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## **Gratitude**

Gratitude stands for thanking the conferrer for his graces and using them in the fields that he accepts. It is one of the qualities of perfection that grow and perpetuate the graces. Because of His absolute self–sufficiency, God does not benefit by one's thanks. As a matter of fact, the benefits of thanks are due to the thankful himself, since he expresses his appreciation for the divine graces and uses them in the fields that achieve the contentment of God. So, the thankful person's happiness lies in his acts of obedience to God.

The Islamic Sharia, through texts of the holy Quran and Sunna, has called people to be characterized with gratitude:

"Thank Me and do not show ingratitude to Me. (2: 152)"

"Eat of the sustenance of your Lord and give thanks to Him. (34:15)"

"Remember when your Lord said to you, 'If you give thanks, I shall give you greater (favors), but if you deny the Truth, know that My retribution is severe' (14:7)."

"Very few of My servants are grateful. (34:13)"

The Prophet (S) said: "He who eats and gives thanks will have the reward of him who fasts purely for the sake of Allah. He who gives thanks and enjoys good health will have the same reward of him who practices patience in his illness. He whom is conferred with graces and gives thanks will have the same reward of him whom is deprived and satisfied 1."

Imam al-Baqir (a) said: "If you look at an ailed person, you should say, but not let him hear you, 'All praise is due to Allah Who protects me from that which inflicted you, but if He wills, He shall do.' He who says so will never be befallen by that ailment2."

Imam as-Sadiq (a) said: "He who is conferred with thanks will be granted increase. Allah says: 'If you give thanks, I shall give you greater (favors)3."

"The thanks of every grace, no matter how big it is, is to praise Allah for it4."

"The gratitude that is shown to Allah for any grace, no matter how big it is, is surely better and weightier than the grace itself5.

"Verily, one of you drinks water and Allah assigns Paradise to him on that account. Verily, one who takes the vessel (containing water), brings it to his mouth, then takes Allah's name, then drinks from it, then draws it away while desiring it, then praises Allah, then drinks from it again, then takes it away while he desires it, then praises Allah, then drinks from it again, then sets it aside and praises Allah, Allah makes the paradise obligatory for him."

# **Categories of Gratitude**

Gratitude can be classified into three categories:

- 1. Gratitude of the heart,
- 2. Verbal gratitude, and
- 3. Gratitude of the organs.

Once the heart is full of the recognition of the graces of the Conferrer Lord, the tongue expresses thanks. Once the heart and the tongue unite in the feelings of gratitude, they inspire the organs to express their gratitude by submission and response to the acts of obedience to Him.

Thus, there are various categories and methods of showing gratitude:

- Gratitude of the heart is to recognize the grace and recognize that its source was God.
- The verbal gratitude is to express thanks to the Conferrer.
- Gratitude of the organs is to engage them in acts of obedience to God and save them from plunging in acts of disobedience to Him.

Hence, it is necessary to thank each of the graces of God in a suitable form:

To thank for a fortune is to spend some of it in the fields of obedience to God.

To thank for the knowledge is to publicize and expose its beneficial concepts.

To thank for a high rank is to support the weak and the persecuted and save them from the oppression that befall them.

The true gratitude of any grace cannot be attained whatever efforts are exerted, because showing gratitude is one of the graces and items of success that God confers. Consequently, man is too short to

show the proper gratitude for any grace.

Imam as-Sadiq (a) narrated that Allah revealed to Prophet Moses: "Moses, thank Me so properly." "Lord," asked Moses, "How can I thank You so properly while I cannot find any method of showing gratitude to You other than that which You have conferred upon me?" The Lord answered: "Moses, as long as you realize this fact, you are thanking Me so properly6."

### **Virtue of Gratitude**

The appreciation for graces and acts of kindness and thanks for the conferrers of favors are within the properties of the noble personalities. As the graces are increased, they should be thank worthier and more appreciative so that they may attain the level of the divine favors that man can never evaluate and thank properly.

As a matter of fact, every single twinkling of the eye, every single word that is produced by the mouth, every single movement of an organ, and every single breathe all these are great favors of the Lord that none can evaluate except those who are deprived of them.

If it is obligatory to thank the favor of the creatures, how will it be then if the favorer is the Creator whose graces are countless and favors are innumerable?

Finally, showing gratitude takes nearly to the Lord and achieves His contentment and His endowments of more graces and favors.

Ingratitude, on the other hand, is the trait of the humble personalities. The holy Quran tells that ingratitude is a direct reason of the collapse of nations and the eradication of their blessings:

"Allah tells a parable about a secure and peaceful town surrounded by abundant sustenance. Its inhabitants rejected the bounties of Allah and He caused them to suffer hunger and fear as a result of their deeds (16:112)."

As he was asked about the explanation of God's saying,

"And they said: our Lord! Make spaces to be longer between our journeys; and they were unjust to themselves so We made them stories and scattered them with an utter scattering; most surely there are signs in this for every patient, grateful one, (34:19)"

Imam as–Sadiq (a) said: "Those were some peoples whose villages were connected to each other. They had flowing rivers and many fortunes, but they showed ingratitude to Allah and changed what is in their hearts; therefore, Allah changed the graces that they enjoyed. As a matter of fact, 'Allah does not change the condition of a nation unless it changes what is in its heart.' He then sent upon them a torrent that scattered their villages, ruined their territories, and wasted their fortunes. In place of their two

gardens, Allah gave to them two gardens yielding bitter fruit and (growing) tamarisk and a few lote-trees. 'This We requited them with because they disbelieved; and We do not punish any but the ungrateful7.'

"When the people of Tharthar were given great graces, they baked the core of wheat and used it for cleaning their babies from feces. That bread was put on each other until it took the form of a high mountain. As a man passed by a woman who was using that bread for the same purpose, he said, 'Woe to you! Fear Allah and do not cause your graces to be eradicated and taken away from you.' She answered, 'Are you threatening us with starvation? As long as our lake is flowing, we do not fear famine.' Allah did not accept so; therefore, He blocked their lake and stopped rainfall and planting. They, first, consumed all that which they had stored. Then, they had to consume that mountain of bread to the degree that it was distributed among them by measures."

Imam ar–Rida narrated on the authority of his fathers that the Prophet (S) said: "The quickest in punishment is ingratitude9."

### **How to Acquire Thankfulness?**

To acquire thankfulness, it is recommended:

- To ponder over the great variety of graces, good turns, and acts of kindness that God has conferred.
- To neglect considering the luxurious people who enjoy excessive means of living and false pleasures of this world, and to look at the miserable people as well as those who are in less levels of livelihood. Amirul– Mu'minin (a) said:

"Try to look very frequently at those who are less than you are in the levels of livelihood, for this is a sort of showing gratitude 10."

- To keep in mind the calamities from which God has saved and the diseases that God has changed into good health and the hardships that He has changed into luxury, and
- To think of the advantages of showing gratitude, some of which are the attracting of the conferrer's contentment and increase of his favors, and to ponder over the disadvantages of ingratitude, some of which are attracting the conferrer's dissatisfaction and decrease of his graces.
  - 1. Quoted from al-Wafi; part 3 page 67 (as quoted from al- Kafi).
  - 2. Quoted from Safinat ul-Bihar; 15/2/135 (as quoted from Thawab ul-A'mal).
  - 3. Quoted from al-Wafi; part 3 page 67 (as quoted from al- Kafi).
  - 4. Quoted from al-Wafi; part 3 page 67 (as quoted from al- Kafi).
  - 5. Quoted from al-Wafi; part 3 page 67 (as quoted from al-Kafi).
  - 6. Quoted from al-Wafi; part 3 page 68 (as quoted from al- Kafi).
  - 7. Quoted from al-Wafi; part 3 page 68 (as quoted from al-Kafi).
  - 8. Quoted from Safinat ul-Bihar (as quoted from al-Barqi's al- Mahasin).
  - 9. Quoted from Safinat ul-Bihar (as quoted from al-Amali).

10. Quoted from Nahj ul-Balagha.

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