

Thirteenth Hadith: Trust In God (Tawakkul)

بِالسَّنَدِ الْمُتَّصِلِ إِلَى الشَّيْخِ الْجَلِيلِ ثِقَةِ الْإِسْلَامِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ عَنْ عِدَّةٍ مِنْ أَصْحَابِنَا، عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ خَالِدٍ، عَنْ غَيْرِ وَاحِدٍ، عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ أَسْبَاطٍ، عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ عُمَرَ الْحَلَالِ، عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ سُؤَيْدٍ، عَنْ أَبِي الْحَسَنِ الْأَوَّلِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ قَالَ: سَأَلْتُهُ عَنْ قَوْلِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ: ﴿وَمَنْ يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ﴾ فَقَالَ: التَّوَكُّلُ عَلَى اللَّهِ دَرَجَاتٌ؛ مِنْهَا أَنْ تَتَوَكَّلَ عَلَى اللَّهِ فِي أُمُورِكَ كُلِّهَا، فَمَا فَعَلَ بِكَ كُنْتَ عَنْهُ رَاضِيًا، تَعْلَمُ أَنَّهُ لَا يَأْلُوكَ خَيْرًا وَفَضْلًا وَتَعْلَمُ أَنَّ الْحُكْمَ فِي ذَلِكَ لَهُ، فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ بِتَفْوِضِ ذَلِكَ إِلَيْهِ وَتَثِقْ بِهِ فِيهَا وَفِي غَيْرِهَا.

Muhammad ibn Ya'qub (al-Kulayni): from a group of our teachers, from Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Khalid, from more than one transmitter, from 'Ali ibn Asbat, from Ahmad ibn 'Umar al-Hallal, from 'Ali ibn Suwayd, from Abu al-Hasan al-'Awwal (A). 'Ali ibn Suwayd says, 'I asked him concerning the utterance of God Almighty: And whoever puts his trust in God, then God suffices him (65:3).' The Imam (A) said: "There are various degrees of trust in God. Of them one is that you should put your trust in God in all your affairs, being well-pleased with whatever God does to you, knowing for certain that he does not cease in His goodness and grace towards you, and that the command therein rests with Him. So put your trust in God, leaving that to Him and relying upon Him in regard to that and everything other than that."¹

Exposition

Halal, with a *shaddah* on the *lam*, means the seller of *hill*, oil. Abu al-Hasan al-'Awwal is Imam al-Kazim (A), and it is he who is meant (in traditions) when just 'Abu al-Hasan' is mentioned. Abu al-Hasan al-Thani is Imam al-Rida (A) and Abu al-Hasan al-Thalith is Imam al-Hadi (the Tenth Imam). *Tawakkul* literally mean, admission of one's inability and reliance on one other than oneself.

(إِتَّكَلْتُ عَلَى فُلَانٍ فِي أَمْرٍ) means, as the lexicographers 'I relied upon him in a certain matter, the word (إِتَّكَلْتُ) originally being (إِوْتَكَلْتُ), which means considering someone sufficient.

(يَأْلُوكَ) derived from (أَلَا) and (أَلُوًّا) meaning 'to fail', 'to neglect', 'to refrain'. In the transitive form, some

have said, when it requires two *maf'ul*, the sense of preventing and depriving (*man'*) is assured

Tawakkul, is something other than *tafwid*; and the two are different from *rida* and *wuthuq*, as will be explained later on. We will now explain this noble tradition in a number of sections:

Tawakkul And Its Degrees

Know, that closely related meanings have been ascribed to *tawakkul* by the various definitions proposed by different schools, each according to its own approach. The author of *Manazil al-sai'rin* says:

التَّوَكَّلُ كُلُّهُ الْأَمْرُ كُلُّهُ إِلَىٰ مَالِكِهِ وَالتَّعْوِيلُ عَلَىٰ وَكَأَلْتِهِ.

Tawakkul means entrusting all the matters to their Master and relying upon His trusteeship.[2](#)

Some *urafa* have said:

التَّوَكَّلُ طَرْحُ الْبَدَنِ فِي الْعُبُودِيَّةِ وَتَعَلُّقُ الْقَلْبِ بِالرُّبُوبِيَّةِ.

Tawakkul means throwing the body down (as in prostration) in servitude (to God) and attaching the heart to (His) Lordship.

That is, it means using one's bodily powers in obedience to God and refraining from interfering in the matters (of the heart) and consigning it to the Lord. Some others have said:

التَّوَكَّلُ عَلَى اللَّهِ انْقِطَاعُ الْعَبْدِ فِي جَمِيعِ مَا يَأْمُلُهُ مِنَ الْمَخْلُوقِينَ.

Tawakkul upon God means the severance by the servant of all hopes and expectations from the creatures (and attaching, them to God).

The meanings mentioned are. closely related and there is no need to delve further on the meaning of the word. However, that which should be mentioned is that *tawakkul* has various degrees in accordance with the stations of the devotees. Since the knowledge of these degrees of *tawakkul* depends on the knowledge of the various degrees of the devotee's knowledge of their Lord, the Almighty and the Glorious, we cannot avoid discussing them here.

Let it be known to you that one of the esoteric principles of the wayfarers of the Path, without which no progress is possible, is the knowledge of God's Lordship and Mastership and the quality of the sway of the Holy Essence over all affairs. We shall not discuss the theoretical aspect of this issue, for it calls for an examination of questions related to free will and predestination, which is not suitable for these pages.

Here, we will only mention the different degrees of the people's knowledge of it.

People are very different in regard to the knowledge of the Lordship of the Sacred Essence of God. The commoners among the monotheists consider God Almighty the Creator of the general essences of things and their elements and substances; but they do not believe in the all-embracing Lordship of God, and consider His authority over things as limited. As a matter of verbal habit they may often declare that God decrees all matters and has power over all things, that nothing can come into existence without His sacred Will. Yet, their actual station is not at a par with their verbal profession, neither in respect of knowledge, nor faith, neither experience nor conviction.

This class of people, to which we also belong, have no knowledge of God's Lordship; their faith in *tawhid* is deficient and the sovereignty of the Lord is concealed from their sight by the veils of apparent causation. Hence they do not occupy the station of *tawakkul*, which is our concern here, except on the level of mere verbal claim. Accordingly, they do not rely in their worldly affairs on anything except the superficial causes and material factors.

If sometimes they turn their attention to God and beseech something of Him, that is either on account of imitation or for reasons of caution; since not only they see no harm in it but allow a possibility of benefit. Thus there is a scent of *tawakkul* in them, although whenever they deem the apparent causal factors as favorable they totally forget God and His efficacy.

Now that which is staid regarding *tawakkul*, that it is not opposed to action and effort is quite right and in accordance with reason as well as revelation. But to fail to see God's Lordship and His efficacy and to consider material causes as independent is contrary to *tawakkul*. Although this kind of people is devoid of *tawakkul* in respect to their worldly affairs, they make vigorous claims of *tawakkul* when it comes to the matters of the Hereafter. They justify their sluggishness and neglect in the matters of acquisition of transcendental knowledge, spiritual development and fulfillment of moral and devotional duties by easy professions of reliance on God and *tawakkul* on His beneficence.

With such verbal declarations as 'God is great' and 'My trust lies in God's beneficence' they hope to attain the stations of the Hereafter. However, in regard to worldly matters, they declare, "Effort and endeavor are not contrary to *tawakkul* on God and reliance upon His munificence." This is nothing except one of the guiles of the carnal self and the Devil. For this sort has *tawakkul* on God neither in the matters of the world nor in the affairs of the Hereafter. But since they consider worldly matters as paramount, they put their reliance on material causes, not relying on God and His efficacy.

On the other hand, since the affairs of the Hereafter are not important in their eyes and as they have no real faith in the Day of Resurrection and its details, they conjure up pretexts to conceal their neglect. Hence they say, 'God is great', and they declare trust in God and faith in the intercession of the Intercessors, although such professions are nothing but empty verbiage and meaningless oscillations of the tongue.

There is another class of people, who, having been convinced either by reason or revelation, affirm that God Almighty is the sole determiner of matters, the cause of all causes, efficacious in the realm of being, there being no limit to His power and influence. On the level of rational belief, they have *tawakkul* in God; that is the complete grounds of *tawakkul* have been furnished for them by reason and revelation.

Hence they consider themselves as *mutawakkil* and are able to supply rational proofs in justification of *tawakkul*, having confirmed rational conviction in all the essential preliminaries of *tawakkul*, which are: God's knowledge of the needs of His creatures; His power and ability to satisfy those needs; His freedom from stinginess; and His Love and mercy for His creatures. On the basis of these, it is necessary to have trust on the Omniscient, Powerful, unbigly and Merciful Lord, Who takes care to provide whatever is good for His creatures and in their interest, Who does not allow them to remain deprived of what is good for them, even though they themselves should be incapable of distinguishing between that which is beneficial or harmful for them.

This group, although they are *mutawakkil* on the level of rational knowledge, has not yet attained the stage of faith; they are shaky when confronted with the matters of life. There is a conflict between their reason and their heart, in which reason is dominated by the heart which has faith in material causes and is blind to God's power and efficacy.

There is a third group in which the conviction in God's sway over creation has penetrated into the heart, which has firm faith in God's Sovereignty and Mastership over things. The pen of reason has inscribed all the essentials of *tawakkul* on the tablet of their heart. It is they who possess the station of *tawakkul*.

But the members of this group also differ from one another in regard to the level and degree of faith, whose highest degree is contentment (*itminan*) at which the most perfect degree of *tawakkul* appears in their heart. Then, their heart is detached from causation and attached to the Lordship of God, on Whom they rely and in Whom they are content, in accordance with the words of the mystic who defined *tawakkul* as "casting the body away in servitude to God and attaching the heart to His Lordship."

That which was mentioned above holds true in the case when the heart still dwells in the stage of plurality (*kathrat al-af'ar*) otherwise it leaves behind the station of *tawakkul* to attain to a higher station whose discussion lies outside the scope of this exposition.

Thus, it was seen that *tawakkul* has various stages and degrees, and perhaps the degree of *tawakkul* referred to in the *hadith* is the one pertaining to the second group, for it mentions knowledge as its preliminary condition. Or perhaps it refers to a degree of *tawakkul* according to some other mode of gradation, for *tawakkul* is amenable to another kind of gradation, as described in relation with the various stages of wayfaring by the experts of mystics knowledge and spiritual discipline, as a gradual gradation from plurality to unity; for absolute extinction (*fana' al-mutlaq al-af'ali*) is not attained instantaneously but gradually. In the first stage, the wayfarer observes unity in his own self and then in all other beings.

The stations of *tawakkul*, *rida*, *taslim* and all the other stations are attainable gradually. The wayfarer

may at first exercise *tawakkul* in some of his affairs and with respect to hidden and unobservable causes. Then, gradually, his *tawakkul* becomes general, in that it extends from hidden and inner causes to manifest and observable ones and from his own affairs to that of his relatives and associates. Accordingly, it is stated in the holy tradition that one of the degrees of *tawakkul* is trust in God in all one's affairs.

Difference Between Tawakkul And Rida

Let it be known to you that the station of *rida* is different from the station of *tawakkul*, being higher and more luminous. This is because whereas the *mutawakkil* seeks his own good and benefit and entrust his affairs to God considering Him the provider of good, the *radi* (one who has attained the station of *rida*) is one who has annihilated his will in the Divine Will, having no more a separate will of his own. When a mystic was asked, “*Matur'id?*” (What is your wish?), he replied, “*Urid an la urid*” (My wish is not to wish at all). What he meant is the station of *rida*.

As to the words of the Imam (A) in the *hadith*, “that you should be well-pleased (*radiyan*) with whatever God does to you,” they do not refer to the station of *rida*. Hence, he (A) says thereafter, “Know for certain that whatever He does to you, your good and benefit lies therein.” It appears that the Imams (A) intended to bring about the station of *tawakkul* in the listener. For this he mentions certain preliminaries. First, he (A) says, “Know that He does not cease to be good and benign towards you.”

Then he (A) says, “Know that the authority therein lies with Him.” Of course, one who knows that God Almighty has power over everything and that He does not cease to be graceful and benign, he would attain to the station of *tawakkul*, because the two main pillars of *tawakkul* are the same as stated by the Imam (A); although he (A) does not explicitly state the other two or three pillars. After mentioning the explicit and implicit preliminaries – that whatever God Almighty does is welcome because in it lies one's good and benefit – the preliminaries which guide to the station of *tawakkul*, he (A) draws the conclusion and says, “Then have *tawakkul* on God.”

Tafwid, Tawakkul And Thiqah

Know that *tafwid* is also different from *tawakkul*, and so also *thiqah* is different from these two. Hence each of the three has been considered a different station on the wayfarer's path. The Khwajah says:³

التَّفْوِيضُ أَلْطَفُ إِشَارَةٍ وَأَوْسَعُ مَعْنَى مِنَ التَّوَكُّلِ. التَّوَكُّلُ شُعْبَةٌ مِنْهُ.

That is, *tafwid* is subtler and more refined than *tawakkul*, for *tafwid*, means that the devotee should see no power and capacity in himself and that he should consider himself ineffectual and regard God as All-effectual. This is not so in *tawakkul*, for the *mutawakkil* makes God his own substitute, one in charge of his affairs, for attaining that which is good and beneficial. *Tafwid* is wider and *tawakkul* is a branch of it,

because *tawakkul* is in regard to one's interests and *tafwid* is in regard to absolutely all the affairs.

Moreover, *tawakkul* does not occur except after the presence of its cause, that is the matter in regard to which the devotee comes to rely upon God. An example of it is the *tawakkul* of the Apostle (S) and his Companions in regard to security from the evil of the idolaters, at the time when they were told:

﴿الَّذِينَ قَالَ لَهُمُ النَّاسُ إِنَّ النَّاسَ قَدْ جَمَعُوا لَكُمْ فَاخْشَوْهُمْ فَزَادَهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَقَالُوا حَسْبُنَا اللَّهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيلُ﴾

Those unto whom men said, 'Lo! the people have gathered against you, therefore fear them'. But it increased them in faith and they said, 'God is sufficient for us and an excellent trustee is He' (3: 173)

Tafwid, however, is mostly antecedent to its referent cause, as indicated by the supplication narrated from the Apostle of God (S):

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْلَمْتُ نَفْسِي إِلَيْكَ وَأَلْجَأْتُ ظَهْرِي إِلَيْكَ وَفَوَّضْتُ أَمْرِي إِلَيْكَ

My God, I surrender my self to Thee; I seek refuge with Thee, and I hand over my matter to Thee.

At times *tafwid* is subsequent to the occurrence of its cause, such as in the case of the *tafwid* of the believer belonging to the Pharaoh's people. (40:44)

The account given above is a condensed translation of the exposition by the famous 'arif 'Abd al-Razzaq Kashani of the words of the perfect 'arif Khwajah 'Abd Allah al-Ansari, and that which the Khwajah says is also substantially the same. However, I have reservations about considering *tawakkul* to be a branch of *tafwid*, and there is an obvious lack of rigor in regarding *tafwid* as being the more general of the two. Also, there is no reason to regard *tawakkul* as being subsequent to the cause, for *tawakkul* can be both antecedent as well as subsequent.

As to the words of the holy tradition,

فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ بِتَفْوِيضِ ذَلِكَ إِلَيْهِ

Possibly, since *tawakkul* is accompanied by viewing oneself as being in charge of one's affairs – because in *tawakkul* one makes God one's *wakil* in an affair that he deems as pertaining to himself – the Imam (A) wished to lift the questioner from the station of *tawakkul* to that of *tafwid*, making him understand that God Almighty is not your substitute and deputy in regard to the charge of your affairs; rather, He is the master of His own realm and the Lord of His own kingdom (to which you and your affairs belong). In *Manazil al-sai'rin*, the Khwajah has also pointed out this while discussing the third

degree of *tawakkul*.

And as to *thiqah* (reliance), it is different from *tawakkul* and *tafwid*, as the Khwajah says:

الثِّقَّةُ سَوَادُ عَيْنِ التَّوَكُّلِ وَنُقْطَةُ دَائِرَةِ التَّفْوِيضِ وَسُوَيْدَاءُ قَلْبِ التَّسْلِيمِ.

Thiqah is the eye of tawakkul, the (moving) point of the circle of tafwid, and the inmost heart of taslim (surrender).⁴

That is, the three stations cannot be attained without *thiqah*. Rather *thiqah* on God Almighty is the soul of those stations, and the devotee cannot attain them without *thiqah*. This allows us to understand the Imam's allusion to it, after the mention of *tawakkul* and *tafwid*, when he says:

ثِقٌ فِيهَا وَفِي غَيْرِهَا.

- ^{1.} Usul al-Kafi (Akhundi), ii, 391, hadith 3.
- ^{2.} Khwajah 'Abd Allah al-'Ansari, Manazil al-sa'irin.
- ^{3.} Khwajah 'Abd Allah al-'Ansari, Manazil al-sa'irin.
- ^{4.} Khwajah 'Abd Allah al-'Ansari, Manazil al-sa'irin.

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