translated by Shaykh Gibril Fouad Haddad.

7 Quran 4:65

8 Quran 28:68

9 Quran 53:24-25

10 Sahih Muslim.

11 Sayings and narrations from the Prophet ﷺ.

While those of deeper knowledge (*ma'rifa*) have said – *Whoever abandons the managing of their affairs, their affairs are managed for them (i.e. by Allah).* While Shaykh Abu'l Hassan Al-Shadhili, may Allah be pleased with him, said *“If you cannot abandon (your desire to have control over the outcome of your affairs), then manage yourself so that you do not manage (Allah’s affairs).”* He also said, *“Abandon your own choosing regarding your affairs, rather choose not to choose – no, even flee from having no choice – no, flee from even your fleeing, and from each and every thing except Allah ﷻ . For it is in reality your Nurturing Lord who creates what He wills, and He is the one who chooses.”*

Let us return to the words of the Most High in the verse initially mentioned – **“But no, by your Nurturing Lord (O Muhammad), they will not believe until they make you the judge between them in their disputes, and find no resistance in their selves to what you have decreed, and they surrender will full submission.”** In it is an indication that true faith is only acquired by someone when Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ rule over them in their matters of speech, actions, in their taking, in their leaving, in their loving and in their aversion. This includes the religious obligations as well as submitting to His Divine decrees. Submission and obedience are necessary upon every believer unequivocally. The religious obligations are the commands and prohibitions (of the *Shariah*) which are binding responsibilities upon every slave. The Divine decrees are those matters that He decreed to fall upon you and are outside of your control. Hence, you cannot acquire true faith except by these two matters; obedience to His commands and surrender to His overpowering decrees.

Notice first that He did not negate the belief of those

who do not judge (by Allah's command) nor of those who do judge but still find unacceptance in their selves – until He took an oath by alluding to His special nurturing of His Messenger ﷺ, out of His tenderness, care, honouring and consideration for him. For Allah ﷻ did not say – No, by *the* Nurturing Lord – He only said, **“But no, by *your* Nurturing Lord (O Muhammad), they will not believe until they make you the judge between them in their disputes...”**

This verse is also emphasised by this oath, and this emphasis from Allah, be He Glorified, is due to His knowing full well that the inner selves are in the habit of loving when they overpower others in disputes and win over them, despite whether the truth is for them or against them.

The verse expresses the importance of the Messenger ﷺ with Allah ﷻ. For Allah ﷻ made His judgement the same as the Messenger's judgement and His decree the same as his decree. It is required from the slave to submit to the Prophet's judgement and comply with his command. Their faith in Allah's divinity is not accepted until they submit to the rulings of His Messenger ﷺ – since he is as his Nurturing Lord described him, **“Nor does he speak out of his own desire. It is nothing but a revelation revealed.”**¹² The Messenger's ruling is the ruling of Allah ﷻ and his decision is the decision of Allah ﷻ. The Glorified states, **“Truly those who pledge allegiance to you pledge allegiance only to Allah.”**¹³ He stressed it moreover with His words, **“The hand of Allah is over their hands.”**¹⁴

The other indication in the verse to the Prophet's great stature and the high honour of his rank is when

12 Quran 53:3-4

13 Quran 48:10

14 Quran 48:10

Allah ﷻ states, **“By your Nurturing Lord...”** This shows how Allah ﷻ attaches the Messenger ﷺ to Himself. He mentions similarly in another verse, **“Kaf. Ha. Ya. Ayn. Saad. A reminder of the Mercy of your Nurturing Lord to His slave, Zachariah.”**¹⁵ So *Al-Haqq* ﷻ affiliates Himself to Muhammad ﷺ directly and to Zachariah ؑ in the third person so that all slaves would know the difference between their two stations (with Allah) and the distance between the two, high ranks.

Now, He, be He Glorified, did not suffice to say that people are believers just by submitting to His judgements outwardly. Rather, He stipulated that there should be no inner frustration or uneasiness (i.e. Allah says in the verse, **“and (they) find no resistance in their selves”**). That is, they should feel no anguish or constriction in themselves towards the judgements of His Messenger ﷺ, no matter if the judgement was against them or for them.

This inner disunity is due only to the absence of inner-light (*nur*) and the presence of other attachments (in their hearts) – hence this frustration and constriction. The real believers are not like this. Their hearts are brimming with the light of faith, are expanded, and are opened by inner-light from *Al-Wasi'* (The Truly Vast One) and *Al-Aleem* (The All-Knowing One). He has stretched out His lights to them from His overflowing, immeasurable bounty. Their hearts have been well-prepared for the arrival of His decrees, and they entrust all matters to Him, not letting their own disapproval or even approval have any say in the matter.

4. A Detour

Know that *Al-Haqq* ﷻ, when He wishes to strengthen a slave to be able to bear what He has decreed upon them out of His wisdom, He dresses them with lights from His names and clothes them with His manners.¹⁶ So, His decrees will descend, but His lights (to strengthen them) have already preceded. The slave's strength to bear those decrees is only from his Nurturing Lord and not from his self. Thus, one is capable to carry fate's burdens and have patience over its hardships.

Indeed, what helps them to bear the burden of His decrees is the arrival of His lights.

But if you like you could also say – *what helps them carry the load of Divine rulings is the opening of the door of understanding.*

Or you could say – *what strengthens them to bear calamities is the arrival of His gifts.*

Or you could say – *what strengthens them to bear Divine decrees is realising the wisdom behind His choice.*

Or you could say – *what gives them patience over His rulings is their knowing that He knows all.*

¹⁶ i.e. the slaves are moulded with the manners of Allah ﷻ. Hence the slave becomes patient, forbearing, generous, noble, kind, and merciful etc.

Or you could say – *what gives them patience over His actions is the splendour of His beauty.*

Or you could say – *their patience over their fate is due to their knowing that patience brings about contentment and pleasure.*

Or you could say – *what gives them patience over Allah's decrees is the removal of His veils and coverings.*

Or you could say – *what strengthens them to carry the burdens of Divine commandments is the arrival of the secrets of intimate knowledge (of Allah).*

Or you could say – *what gives them patience over His decrees is their knowledge of what those decrees contain of kindness and charity towards them.*

These are then ten reasons that bring about patience in the slave and strengthen him upon the decrees of his Master when they appear. Allah ﷻ alone is the One who bestows these gifts from His overflowing kindness. He is the benefactor of this all upon the chosen of His slaves. Let us now speak on each of these ten reasons briefly so that their benefits might be realised accordingly, and the advantages of repetition might be acquired consequently.

The First

What helps them to bear the burden of His decrees is the arrival of His lights. These blessings, when they arrive, reveal to the slave the closeness of *Al-Haqq* ﷻ to him. They realise these decrees do not come except from Him. The slave's knowledge that these decrees come directly from

their Master is a cause of solace for them and bolsters their patience.

Have you not heard what Allah ﷻ said to His Messenger ﷺ, **“Be patient with the judgement of your Nurturing Lord, for you are before our eyes”**?¹⁷ That is, it is not the decree of anyone’s but His and, because of this, it should not torment you. Rather, it is the decree of your Master, faithful in His kindness and care upon you.

*Lightened for me is what I meet of difficulty
Because it is You, dear Lord who decrees and examines*

*And it is not for man to regulate Allah’s affair
Nor can he take from Allah what he desires.*

A relevant parable is of a man in a dark room. Suddenly, something hits him, yet he does not know what it is or from where it came. A lamp is lit and he sees it was his Shaykh or leader. Hence his knowledge of this brings about his patience in the matter.

The Second

What helps them carry the load of Divine rulings is the opening of the door of understanding. For when Allah ﷻ wills a certain decree to fall upon His slave, and He has given the slave understanding of the wisdom behind that decree, then know that He, be He Glorified, wants to carry the burden off the slave’s shoulders. Understanding brings your focus back to Allah ﷻ, makes Him your only goal, and induces your trust upon Him.

The Glorious states, **“And whosoever trusts in Allah, He suffices him.”**¹⁸ That is, Allah suffices their needs, He protects them, He stands by them against others, and He watches over them.

In fact, being given understanding from Allah ﷻ unveils the reality of what it means to be a slave to Allah. The Most Glorified states, **“Does not Allah suffice His slave?”**¹⁹ In fact all these ten statements revolve around the gift of understanding and are only variations of it.

The Third

What strengthens them to bear calamities is the arrival of His gifts. Indeed, your recollection of Allah’s previous gifts upon you helps you bear the arrival of calamities. So just as He decrees for you the things you love, have patience over what He would love to see from you. Have you not heard the words of the Most High **“And when an affliction befell you (O believers), though you wrought an affliction twice its like, did you say – From where is this?”**²⁰ So, *Al-Haqq* ﷻ consoled them of their defeat²¹ by (reminding them of) their victory. This is like previous blessings which, when remembered at the moment of tribulation, lighten the burden upon the slave brought close to Him.

Also, He makes them realise the great reward He has kept in store for them within that calamity and that gives them fortitude. As does the strength and tranquility which He sends down upon their hearts. As does what He sends

18 Quran 65:3

19 Quran 39:36

20 Quran 3:165

21 i.e. their defeat at the battle of Uhud after gaining victory at Badr.

upon them from subtle kindnesses and favours. So much so, that some of the Companions would say to their sicknesses, *"Intensify in your grip!"* While one of those with intimate knowledge would say, *"I have become so sick, but I love that the (spiritual) gifts and secrets of Allah continue to descend."* But this is not the place for delving into that.

The Fourth

What strengthens them to bear Divine decrees is realising the wisdom behind His choice. The slave, upon witnessing His excellent choosing, understands that it is not the purpose of *Al-Haqq* ﷻ to pain His slave because He is especially merciful to them, **"And He is Especially-Merciful to the believers."**²²

The Messenger ﷺ once saw a woman with her child and asked his companions, *"Do you think this woman would throw her child into fire?"*

They replied, *"No, O Messenger of Allah."*

He said, *"And Allah is more compassionate to His believing slave than she is to her child."*

Rather, He decrees upon you these difficulties because of what they necessitate of blessings and bounties. Have you not heard the words of the Glorious **"Surely, the steadfast will certainly be given their reward without measure"**?²³

If *Al-Haqq* ﷻ was to leave His decrees to the whims of His slaves, His favours would be prevented, and they

22 Quran 33:43

23 Quran 39:10

would be prevented from entering His paradise. So, all praise and gratitude are to Him for His excellence in choosing.

Have you not heard the words of the Most Glorified **“But it may be that you hate a thing though it be good for you, and it may be that you love a thing though it be evil for you”**?²⁴ A compassionate father would surely drive his son to the blade of the surgeon – and not for the desire to cause pain. The well-meaning doctor treats you with stinging medicine, even when it troubles you. If he consented to your wishes, you would forfeit your healing.

As for the one who is prevented from something and recognises that as a blessing, then this is not withholding at all but bestowal. It is like a merciful mother who prevents her child from overeating out of fear of indigestion and gluttony. Because of this Shaykh Abu’l Hassan Al-Shadhili, may Allah be pleased with him, said, *“Know that Al-Haqq does not withhold from you out of a refusal to give, but as a mercy and kindness for you.”*

So, the withholding of Allah is in fact His gifting, yet none realises this hidden gift except a truthful person (*siddeeq*). From the words we have recorded in another book are – *“Certainly, what will lighten from your shoulders the pain of calamity, is your knowledge that it is He, be He glorified, who is the one who trials you.”*²⁵ So, the One who directed fate upon you is the same who has excellence of choice regarding your affair.

24 Quran 2:216

25 *Kitab Al-Hikam*

The Fifth

*What gives them patience over His rulings is their knowing that He knows all. That is, the slave knows that Al-Haqq ﷻ is well acquainted with what He has tested the slave with. This knowledge lightens the burden of the calamity for him. Have you not heard the words of the Glorious “Be patient with the judgement of your Nurturing Lord, for you are before Our eyes”?*²⁶ *That is, what you – O Muhammad – have experienced from the disbelievers from the Quraysh, of stubbornness and denial, is not concealed from Us.*

Related to this, is the well-known story of a man whipped ninety-nine times, yet he did not let out a single sigh. But, on the hundredth strike, he cried out. He was asked about this and replied, *“The one for whose sake I was bearing the whippings for was in the gathering looking on – until the ninety-ninth whip. When he turned away (and no longer witnessed my ordeal), I then sensed the pain.”*

The Sixth

*What gives them patience over His actions is the splendour of His beauty. Al-Haqq ﷻ removes the sourness of difficulties from them when He manifests signs of His beauty to His slaves during those troubles. He lets them taste and experience from the sweetness of the manifestation.*²⁷ *Perhaps that delight will completely overpower them, leaving no trace of pain. Sufficient for you to understand this are the words of Allah “Then when they saw him, they so admired him, they proceeded cutting their hands all the*

26 Quran 52:48

27 i.e. their contemplating and recollection of Allah, that the Beautiful One is remembering them in His decrees, wisdom and actions. And Allah knows best.

while exclaiming – ‘Allah be praised! This is no human being; this is but an angel of nobility’.”²⁸

The Seventh

Their patience over their fate is due to their knowing that patience brings about contentment and pleasure. Whoever remains patient upon the decrees of Allah ﷻ, it will lead to acquiring contentment from Allah ﷻ. So, they bear its sourness to seek the resulting contentment. Much like bitter medicine is sipped in the hope it will lead to healing.

The Eighth

What gives them patience over Allah’s decrees is the removal of His veils and coverings. Al-Haqq ﷻ, when He wishes to remove the burden which He has placed upon His slaves, uncovers the veils from the insight of their hearts. The slave recognises the closeness of Allah, and that delight makes one oblivious to pain.

If *Al-Haqq* ﷻ was to manifest His beauty and perfection to the people of hellfire, it would make them oblivious to their punishment. Just as if He were to veil Himself from the people of Paradise, all happiness would cease to exist for them.

Punishment is then the presence of veils between Allah ﷻ and His creation. The degree of punishment is according to the degree of His veiling. Bliss is only in His revealing and manifestations. Its joy is dependent on the intensity of His manifestation.

28 Quran 12:31. Referring to the Prophet Joseph ﷺ. When the wealthy women of Egypt cast their eyes upon him, instead of the fruit before them they were meant to cut, they began cutting their hands and did not even realise it out of their fascination of the Prophet’s beauty.

The Ninth

What strengthens them to carry the burdens of Divine commandments is the arrival of the secrets of intimate knowledge (of Allah). All imposed obligations are taxing upon the slave. These include abiding by His commands, restraining from His prohibitions, patience with His decrees, and gratitude for His blessings. These obligations then revolve around four matters: obedience, sin, blessings, and trials. They are indeed four, having not fifth.

All four circumstances demand an obligation from you that is due to Allah ﷻ. Due to Him because of His being Lord and Master. His due upon you concerning obedience is that you recognise His favour on you in regard to it (i.e. His empowering you to abide by obedience in the first place). His right upon you regarding sins is your seeking of forgiveness over what you have committed. His right upon you regarding trials is showing patience to Him throughout them. And His right upon you regarding blessings is your gratitude throughout.

Further, what will lighten all these burdens upon you is proper understanding. If you recognise that obedience returns and yields benefits to you, it will grant you steadfastness in performing acts of obedience. If you know that persistence in sin and wandering into them necessitates punishment from Allah – either later (in the Hereafter or later in your life) or immediately by the removal of the lights of faith– it would be a motive for you to abandon them. Likewise, if you understood that patience returns to you its fruits, and lowers into your reach its blessings, you would hasten to it and rely upon it. If you knew that gratitude comprises of an increase in blessings from Allah

– for He says, **“If you give thanks, I shall surely grant you increase...”**²⁹ – it would be a reason for your diligence and your rising towards Him. We shall, Allah willing, expound on these four matters near the end of this book and dedicate a chapter to it.

The Tenth

*What gives them patience over His decrees is their knowledge of what He has placed in those decrees of kindness and charity towards themselves. Indeed, Al-Haqq ﷻ has embedded His kindness and mercy within the disliked things that befall you. Have you not heard the words of the Most High **“But it may be that you hate a thing though it be good for you, and it may be that you love a thing though it be evil for you”**?³⁰ Or the words of His Messenger ﷺ, “Paradise is surrounded by what is disliked and Hellfire is surrounded by what is desirable”?*

Within trials, sicknesses, and poverty are secrets of His mercy that none understand except those of spiritual insight. Do you not see that trials and strife calm and subdue one’s animal-self (*nafs*), humiliate it, and jolt it out of its heedless seeking of desires?

Indeed, with afflictions occurs humility, and with humility occurs victory – **“Allah certainly gave you (O believers) victory at Badr, when you were lowly.”**³¹ But to delve into that would take us out of the purpose of this book.

29 Quran 14:7

30 Quran 2:216

31 Quran: 3:123

5. Back on the Path

Let us return to the verse in which the Glorious states, **“But no, by your Nurturing Lord (O Muhammad), they will not believe until they make you the judge between them in their disputes, and find no resistance in their selves to what you have decreed, and they surrender will full submission.”**

Know the relevant times are three: before Allah’s judgement, during it, and after it. As for before it, slave-hood to Allah ﷻ requires resorting to His judgement. As for during and after, slave-hood consists of having no feelings of frustration, since some rulings may induce feelings of bitterness within you. If you were to be discontent with His judgement, it would only be submission to the judgement outwardly and aversion to it inwardly. There is no place for that regarding Allah’s judgement.

One might ask – If no resistance is shown against Allah’s judgement, one would have fully surrendered. Then what is the purpose of His repeating **“...and they surrender with full submission”** at the end of the verse? It is already mentioned that they are free from internal resistance and conflict, so it is already deduced they are in a state of submission. Why is it repeated?

The reply to that is that **“they surrender will full submission”** applies to all your affairs. If you argued that that is already obvious by the Most High’s words – **“until it make you (O Muhammad) the judge,”** then the rebuttal is

that the judging initially referred to in the verse is limited to the arbitration of disputes since He links it with “...**between them in their disputes.**”

The verse then revolves around three matters:

The first relates to arbitration or judging between disputes.

The second relates to the absence of feelings of frustration or opposition to those judgements.

The third relates to complete and absolute surrender in their inner-selves for both that decision and *all other Divine decrees that befall them*. It is the mentioning of what is specific before what is general.³² So understand!

The second, relevant verse we mentioned was “**And your Lord creates what He wills, and chooses, no choice have they. Glory be to Allah and exalted is He above the partners they ascribe!**” It contains multiple benefits.

His words “**And your Lord creates what He wills**” are an obligation upon the slave to not interfere with Allah’s managing of your affairs. Since it is He who creates what He wills, so He manages them how He wills. Likewise, one who does not create has no claim to manage what is created. “**Is He Who creates like one who creates not? Will you not, then, reflect?**”³³

As for His words “**...and (He) chooses...**” expresses His exclusivity in choosing (for the management of His creation). He is not forced or impelled towards His actions,

32 Such ordering is often used as a rhetorical device.

33 Quran 16:17

rather they come out of His will and choice. In that is found the requirement upon the slave to delegate management and choosing over to Him since what is for Him cannot be for you.

His words “**...no choice have they**” has two aspects. The first is that it is not fitting that slaves have any choice in the matter of His decree. They can never claim to be better at choosing than the Glorious ﷻ. The second is that they have no choice in the matter period. It is as if He says – *We have not given them the choice in the first place nor given them precedence in it over Us.*

His words “**...the partners they ascribe**” exalts Allah ﷻ over the idea that His slaves have any choice or authority alongside His choice. The verse makes evident that whoever claims to have a choice in Allah’s managing of affairs, alongside Him, is a polytheist (*mushrik*). A claimant of divinity for himself made evident through his very state – even if he denies it with his tongue.

The third, relevant verse consists of the Most High’s words “**Or shall man have whatsoever he longs for? Yet unto Allah belong the Hereafter and this world.**” It also indicates the abandoning of your own self-direction.

“**Or shall man have whatsoever he longs for?**” That is – *it is not appropriate that slaves have anything, except what We have prepared for them.* A point which is accentuated by the Most High then stating, “**Yet unto Allah belong the Hereafter and this world.**” It enjoins upon the slave to abandon management alongside His management. If the Hereafter is for Him as well as this world, then humankind has no part in them. Neither is it fitting that people

administer and manage what are not their possessions. It is only fitting that the One who owns the two worlds be the one to manage them, and that is Allah, the Glorious.

Consider also the words of the Prophet ﷺ, *“He who tastes the sweetness of faith is the one pleased with Allah as Lord, Islam as religion, and Muhammad as Prophet.”* It too contains multiple benefits.

His words, upon him be peace, *“He who tastes the sweetness of faith is the one pleased with Allah as Lord...”* contain proof that whoever does not have this quality does not taste the sweetness of faith and cannot appreciate its delight. Such a one’s faith is only a body with no soul. An empty shell. A conception of the mind with no truth behind it.

On the other hand, this phrase indicates that if hearts are free of the sicknesses of heedlessness and preoccupation with desires, they enjoy the sweetness of understanding just as others enjoy the delights of foods. Such sweetness is only tasted by one pleased with Allah ﷻ as his Lord. Those who surrender to Him, obey His commands, and throw the reins of control over to the excellent determination and choice of Allah ﷻ – far from the delusions of their own managing and choice. Such find the sweetness of life and true relief, by surrendering their burdens over to Allah ﷻ.

When one is pleased with Allah ﷻ, one receives Allah’s pleasure, as He states, **“Allah is content with them and they content with Him.”**³⁴ If one is blessed with Allah’s pleasure, Allah ﷻ brings about its sweetness in the heart to show the slave the value of what He honoured him with. Hence, the slave can recognise the kindness of Allah upon

him.

Yet, there is no being pleased with Allah, except with understanding, and there is no understanding except with light (*nur*), and there is no light except with being brought close to Allah, and there is no closeness except with heedfulness. So, when heedfulness was bestowed upon the slave, gifts and favours from His treasures followed. When Allah's support and light reaches the slave, his heart is cleansed from (spiritual) sicknesses and disorder. He becomes capable of perception and tastes the sweetness of faith due to his, now, unimpaired awareness and soundness of understanding.

But if one's heart is diseased with heedlessness of Allah ﷻ, he would not be aware of such sweetness. Fever, at times, causes the taste of sugar to be bitter – a distortion of reality. Only when the heart is cured of its sicknesses, does it understand things as they truly are. It then can sense the sweetness of faith, the delight of obedience, and the bitterness of being removed from Allah ﷻ and disobedience to Him.

The heart which tastes the sweetness of faith is in delight and grateful for recognising the favour of its Nurturing Lord. The sweetness compels it to seek the means that will preserve this faith and boost its delight. As for the heart that tastes the sweetness of obedience, it ensures consistency in obedience, as well as witnessing the kindness of Allah ﷻ. While tasting the bitterness of disbelief and disobedience necessitates that the heart flees from them and loses its passion for them. One then achieves purity from sin and from yearning for it.

Realise that not every person who abandons sin also

abandons the desire for that sin, yet alone becomes averse to it. It is the light of the heart that guides one to recognise that disobedience towards Allah ﷻ and heedlessness of Him is a deadly poison. The hearts of the believers flee from any discord with Allah, just as you flee from poison.

Returning to the *hadith*, his words, “...Islam as religion...” denote that if one is pleased with Islam as religion, then one is pleased with what Allah is pleased with and with His excellent choosing. The Most Glorified states, “**Truly the religion in the sight of Allah is Islam.**”³⁵ He also states, “**Whosoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it shall never be accepted of him.**”³⁶ He also states, “**Allah has chosen for you the religion, so die not except as Muslims.**”³⁷

These verses necessitate obedience to His commands, refraining from His prohibitions, enjoining good, prohibiting evil, and having passion enough for the religion that if one sees a denier trying to insinuate falsehood into it, one refutes him with Islam’s proofs and extinguishes the effect of that lie on himself with his faith.

Finally, his words, “...and Muhammad as Prophet,” necessitate that whoever is pleased with Muhammad ﷺ as his prophet, should be his supporter, take on his character and customs, mould himself to his values, be abstinent to this world while seeking the world beyond this one, forgive the offender, overlook harm done to him, as well as imitate his other virtues. One might then fulfil the pledge of allegiance to the Prophet ﷺ through word and by action, through taking and leaving, loving and disliking, both outwardly

35 Quran 3:19

36 Quran 3:85

37 Quran 2: 132

and inwardly.

Whoever is pleased with Allah ﷻ, surrenders to Him. Whoever is pleased with Islam acts upon it. Whoever is pleased with Muhammad ﷺ follows him. None of these can exist without the others. It is inconceivable that one is pleased with Allah ﷻ as Lord and not with Islam as religion. Or with Islam as religion but not Muhammad ﷺ as prophet. It is obvious enough to need no explanation.

19. Promenade

We now mention some parables of managing alongside Allah, Most High and of those that fall into it. As well as parables related to provision and *Al-Haqq*'s guarantee of it. Indeed, reality is clarified by parables.

A Parable

The parable of one who plans alongside Allah ﷻ is like a man who builds a house on the coast of a furious ocean. Every time he struggles with its construction, powerful waves bear down upon it and the building falls on all sides. Likewise, he who manages affairs alongside Allah ﷻ constructs buildings out of his plans and hopes while the decrees of Allah ﷻ leave them decimated in wreckage. Hence it is said – *one plans and manages and all the while fate laughs*. While the poet said:

*On what day will the building be completed
If you build it up and someone else pulls it down?*

A Parable

The parable of one who manages with Allah ﷻ is like a man who comes to a pile of heaped up sand and proceeds to build upon it. A violent wind comes and scatters the sand so his house is destroyed. As the poet said:

*Their contracts were by sand eventually effaced
And likewise buildings are not founded on sand*

A Parable

The parable of one who manages alongside Allah ﷻ is like a child travelling with his father. They set out at night and the father, out of concern for the child, keeps an eye on the child without the child noticing. The child does not see the father because of the darkness between them. The child becomes troubled and begins to worry about who will take care of him. But when the moon appeared and he saw how close his father was, his heart was soothed and his fear abated. By witnessing the closeness of his father he sufficed with his father's managing for him over his own managing for himself.

Such is the one who manages over himself, alongside Allah ﷻ. Such a person is only in the darkness of estrangement from Allah ﷻ so sees not His nearness. If the moon of Allah's ultimate Oneness (*tawheed*) was to ascend, or the sun of intimate knowledge of Him (*ma'rifah*), he would have witnessed the proximity of *Al-Haqq* ﷻ and been ashamed to manage affairs alongside Him. He would have sufficed with the managing of Allah ﷻ for himself over his managing for himself.

A Parable

Self-direction is a tree, watered by a river of negative thoughts about Allah ﷻ. Its fruit is estrangement and being cut off from Allah ﷻ. If the slave made good his thoughts about his Nurturing Lord, that tree of self-direction would have withered away. It would live no longer in his heart once its nutrients have dried up. But the fruit of self-direction is only estrangement from Allah ﷻ since whoever manages over himself relies solely on his own intelligence and

marvels at his own planning and schemes. His punishment is that he becomes the target of a grander plan and Allah's favours and bounties are prevented from reaching him.

A Parable

The parable of he who manages alongside Allah ﷻ is like that of a slave sent by his master to a distant locality to fabricate a garment. The slave enters the town and asks – *Where shall I live? Who shall I marry?* He busies himself with that and diverts his concern so he can managing those affairs. He neglects what the master commanded him to do until the master calls him back. The master punishes him by distancing him and revoking his elevated standing because he preferred his own fortune over the rights of his master.

You are the same, O believer. *Al-Haqq* dispatched you to this land and commanded you to His service. He undertook your care through management from Himself. If you are to then busy yourself with self-direction instead of observing the rights of your Master, you have strayed from the guided path and follow the road to destruction.

A Parable

The parable of one who manages alongside Allah ﷻ and the one who does not is like the parable of two slaves to a king. One of them is absorbed in fulfilling the commands of his master and does not concern himself with his clothing or food. His endeavour is only the service of his master. It has preoccupied him from attending to his personal needs. The other slave is always found to be washing his clothes, organising his mount or embellishing his appearance, no matter how the master asks him to do otherwise. No doubt, the first slave is more beloved to the master than the second,

who is more concerned with his desires and needs than the rights of his master.

A slave is bought only for his master, he is not bought to serve himself. Likewise, you will not see the insightful slave except that he is occupied with the rights of Allah and the observance of His commands, so much so that he does not worry about his personal needs and desires. When the slave becomes like this, *Al-Haqq* ﷻ ensures all his affairs for him and dispatches to him abundant gifts because of the slave's sincerity and trust. **"And whosoever trusts in Allah, He suffices him."**³⁴⁵

As for the ignorant one, you will not find him except reaching out towards worldly means. You will see him seeking out things that ingratiate his desires and lust. He relies on his self-direction and is so left to his own devices. He is banished from the serenity of true confidence and trust in Allah ﷻ.

A Parable

The parable of managing alongside Allah ﷻ is like a shadow stretching out as long as the sun does not reach its zenith. Once the sun reaches its peak, that shadow disappears and nothing remains except the little outline of shadow that remains when objects are directly facing (beneath) the sun. Such too is the sun of intimate knowledge of Allah (*ma'rifah*). If hearts turn their attention directly (to Allah), self-direction is completely effaced except for a little of the form of self-direction of the slave so that he can use it to fulfil his obligations to Allah ﷻ.

A Parable

The parable of one who self-directs his affairs alongside Allah ﷻ is like a man who sells a house and a slave. After the transaction has been completed and signed, the seller comes to the buyer and says – *Do not build anything upon the house nor destroy such and such part of it or do such and such with it.* Or the buyer comes to the house himself to do from that what he wills. It would be said to him – *You have sold the house you can not do whatever you like freely over what you have sold! There is no right for you to dispute the managing of something after you have sold it!*

The Glorified states, **“Truly Allah has purchased from the believers their souls and their wealth.”**³⁴⁶ Therefore, it is binding upon the believer to deliver his soul to Allah ﷻ and not attribute his soul to himself. Indeed, Allah ﷻ created it and indeed, He bought it. From the requirements of surrendering your soul is to abandon the managing of what you have handed over, as we have discussed.

A Parable

The parable of the matter of provision of the slave in this world is like a master who says to his slave – *Stay in this house to perform such and such service of mine.* No doubt, the master would not command that from the slave without feeding him, clothing him and undertaking the responsibility for the slave’s needs. The master would not abandon and neglect the slave of his care.

Likewise, Allah ﷻ has ordered the slave to act obediently in this world and in harmony with Him. He has

guaranteed the apportioning of His provisions. So, let the slave undertake His service, for the Master has undertaken upon Himself to deliver His grace. He states, be He glorified, **"And bid your family to prayer and be steadfast therein. We ask no provision of you; We provide for you. And the end belongs to (the people of) righteousness."**³⁴⁷ Its discussion has already preceded.

A Parable

The parable of the slave and Allah ﷻ in this world is like a child with its mother. The mother would not leave the child out of her care and guardianship. Likewise, is the believer with Allah ﷻ. *Al-Haqq* watches over him with His excellent guardianship, drives blessings towards him and repels away distress. The Messenger ﷺ once saw a woman with her child and said, *"Would you think that she would throw her child into fire?"*

They replied, *"No, O Messenger of Allah."*

He said, *"Allah is more compassionate to His believing slave than she is to her child."*

A Parable

The parable of the condition of the slave in this world is like that of a slave to whom his master says, *"Go to such and such land but be careful because you will need to cross a desolate wasteland to reach it. And make your preparations and take equipment with you on your way."* When the master has allowed this, the slave knows that it is permissible for him to eat what will give him strength so that he can strive to attain those preparations and the necessary equipment.

Such is the slave. *Al-Haqq* ﷻ created him in this land and commanded him to take provisions from it for his final destination. He states, “**And make provision, for indeed the best provision is reverence (taqwa).**”³⁴⁸ It is hence understood that since He commanded his slaves to take provisions for the Hereafter, He has allowed them to take from this world that which will help them take their provisions, prepare themselves, and equip themselves for their final destination.

A Parable

The parable of the slave and Allah ﷻ is like a master who has a garden. He commands his slave to cultivate and care for it. If that slave was to do all that his master asked him, then it is not for the master to blame the slave or prevent him from eating something from that garden. If the slave ate from the garden, then he also worked in it. However, the slave must only eat what will help him in his service, he should not eat out of enjoyment and greed.

A Parable

The parable of the slave and Allah ﷻ is of a man who plants many crops and builds a great house. It is said to him – *For whom have you done all this?* He replies – *For a child I hope will be mine in the future.* He made preparations for everything the child would need before the child existed out of his love for him. Do you think that, after the father has made such preparations for the child before the child's existence, he would prevent the child from it after the child came into existence?

Similarly, *Al-Haqq* has prepared kindnesses for

the slave before He established him in this world for His kindness necessarily precedes your existence, if you have so far understood. Do you not see that His gifts to you have preceded your existence and His favours appeared before your appearance in this world? He bestows in pre-eternity before the slave existed and before the slave had any work or occupation. What He set aside for you in pre-eternity and stored for you, He did not do so to prevent you from it here. Would He make preparations for you before your existence and prevent you from it after your existence?

A Parable

The parable of the slave and Allah ﷻ is that of a labourer that a king brings to his home and commands him with some task. The king would not bring that labourer and employ him in his home and leave him without provision, for the king is too noble to do otherwise.

Likewise is the slave with Allah ﷻ. This world is the house of Allah ﷻ and the labourer is you. Your work is obedience and payment is Paradise. He would not order you to His work without driving to you what will sustain you in it.

A Parable

The parable of the slave and Allah ﷻ is like a guest who lodges with a noble king in his home. That guest would not worry about his food or drink for if he did it would be an accusation against the king and thinking badly of him.

The words of Shaykh Abu Madyan, may Allah be pleased with him, have already been mentioned, *"The world belongs to Allah. We tarry here only as His guests."* Further, the

Glorified would not command us to honour the guest, on the tongue of His Prophet ﷺ, and then abandon it Himself.

The one who throws accusations at the king over receiving food and drink is contemptible in the eyes of the king. If he had no doubts about Allah ﷻ, he would not accuse Allah of not taking care of his affairs.

A Parable

The parable of the slave and Allah ﷻ is like a king who commands a slave to base himself in such and such land to fight the king's enemies. He commands him to expend his courage and be relentless in fighting. Thus it is understood that since the king has commanded this, he has allowed the slave to eat from that land and its treasuries to maintain his war against the enemy.

Likewise, *Al-Haqq* ﷻ has commanded His slaves to fight Satan when He states, **"And strive for Allah as He should be striven for."**³⁴⁹ Also, **"Truly Satan is an enemy unto you; so take him as an enemy."**³⁵⁰

When Allah ﷻ has commanded them with fighting against Satan, it is permissible for them to eat from His favours to strengthen themselves for it. If you abandoned food and drink, you could not fulfil His obedience nor move in His service. So the command of the king to fight includes eating from the king's riches, that is those things that have been predetermined for you as a trust and ensure your well-being.

349 Quran 22:78

350 Quran 35:6

A Parable

The parable of the slave and Allah ﷻ is like a tree that was planted to seek its growth and fruit. Would the tree think, if we suppose it can think, that its sower would plant it and then not water it? How could it be, when the sower desires its fruit and its growth?

You are like that O slave, a tree of Allah ﷻ that He planted. He is the One who waters you at every moment and is responsible for your sustenance. Do not throw accusations at Him of planting the tree of your existence and then prohibiting its water. For He would never do so.

A Parable

The parable of the slave with Allah ﷻ is like a king who builds a house, beautifies it, embellishes it, undertakes growing its foliage and finishes it with all sorts of desirable goods. The king wishes to move his slave into this home. Do you think that if this is the king's concern, he would not store provisions for them and facilitate their journey? Would he prevent them to eat from his favours and bounties here when he has prepared a much grander and more excellent lodging for them there?

Likewise, Allah ﷻ has established His slaves in this world but prepared Paradise for them. He has not prepared for them the Hereafter and then prevented them from what would sustain them in this world. Hence, He states, **"Eat of the provision of your Lord and give thanks to Him."**³⁵¹ And He states, **"O messengers! Eat of the good things and work righteousness."**³⁵² And He states, **"O you who believe! Eat**

351 Quran 34:15

352 Quran 23:51

of the good things We have provided you.”³⁵³

If He has postponed the eternal paradise for you and gifted it to you, He would not prevent you from this perishing world. If He prevents you from it, then it is only what He has not apportioned to you. What has not been assigned to you is not yours to claim. Perhaps that prohibition is due to wisdom He grasps, there being in its prohibition a benefit for you and the excellent administering of your affairs. Much like water is diverted from a tree so that it is not ruined by continual watering.

A Parable

The parable of one concerned with his worldly life, heedless of taking provisions for his Hereafter, is like a person attacked by a lion. The lion is about to devour him when suddenly the man preoccupies himself with repelling a fly that lands on him, instead of worrying about the lion. This slave would certainly be considered a fool, deprived of intelligence. If he was characterised by intelligence he would have occupied himself with preventing the lion from attacking him instead of swatting the fly.

Such is the one who concerns himself with his worldly life and is ignorant of his preparations for the hereafter. This is evidence enough of his stupidity. If he was intelligent and astute he would prepare for himself the home of the Hereafter which he is responsible for and what was assigned to him to strive for. He would not busy himself with worrying about his provision. His concern for it in comparison to the Hereafter is like the fly compared to a sudden ambush by a ferocious lion.

A Parable

The parable of the slave and Allah ﷻ is like a young child with his father. The child bears no worry and fears no loss because he knows that his father is taking care of him. The child has great confidence in his provision and his reliance on his father removes any anxiety.

This is how the believing slave is with Allah ﷻ. He does not bear worries nor do anxieties return to his heart over the affair of provision because he realises that *Al-Haqq* ﷻ would not abandon him. He knows that Allah ﷻ would not prevent him from His bounties or cut him off from His kindness and generosity.

A Parable

The parable of the slave with Allah ﷻ is like a slave who has a rich master, known for his great fortune and kindness to his slaves. The master is known never to withhold, always bestowing gifts freely. Hence, the slave has confidence in His bounty and always expects his kindness. He recognises his master's great wealth and that saves him from fatigue and worry.

This is exactly what caused the repentance of Shaqeeq Al-Bakhli رحمه الله. He narrates, *"At a time of famine, I came across a young slave who was happy and cheerful, he seemed to have no knowledge of the difficulties people were going through. I said to him, 'O young one, do you not know that the people are suffering?'"*

He replied, 'And what does that matter to me when my master has a farm reserved for us. Every day he sends us from it what we need.'

I said to myself – If this master has a farm reserved for them, then my Master has the treasuries of the heavens and earth. It is more worthy I have confidence in Him than this slave has with his master.” This was the cause for his turning to Allah ﷻ .

A Parable

The parable of a slave who utilises worldly means is like a slave to whom his master says – *Stick to my service and I will send you my gifts.*

The slave who takes worldly means and his reliance is on Allah ﷻ is like a man who sits underneath a waterspout when it rains. He thanks Allah ﷻ , alone, and does not attribute the bestowal of water to the waterspout. He just knows that if he did not sit there, he would not find any water.

Likewise, worldly means are the waterspouts of Allah’s favours. Whoever takes worldly means and his aspiration is only towards Allah ﷻ , not with the worldly means he interacts with, will not be harmed by that and being distanced from Allah ﷻ would not be feared for him.

As for those whose reliance stops with the worldly means, who are heedless of their Master, then they are like a herd of cattle. Their owner passes in front of them but they pay no attention to him, even though he pays for their upkeep and employs the farmhand that cares for them. But when the farmhand passes by they give him much attention and move close to him because of their being accustomed to their food coming from him. The heedless person is like this. When he receives kindnesses from people he attributes it to them when in reality it does not originate from them. He is akin to cattle and in fact, cattle are in a better state than him.

"Such as these are like cattle. Nay, they are even further astray. It is they who are heedless."³⁵⁴

A Parable

The parable of one who relies on worldly means compared to the one who transcends them is like that of two men that enter a public bath. One is intelligent, the other is dull and foolish. When the water stops flowing, the intelligent one knows there is a canal and waterway that directs and pushes the water out. He inspects them to remove what has blocked the water or see to whatever else needs to be done.

As for the other man, he comes up to the water pipe saying – *O water pipe! Pour forth for us some water! What is wrong that you have stopped your water?* It would be said about him – *He is indeed crazy! Does a water pipe hear or do anything!? It is only the spot where the water appears not the cause of the water to flow!*

A Parable

The parable of a slave who hoards wealth is like the slave of a king. The king places him in his garden so the slave can look after it. It is acceptable that the slave eats from it to strengthen himself so he can sow and farm. But it is not acceptable that he gathers and stores away food from the garden because there will always be fruits in the garden and his master is rich. If he hoards without permission from his master, out of greed and throwing accusations at his master (that his master will neglect him), then he has acted treacherously.

Such is the slave who does not hoard. He is like a slave in the garden of a master or in his house, knowing full well that his master will not forget or neglect him. Rather, he knows his master will grant him goodness and reward in return. He suffices in his master from having to hoard and in his master's richness from needing anything else. Such a slave is worthy of the master's friendliness and in being supported by the master's gifts.

A Parable

The parable of the one who gathers wealth in good faith, as a trust, is like the slave of a king. The slave does not consider himself as owning anything alongside the king. He does not rely on what he has stored in his possession nor does he spend it, he has no choice in the matter except for what his master chooses for him to do. When the slave understands that his master intends for him to hold on to wealth, he holds on to it. He holds on to it for the sake of his master, not for his own sake. When the right time to spend it arrives, he spends it recognising that is what the master desires. He is not to be blamed for not spending because he held on to the wealth for his master, not for himself.

Likewise are the people of intimate knowledge of Allah ﷻ. If they spend, it is for Allah ﷻ and if they keep, it too is for Allah ﷻ. They desire thereby to seek His good pleasure, they seek nothing else but Him alone by their spending and keeping. They are trustworthy treasurers, distinguished slaves and generous, liberated people. For *Al-Haqq* ﷻ has freed them from bondage to worldly means. They do not incline to worldly means with love nor do they devote themselves to worldly means with ardour. The love for Allah ﷻ and yearning for Him that has settled in their

hearts, as well as His greatness and majesty that has filled their chests, prevents them from regarding worldly means.

Nor is the one who holds onto wealth for the sake of Allah ﷻ any less than the one who spends it for His sake. For when things are in their hands it is like they are still in the treasuries of Allah ﷻ. They realise that Allah ﷻ owns them together with what they own. Whoever does not master their keeping wealth for the sake of Allah ﷻ does not master spending it for His sake. So understand!