

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Tafseer Surah Al-Imraan

(verses 14-20)

الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا إِنَّنَا أَمْنَا فَأَغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَنَجِّنَا مِنْ عَذَابِ النَّارِ

Those who say: "Our Lord! We have indeed believed, so forgive us our sins and save us from the punishment of the Fire." (verse 16)

We need to ask Allah to protect us from the Fire as well as from every act, word, saying or ideology which will cause us to enter the Fire.

How True Believers Supplicate: Pleading with their iman and saying “Our Lord -ربنا-”:

We see numerous examples in the Quran how true believers should supplicate to their Lord. In this specific verse we see them supplicating to Allah by using their iman (faith) by saying, “We believe in You Allah”, and in addition they say “our Lord -ربنا-” because they truly understand that Allah is their Lord and it is only by His guidance and mercy alone that they became true believers.

In addition, the above supplication asks for Allah’s forgiveness. Asking for forgiveness is one of the most beautiful acts of the heart and tongue, and is loved by Allah. Once a person’s heart performs this act of knowing that Allah is his Lord, acknowledging that He has rights over him and that through his sin he has violated these rights deserving Allah’s punishment, then Allah will accept his plea for forgiveness.

الصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالْمُنْفِقِينَ وَالْمُسْتَغْفِرِينَ بِالْأَسْحَارِ

(They are) those who are patient, those who are true (in faith, words and deeds), and obedient with sincere devotion in worship to Allah. Those who spend [give the zakat and alms in the way of Allah] and those who pray and beg Allah's pardon in the last hours of the night. (verse 17)

The Characteristics of the True Believers which are found in this Verse:

- **The patient - الصابرين**

Meaning of patience (الصبر) - means patience, to withhold or restrain oneself.

The believer needs patience in each and every act of worship. We need patience in order to perform the commands of Allah (like praying, fasting...) Patience is to refrain from committing any wrongdoing, such as lying, looking at that which is forbidden, and other actions forbidden by Allah. One aspect of patience is to refrain oneself from being impatient or overly upset when calamity strikes. When a grave hardship occurs, the one who does not have patience may ask: "Oh Allah, why did You do this to me?" In so doing, he is in effect denying Allah's pre decree for him. He must refrain from this and accept Allah's decree.

- **Those who are truthful (in faith, words and deeds) - الصّٰدِقِيْنَ :**

We see here that to be honest and sincere in all things is from the best of manners with Allah, and only with the aid of Allah we can attain this truthfulness.

Truthfulness occurs when one's outside is identical to his inside; When actions match beliefs.

If one says, "I believe in You Allah," then his actions must reflect this, and if he truly believes in Allah then he needs to truly obey, fear, love and have hope in Him.

Furthermore, if one says, "Yes, I believe in Paradise," then his heart, statements and actions should be the heart, statements and actions of someone who is striving to achieve Paradise.

We must examine ourselves constantly, asking ourselves if we truly believe, if our actions are the actions of someone who believes in the beauty of the Paradise and on the other hand do we believe in Allah's severe punishments.

We should always ask Allah to grant us strong belief in His words- His promises and punishments- and that He grants us the ability to act according to that belief.

- **The obedient and sincere worshippers of Allah - الْقٰنِتِيْنَ :**

They are those who are obedient and sincerely devoted to worshipping Allah alone

Constant obedience to Allah includes performing the act of worship that Allah has prescribed for any given time.

Al-qunoot (القنوت) means to be in a continuous state of obedience to Allah in all situations and conditions. For example, to treat our spouses in the way Allah has commanded us to, and fulfill our obligations to our parents in a way pleasing to Allah. In each and every situation, we seek and follow what pleases Allah. This includes performing these acts of obedience in the proper times and situations, as well as choosing the obligatory over the supererogatory when required rather than judging by your own desires. For example, we pray the supererogatory prayers because it is an act that is pleasing to Allah. However, there are times and situations when other more binding acts would supercede performing these extra prayers. If one's mother for instance, needed assistance at that time then in this case Allah would not want us to pray the supererogatory prayers because obedience to the mother would be obligatory, while supererogatory prayers are only recommended. In this situation, if one refused to obey his mother and chose the supererogatory prayers instead, then he would be committing an act of wrongdoing and is not fulfilling the conditions of being qanoon.

So, qunoot is doing whatever Allah commands us with, as well as that which He loves throughout each stage of our day. In addition, this must be with purity of intention, done solely seeking Allah's pleasure alone.

We must take care regarding these matters because trials such as this come often. We must ask ourselves, are we in submission to Allah the majority of the time, or do we let our desires dictate our actions?

- **Those who spend by giving the zakat and other charity for the sake of Allah**
- **الْمُنْفِقِينَ** -

Literally, this means spending for the sake of Allah. This encompasses much more than money, and includes sharing knowledge, giving advice or guidance, or making an effort such as helping someone with physical effort, such as cleaning your friend's house, etc.

The best type of spending is spending one's knowledge, and the more you share your knowledge the more Allah will increase you in knowledge.

Giving wealth freely is a characteristic of the true believer. You will not find a true believer who is not generous in his spending. It is an important characteristic because it shows that the person believes in Allah's promise and reward, and that his love of Allah is greater than his love for himself.

It is well-known that the Prophet, peace be upon him, was known for his generosity, and he is the best example for us. We must spend to please Allah, knowing, in addition, that we must love for our Muslim brothers and sisters what we love for ourselves. The reward for spending is great. Furthermore, there is a great difference in the heart of one who is generous and one who is miserly; A miser does not have enough faith in Allah being the All Provider, as he is afraid that by sharing his wealth, he risks poverty. There is something wrong in his belief in Allah's promise and His Names.

If we find within ourselves a restraint when it comes to spending in this way, then we must work to rid ourselves of it. The way to fix this condition is by training ourselves to spend our wealth for the sake of Allah until it becomes a habit. Allah did not create us with the love of spending, rather He created us with the love of keeping things to ourselves, but the true believers strive to purify themselves from being selfish and will succeed in attaining a generous soul which eagerly spends for the sake of Allah. We must not let our souls dominate and control us; Rather, we must control ourselves with our knowledge of Allah's religion, His commands, and that which He loves.

- **And those who pray and beg Allah's pardon in the last hours of the night.**

(وَالْمُسْتَغْفِرِينَ بِالْأَسْحَارِ)

These true believers stand in prayer at night, and when they finish they sit asking Allah's forgiveness after their act of obedience to Him, benefiting from this beautiful, blessed time. Allah has informed us that He descends to the first heaven, telling the believers to ask Him for forgiveness and supplicate to Allah for whatever they need. In so doing, they make the most of this time. They are not arrogant or overly pleased with themselves due to their night prayers, rather they finish their prayers and then ask Allah for His forgiveness.

This is a beautiful description. When Allah talks about the people whom He loves and the people whom He praises you need to examine yourself and see how you compare to these people that Allah loves and praises.

You should ask yourself if you are supplicating sincerely to Allah, asking Him to forgive you. Do you feel an urgent need for His forgiveness? Are you truthful? Do you make sure never to lie and always try to be truthful in everything you say? Are you trying to beautify yourself internally so your outside will be beautiful, or are you trying to beautify the outside while leaving the inside to rot? Are you generous in spending your money, effort, good speech, time, to please Allah? Do you comfort and assist the people in any way you can? Or are you a miser in every way?

شَهِدَ اللهُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَأُولُو الْعِلْمِ قَانِمًا بِالْقِسْطِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

Allah bears witness that *la ilaha illa Huwa* (none has the right to be worshipped but He) and the Angels, and those having knowledge (also give this witness); (He always) maintains His creation in Justice. *La ilaha illa Huwa* (none has the right to be worshipped but Him) the All-Mighty, the All-Wise. (verse 18)

This is the greatest testament of faith, the shahada: *La ilaha illallah*, meaning, there is no God worthy of worship except Allah alone, without partners.

The greatest testament of the most important issue that we bear witness to is: *At-tawheed*. Indeed, Allah is The Only One worthy of worship.

In justice (بِالْقِسْطِ): Means Justice and fairness, Allah maintains His creation in Justice

Is the fact that Allah is The Only One to be worshipped just? Yes, it is just because He is The Only Creator and Provider. He is The Everliving. A person commits injustice when he worships and obeys other than Allah, when in reality it is Allah Who created him and provides for him. Allah maintains His creation in Justice, Allah's religion- all of His commands and prohibitions- are just and fair.

The believer is able to understand and love Allah and comprehend His mercy, wisdom, justice, fairness and generosity through His legislation and the promise of His reward.

Furthermore, It is from the Sunnah (the way of the Prophet, peace be upon him), to interact with the meaning of Quran verses you recite during supererogatory night prayers, it is narrated in an authentic hadith that whenever a verse of mercy came mentioning Paradise, the Prophet, peace be upon him, would ask Allah to grant him entrance to it from His mercy,

saying, "Allah, I ask for the Paradise." Conversely, whenever a verse mentioned the punishment of the Hellfire the Prophet, peace be upon him, would ask Allah to protect him from the Fire. When the Prophet, peace be upon him, recited this verse, he reacted by saying: and I decertify my Lord.

عن الزبير قال : سمعت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم حين قرأ هذه الآية : (شهد الله أنه لا إله إلا هو والملائكة) قال: " وأنا أشهد أي رب " .

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Imam Ibn Kathir narrated that one of the Pious Predecessors called "Al-A'mash" was reciting this verse in his night prayers and was heard saying: "Me too. I testify with what Allah testified (Iaa ilaaha illa Allah) and I save this testimony of mine with You Allah (for the Day of Reckoning)."

We must ask ourselves what our status is concerning this interaction with the Quran. The sort of response and interaction we see from the Prophet and the Pious Predecessors is one of the means that will make our hearts feel the faith, be truly alive with belief, and motivate towards the good. If the believer incorporates this into his life, he will find that something beautiful occurs when he prays. He will find enjoyment, contentment, and blessedness in his prayers, feeling close to Allah and knowing the truth of Allah's words by His responding to them.

Allah speaks to us through what He has revealed in the Quran and when we respond to the Revelation it leads to "khushu" our hearts will be involved in the prayers as much as our tongues and limbs.

Sheikh ibn Al-Uthaymeen further explained that this verse demonstrates the virtue of knowledge. The people of knowledge who combine their bearing witness with His are indeed people of great virtue.

We ask Allah to increase us in beneficial knowledge and grant us knowledge about Him.

إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَعْضًا بَيْنَهُمْ وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ

Truly, the religion with Allah is Islam. Those who were given scriptures before (Jews and Christians) did not differ except out of mutual jealousy, after knowledge had come to them. And whoever disbelieves in the ayat (proofs, evidences, verses, signs, revelations, etc) of Allah, then surely, Allah is swift in calling to account. (Verse 19)

¹ Musnad Al-Imam Ahmad

The meaning of Islam is to affirm and submit to Allah's oneness and to surrender to Him in obedience. In addition one must reject associating others in worship along with Him, and disassociate himself from those who do so.

Islam is the only true religion in our time. But what about the people of Musa (Bani Israel) and Isa (Prophets Moses and Jesus), peace be upon both of them, who followed them in their times; Were they Muslims? The answer is yes, anyone who believed in their Prophet or Messenger at the time of that Prophet until the next one was sent, who believed in Allah's oneness and obeyed Allah is considered to have been Muslim.

Allah revealed different legislations according to the circumstances and the era in which that message was revealed. To be a believer you have to believe in all the Messengers without any exception, and after the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, was sent, anyone who rejects him or his Message is a disbeliever. Prophet Muhammad is the final Messenger sent and his legislation is suitable for everyone at all times until the Day of Resurrection.

To be a believer one must believe and testify that Allah is The Only One worthy of worship, and that Muhammad is His final Messenger. He must affirm and follow the Legislation that the Prophet Muhammad was sent with.

The Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, has passed away, but that which he was sent with has not. So our role, the role of his followers is to teach and spread the religion of Islam.

Those who were given scriptures before (Jews and Christians) did not differ except out of mutual jealousy, after knowledge had come to them. (وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ)

Scriptures; Meaning, the Tawrah and the Bible. The Jews and the Christians were given their own scriptures, yet they differed concerning it and rejected the guidance given to them by Allah. Indeed, they knew he was the true Prophet who was foretold in their Scriptures, the people of the Book had the knowledge of the signs of the Prophet, peace be upon him, but despite all of this they refused and denied him.

They did not differ except out of mutual jealousy, after knowledge had come to them

(إِلَّا مِنْ بَغْدٍ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَغِيًّا بَيْنَهُمْ)

They refused the truth of Islam due to envy and jealousy. They wanted the announced Prophet to be from their own tribe, Bani Israil and not from the sons of Prophet Ismail, peace be upon him.

And whosoever disbelieves in the Ayat (proofs, evidences, verses, signs, revelations, etc) of Allah, then surely, Allah is swift in calling to account. (وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ)

Notice how Allah ended this verse. He did not say He would punish them or put them in the Hellfire. Rather, He just said that He is swift in calling to account. This is one of Allah's attributes, referring to that which He does. Anyone who has a heart should feel fear within it due to this verse.

فَإِنْ حَاجُّوكَ فَقُلْ أَسْلَمْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّهِ وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِ وَقُلْ لِلَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ وَالْأُمِّيِّينَ أَسْلَمْتُمْ فَإِنْ أَسْلَمُوا فَقَدِ اهْتَدَوْا وَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ الْبَلَاغُ وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِالْعِبَادِ

So if they dispute with you (Muhammad) say: "I have submitted myself to Allah (in Islam) and (so have) those who follow me." And say to those who were given the scriptures (Jews and Christians) and to those who who are illiterates (Arab pagans): "Do you (also) submit yourselves (to Allah in Islam)? If they do, they are rightly guided; but if they turn away, your duty is only to convey the Message; and Allah is All-Seer of (His) slaves.

Allah told the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, "Say to the Christians, the Jews and the illiterate (the Arabs who weren't given a book): Submit to Islam." (Verse 20)

There were two types of people during the period of the Prophet, peace be upon him:

1. The People of the Book. These were the Christians and the Jews.
2. The illiterate - The Arabs (Bani Ismail) the sons or descendants of the Prophet Ismail. They did not have a revealed book with them.

The Book and the knowledge were with the Jews and the Christians. Some people of the Arabs took knowledge from them. They were interested in asking the Jews about their religion.

One example of this was Waraqah bin Naufal who was the uncle of the Prophet's first wife, Khadijah, may Allah be pleased with her. He had some knowledge of the Bible, and that was why when Angel Jibril came to Prophet Muhammad for first time, he told the Prophet, peace be upon him, "This Angel who came to you was the same Angel who came to Musa (Moses)." So the people of the Book did have knowledge of the Prophet and his coming.

Allah is directing the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, and the believers who follow him concerning how to deal with the people who argue with arrogance and refuse to accept the truth even though they know that it is the truth with saying: " I submit to Allah's orders and commands." After this, leave them be. You have conveyed the proof to them and showed them the verse with the explanation and the hadith, but if they continue to refuse to accept it then your duty has ended.

Indeed, one of the principles of the people of the Sunnah is to never argue with people who do not want to find the truth.

There are two types of people:

1. The ignorant who simply need to be shown the truth in order to accept. They search for the truth and are ready to accept it if they find it. We should be patient with these people, continuing to talk to them and provide them with proofs which will clear their doubts.
2. Those who argue for argument's sake. They will never accept the truth. They are not affected by any hadith that is brought to them as proof. These are the people we do not continue arguing with due to their stubborn refusal to accept the truth.

Sheikh Ibn Al-Uthaymin, may Allah have mercy upon him, says, "If you show a proof (a Quran verse, or an authentic hadith) to a person and he still rejects it, run away from him in the same way you would run from a lion." Take care and protect your heart from any doubt he may cast. Furthermore, Allah hates arguments so do not engage or entertain them in their debates.

But if they turn away [refuse to accept and submit], your duty is only to convey the Message; and Allah is All-Seer of (His) slaves. (وَأِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ الْبَلَاغُ وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِالْعِبَادِ)

Your duty is to convey the Message, and that is enough. Once we have conveyed the Message, it is not up to us whether or not the person we convey it to accepts it.

What is our role in calling the people to Islam?

It is to show them the beauty of Islam with its perfect legislation, the perfection of Allah and why does He deserve to be worshipped alone, without partners. We should show them the true Islamic manners and the beautiful manners of the Prophet, peace be upon him. Let them learn how the Prophet was humble, lenient, merciful, had good character and was excellent with his wives. We should call to Allah whilst understanding that we do not have the power to make someone accept it. Only Allah can guide people's heart.

Moreover, if someone does not accept your advice and invitation to Islam do not be saddened by it or lose heart because know that you have fulfilled the role Allah set for you. The most important thing is for us to perform this role in the right way. We make dawah to Islam based on; Knowledge, wisdom and gentleness. Speaking to each person in a manner that is suitable and in accordance to their level of understanding, whilst showing humility and mercy, and then, if Allah wills, we will be rewarded for our efforts.

Allah is the All-Seer of His slaves (وَاللَّهُ بِصِيرٍ بِالْعِبَادِ):

According to Allah's knowledge- His hearing, seeing and knowing what is in our hearts- He will decide whether a person should be guided or not. The Only One Who is knowing of who is deserving or not to be guided is Allah.

Sometimes we may have a good feeling about a person, believing her to be receptive, kind-hearted, and possessing good character, so we feel strongly that they will accept Islam quickly, yet upon speaking to her about Islam, obedience to Allah, following the Prophet and abiding by the rules of Islam, (even if she is a Muslima) she reveals herself to be an extremely arrogant person. All of the sweetness, kindness and smiles suddenly go away!

On the other hand, another person may seem fierce and harsh but will accept the truth quickly. Thus we should not be fooled by appearances.

If Allah saw goodness in their hearts, He would make them hear and guide them to the truth. It is not up to us.

Above is a transcription of a class given by teacher Zaynab El-Kateb and it's based on tafseer Surah Ali-Imraan by Shaikh Ibn Al-Uthaymin, may Allah be pleased with him.

