



[‘Ibāda ar-Rahman:](#)

The Characteristics of Those with Whom Allah is Pleased

And the worshipers of the Universally Merciful are they who walk modestly upon the earth, and if the ignorant address them, they say “Peace.” Those will be rewarded with a Paradisical chamber for their steadfast patience and they will be met with welcome and greetings of peace, and there they shall dwell forever in a happy place at a high station.

The subject today is about a group of people. It could be any group of people; it could even be me or you, of whom Allah (swt) is pleased with. These are people who make effort. These are people who, who have had their lives filled with tests and trials, gains and losses, sorrows and happinesses, gain the highest of qualities, both in knowledge and in intention, and consequently in action. Whose lives themselves are *isharat* toward the Sifat of Allah (swt), they, themselves, are doors to Allah (swt). Allah (swt) gives these people a very good title: He calls them *‘ibādu Rahman*. This might be translated as servants of the Most Merciful. It might also be called *‘ibādu Allah*, worshipers of Allah. But a very small select group of people only can attain that title.

The Qur’an gives us an explanation about their characteristics and behavior and their attitudes and lifestyle, and the spiritual life these people live; and Allah (swt) in Surah al-Furqān / Discrimination (the *‘āyat* I read) tells about them: who are they, what are they. They walk upon the earth with humility. When the ignorant, those without knowledge address them, they reply with “peace.” This is their response to everything and anything, inwardly and outwardly. There is more just than a verbal response, obviously; there is an attitude. In fact, Allah (swt) continues with the last *‘āyat* in Surah al-Furqān: **“Say to the believers, ‘My Lord would not be concerned with you were it not your calling to**

Him in supplication.’ And say to those who disbeliever, ‘You rejected the message of Allah, so this rejection will stick to you.’”

It tells us a great deal about these people. This is more than a verbal response: it is an attitude, an intention, and we need to remember this every day of our lives, and especially when we come and gather for the *khutbah*. It has a great deal to do with intention and with this journey we are on, the *sayr ul suluk*. It has to do with the expression of what the soul of an individual has the capacity to do and to be, and it’s really the carrier wave of the *rūh*, the spirit of the individual. Such an individual has found the way to bring that to their consciousness, to the forefront of their actions.

If I would say to you, “Here’s a formula. It will make you happier, more successful, wealthier, more kind, more calm, more peaceful, more accepted, more loving, more loved than anything else. Would you like it?” Everyone would say, “Yes.” The next question is, “Would you use it?” Everybody might say, “Oh, yes!” But the truth of the matter is what? Not everybody will use it. Or, maybe they will use it, but without the attitude, the intention, the passion, the love, that is beyond it; and so it becomes just a verbal response.

In this *‘āyat*, Allah (swt) informs us about two good characteristics of people. One is humility: they don’t brag about their own piety or accomplishments, their status or their state. The other is they don’t respond negatively to situations, to ignorance or to ignorant people. Ignorant people represent ignorance, and such people as those who have the quality of *‘ibādu Rahman* understand that there is something to understand. They understand that understanding is extremely important, because it is the foundation of love, patience, tolerance, perserverance, and so they act out of that understanding. If they act out of being servants of Allah, and they trust in Allah, they will see. Everything they do will be a process wherein there is knowledge, understanding, and growth to be gained. This is because good actions result in transformation and knowledge. Good actions result in an evolution of the soul.

There is a goal in this world and in the next, and there are fears to be overcome and doubts to be answered, and patience to be attained so that we can realize the goal of life. They don't respond negatively, because as soon as one responds negatively, one is in opposition. If one is in opposition, they are in opposition to the truth, to Allah (swt). So the subject of obedience / *ita'ā* comes up. What does it mean to obey? Is obedience exactly the same as surrender? Is surrender something that is negative? Is obedience something that is a weakness? What is *ita'ā*?

They don't respond negatively to even the most obnoxious of people, even to an enemy. The other characteristic of such an individual (*'ibādu Rahman*), who is on the *sayr ul suluk* to compassion, mercy, love, tolerance and patience, on this journey to becoming who one can be, is that they worship Allah (swt) day and night. They don't go to bed unless they have performed their *wudu*, their *salat*, their prayer, and their *du'ā*, and their *muraqabah*, reading Qur'an, whatever is prescribed for them or suggested by Allah, and to those who are near to Allah. They make *du'ā* to Allah whenever they can, because they are a type of person. When someone comes to you and says, "*Salaam aleykum*," you say, "*wa aleykum as salaam*." They are not doing it to protect themselves from hell or to purchase a good place in heaven, even though I understand these days the interest rates are very low. "Oh, there are no interest rates, no *riba*!" But interest in it is probably very high—a good piece of property in Jannah.

The quality expressed in this *surah* tells us quite clearly that they say, "**O Lord, avert from us the wrath of hell because its wrath is indeed an affliction and is evil. Indeed it is an abode, a place to rest.**" They recognize this is a possibility, but this is not why they are *'ibādu Rahman*. The other quality of an individual who is a true seeker, or has the potential, is that they are generous—not extravagant, not stingy—moderate, but generous. They are not sitting there counting every dinar, dollar, or yen they make. They don't count every good word they say. They know that Allah counts their good deeds, not

the number but the quality. They don't worry about how many people they bring to Islam or how many they teach, or how many good things they have done in life. They only know that Allah (swt) looks at their heart, their intention, and all is recorded.

Allah tells us also that there are sins we have to refrain from, and the first one is *shirk*. It doesn't say murder or theft; it doesn't even say lying or stealing: but *shirk*. Whatever drives us to any other sin, and every other sin is comparing Allah with something else; saying, "This is worth more than my piety, more than my faith, more than my prayer." "My sleep is worth more than my prayer. My eating is worth more than my prayer. My being at a certain event is worth more than my being in *suhbat*. My sleep is worth more than my *wudu*." It's comparing.

Build your relationships on trust and respect, as they have to go through many trials and intentions and testings. Take those relationships very, very seriously, because sometimes, we make relationships for life. We want to be in the company of the right person or people. Sometimes we have to test and try that out once, twice or thrice. Probably we will be disappointed by many of our choices more than we will be satisfied with them, until we arrive at the choice that is firmly rooted and anchored in the attributes of Allah (swt). Then we are told that the people, these special people, know something special. The *'ibādu Rahman* understands that no matter what happens, Allah (swt) is merciful and forgiving.

Very few of us have had the opportunity to be merciful in life, but Allah is merciful. We have many opportunities to be compassionate, but how many times do we have the opportunity to really be merciful? When we refrain from our anger, perhaps we are being merciful. When we refrain from our judgment, perhaps we are being merciful. When we refrain from informing people about things that might be harmful, we are being merciful. When we insist on doing something for ourselves, perhaps we are being merciful. However, we really assign the idea of mercy to Allah (swt), because there are times it is

not clear whether we are acting out of mercy or some other influence. When someone assists us or is in need of us, there may be many elements of mercy. People have very little understanding of mercy, and the repentance it takes to be merciful. There are two interesting comments side by side: it's not just repenting, but to take the initiative to do good. Allah will forgive, and Allah will double the rewards, we are told.

This group of people, the *'ibādu Rahman*, have other qualities. They do not witness any case wrongly. They don't misrepresent the truth. They are equitable; they believe in equality. They do not allow themselves to sit in a gathering in which people speak only vain things or nonsense, or spread rumors or impose. They always show respect even though respect may be due to them. They obey Allah. What a boring group of people! Many years ago when I was practicing yoga – I'd put my leg over my head but I don't want to show off – people would say, "I cannot become a perfected being, so why should I even strive to be?" Or someone would come to me and say, "I'll give you ten years to make me perfect." I'd negotiate another one or two years... As a Muslim, we all know the mercy of Allah cannot be negotiated or reasoned out. Allah may reward someone who is the worst of the worst who makes a small effort, and withhold reward from someone who is the best of the best and makes the same effort. It has to do with capacity, capabilities and potential, and what Allah (swt) sees in the heart of the human being.

No one ever knows who the *'ibādu Rahman* are. When we say there are not many, who know how many are not many? There are 1.3 billion Muslims in the world, and there might be 10, or a hundred, or a hundred thousand. Even a million would not be many. Who says that they all identify themselves by that name? Quite the contrary, they may not even know it themselves. Another characteristic of a person like that is not only that they are hidden, but they are seen. They are seen by their good works, by their love, by their tenacity. They are seen by their trust, sincerity, obedience and surrender. The name is just a name, but the quality is a reflection of something much greater. They raise their

hands [in supplication]. Maybe they make special *du'ā*. Maybe they are the people you naturally turn to for a blessing. They don't think, "Should I do that? Should I give a blessing? Should I be available?" Maybe they are a person who, when they hear some news, immediately make *du'ā* for the poor suffering individual, or say *astaghfiru-Llāh* for all of humanity.

A person may be *'ibādu Rahman* by just their good nature. They request to Allah to make them good examples to others, good role models, good examples to be followed. It means they request Allah to make them good guides in the true sense of *iman*. This group, these friends of Allah, deserve His blessings and they are rewarded in Paradise. They are rewarded in eternity. Allah says: **"Those are the ones who will be rewarded in the high place in heaven because of their patience and their constancy, and therein they shall be met with salutations of peace, and dwelling therein a beautiful abode in a place of bliss."** It doesn't sound bad, does it? It doesn't sound bad at all. It means that such an individual has an opportunity in life to do more for others, and in the Hereafter.

I pray that all of us here, who pray this Jumah prayer, will be included one day, as *'ibādu Rahman*. We all need to ask ourselves if we feel, "Is that what I would like to be like?" And then if you are not sure, ask yourself, "What then is my life about? What should I be doing in life?" Just doing good things for people, get old, wither up and die and wonder what it was all about? I have news for you, for those of you who are younger: time goes very fast. Yet, when we have problems and difficulties and worries, and we have no faith and no passion, life goes fast and time goes slow. You work on that one.

Do we have the patience and perseverance to withstand the criticism of others, the challenges of life, seeing our faults, the pains and stings of our shames and our sins? Do we have the time to be active and a decision maker, based on the qualities and attributes or values we know are true and right? Or are we going to be just some kind of laconic

individual who has to get drawn in to every situation, and hope it is for the best? Do we all have the love of one another to cover the faults of one another, as we assist one another? All we need to do is take a first step—or maybe it's the last step. [We can] raise our hands or keep them at our sides, but [we want] to plead our cause to Allah (swt) in our words and our actions. Of course, the words of others who have made beautiful *du'ā* help us, but if the *du'ā* comes from our heart it's much better. Maybe we can be included even for a moment by those who are the friends of Allah, even for just a moment as the doors of Paradise open (as they do on Fridays/*Jumah*), and all the *du'ā* asked of Allah are received and granted. Maybe we can make good *du'ā* today. Let us pray our Jumah prayer and make the *du'ā* that I'm sure without a doubt will bring us near to Allah (swt). *Asalaam aleikum*.