

Shaykh Ahmed Abdu-r-Rashid
April 1, 2009

www.circlegroup.org

Wednesday

Title: [Guard Against the Torment of the Fire](#)

DVD title: The Means to Remove Difficult Cares, Worries and Thoughts
Accessing “the Good in This World and in the Hereafter”

Dinner blessing: O Allah, we are very blessed today to celebrate so many birthdays. *Insh'allah* You bless everyone who had, is having, or will have a birthday this week with long life and health and well being, and a sense of deep spiritual purpose. Also we are grateful this week to have another doctor among us, so *insh'allah* if you have any illnesses you can go to him, as long as they have to do with sustainable tourism and development and things like that. We are grateful that You have shown us that the impossible is possible. In the coming week we also have our Board meeting for Legacy and a lot of decisions to make. We ask You, Allah, for clarity of mind and spirit for that, and to deepen our spiritual beliefs. By this time next week, we will have guests here videoing us. We hope we can show them what good Muslims are like in this world, living in a practical life. We ask You for Your help, O Allah Swt.

Sohbet: Allah Swt tells us in *Sūratu-l-Baqarah*, “**Give us good in this world and in the Hereafter, and guard us against the torment of the fire.**” (2:201) How do we get what is good in this world and in the Hereafter? Much of our life in this world is consumed with concerns, cares, thoughts. To remove these concerns and cares according to the *awliyā* is sometimes a very difficult task. Removal of these cares is discussed by Abdul Qadir Jilani (ra) in his text, “*Cares.*” It is said that a man once complained to Hasan al Basri (ra) that he (the man) had a very hard heart. Hasan told him to take to the constant practice of *dhikrullah*. He said, “*Those who remember Allah, and practice what is*

required of him, and who become Allah's friends (awliyā) they are the kings in the realm of Reality (Haqiq). You become desirous of serving the king, so to speak. You, yourself, become a king in the hereafter, he tells us. He goes on and says, “*This world really has little importance in the hearts of such people. Once you have seen the light of Rabbi-l-Haqq, Lord of Truth, things of this world seem quite insignificant.*” How does one do this? We know that Abdul Qadir Jilani's (ra) teachings are some times very ascetic. He tells people to abandon all attachments to this world. Even for those of us who find that a little difficult, there are some good things we can learn in this area. There is not one of us who does not have any cares to be removed, or thoughts we wouldn't like to have attenuated if not changed. There is not one of us who would not like some change in our hearts. If not anything else, our children would like not to be confused.

One of the greatest teachings of the *Khwaja Khwajagan*, as I'm sure you figured out from the last series of talks I gave, and the other teachings of the *awliyā*, lies in the area of *sabr*/patience, and perseverance. It is said that the really sincere individual, the *sādiq*, is grateful for the *nai'ma* (blessings) of Allah, no matter what they are, and patiently endures the *nakd (ankad (pl))* (misfortunes or difficulties) that come along with those blessings. To realize that our hearts, from the time of our conception to the time of our transition and beyond, are in a process of development, and to be grateful for the blessings, is a formula for those blessings to increase. To be able to anticipate or endure the difficulties and misfortunes and trials of life with patience and perseverance makes it easier for us to accomplish our spiritual purpose, and to reap the benefits of the *Nai'ma* of Allah.

In some terrible cases, like the Mehtas having to endure the death of their own child. Or, I was talking to a young man who went to camp here 26 years ago, Raffi. His brother passed. I said, “What did Serge pass of?” He said, “We don't know. It's a mystery. I

have to believe there was some mystical purpose. He just had a sore throat, and it got worse. He went into the hospital, and within 24 hours, he died.” I said, “Is there an autopsy?” He said, “We have to wait up to two months for the autopsy.” We all have to endure the passing of relatives, parents. Some of us experience wealth and poverty, and others of us experience poverty and wealth—specially these days. Sometimes someone makes accusations against you, and you have no way of refuting them. You have to endure the loss of a good reputation. Or you have goals and aspirations in life that are not met. Or your fellow human being, your brother or sister, consciously or unconsciously does you something to cause you pain, grief, or loss. Of course, we experience a lot of wonderful things in life, too. If we respond with *shukr*/gratitude when good things come to us, and with patience, then we will have that patience when difficult things come to us.

Usr: “*Inna ma’l usri usra*. When hardship comes.” It is said that *usr* are the feathers that give strength to the wings of your *iman*, so that your heart and your *sirr*, your innermost secret place can fly to the *bab* of *Rabbi-l-Ālamīn*, the Lord of the Worlds. We look around and see that a lot of people seem to be faithful, if the definition of faithful is that they do their prayers and their *wudu* and fasting. We cannot judge these people too easily unless they commit heinous crimes. One thing that is said by our teachers is, you cannot really claim faith if you have no *sabr*. Prophet Mohammed (sal) said, “***Patience is to faith as the head is to the body.***” If you have no patience, your faith has no head. This means the body has no consequence, no viability. To come to know this reality, al *Mubtali*, the One Who tests us. If we come to know Allah Swt not as a person, but as a Dynamic Reality that is just and balanced, we may be asked something very, very costly in the physical world, but may be given something much more valuable in return, either in the physical world or the Hereafter. Then we can really understand the meaning of the tests and the trials.

If we really knew this world for what it is—and certainly in these days we can get some idea of the levels of corruption, greed, narrow-mindedness, bigotry, prejudice, hate, genocide and maniacal ways—we would question our pursuit of it. Some say that the way to grasp this understanding is just to fear hell, fear the fire. A lot of *katībs* dwell on this a lot. *When Jilani was asked, “What is more intense, the fire of fear or the fear of shawq (yearning)?” He replied, “The fire of fear in the case of the seeker (murīd), and the fire of yearning in the case of the murad (one who is sought by Allah).”* The teaching is that for those of us who rely on the *asbab*, the material aspects of the world, our benefactor is the one who causes us *dar*, difficulty or harm.

For those who rely on Allah, who really strive to accept the meaningfulness of what is brought to us as a blessing, then we realize the One Who made us gives us the ability to create. Whatever we make [is] through His hands. He Who created us gives us the capability of creation; the One Who sustains, also causes us to sustain; the One Who causes us to suffer harm, also gives us the opportunity to harm others; the One Who gives us joy and benefits and guides us rightly gives us the opportunity to guide rightly. When I say the One, I don’t mean a personality. I mean the Oneness, the Totality. We realize we can’t really rely absolutely on anything in creation, since all that is limited. We can only rely on the Creator of it.

How do we get to that? We are told in Qur’an, **“Whoever hopes to meet his Lord let him do righteous work. And make none share in the worship due his Lord.”**

(18:110) The one who doesn’t do righteous work – from the perspective of Islam, and from the perspective of those who pursue real understanding and knowledge that is Islam – one who doesn’t inspire righteousness, is a *munāfiq*. A *munāfiq* is like anything of this creation, which is slipping away into nothingness. We walk, we talk, we laugh, we play, we cry, we work hard, we sweat and do all these things. This thing that does it, this

Shaykh Ahmed Abdu-r-Rashid
body, will become nothing. We fritter away our existence.

www.circlegroup.org

In this case, we fritter away our spiritual capital. That means today what you thought you had invested “ain’t worth nothing”. You won’t get any profit from it. What is our capital? Our faith in our *dīn*. The way to remove our cares and our worries is through that. It’s one thing to consume the things of this world, and another thing to consume the foundation of our *dīn*. It’s one thing to use up the things of this world for things of this world, and it is another thing to use up the things of our faith for the things of this world. I guess you could say that your *dīn* and your *iman* and your sincerity and practices are your 401(k) retirement plan. It’s invested like in precious metals, only in what doesn’t lose any value. The rest of it melts away. If you draw from that for your own ego, your own pursuit of wealth, to pursue things that are *haram* or any of those type of worldly things, you become the enemy. You become the betrayer of Allah, the betrayer of the trust that Allah Swt gave us.

In that, one has no companionship with the *salihīn*. There is no room at the table among the righteous. There is no room among the *sadiqīn*, the people of truth. And there is no room among the *malakūt*, the angels. Indeed, it is said that the angels curse such a person. First they warn, then they curse. He said, “*The earth below you is cursing you, and the sky above you is cursing you. The very clothes you wear on your back are cursing you, and all the showy things are cursing you. You are in the sight of al-Khalaq and His Creatures an abomination. Such people are in the lowest depths of the hell fire.*” You can take that literally or metaphorically. Americans want to take it metaphorically. We’re too intelligent to believe in hell. That’s why the means to even begin this or sustain this journey of righteousness begins with *taslim*/submission.

Only when you have submission can you truly repent. And only when you repent; when

you turn around and look, can you make progress. Repentance is a door that opens. We are told that we have to repent before death overtakes us, before it catches us unawares. It can, you know, like that boy I told you about earlier. Then we feel sorry, but feeling sorry doesn't change anything. Allah puts before us means to remind us: things that are remarked, things that are responded to; people who look in a certain way and say certain things to us, and try to warn us, even unconsciously, by their responses and reactions; until we are finally tuned to the potential of generosity, love, kindness, and mercy; until we understand that the trials and tribulations that come to us in the name of Allah Swt are a good investment in our 401(k). That's like getting a 50% return, if not a hundred percent return.

Then there is a general kind of understanding. If you want to use the metaphor, it is as if Allah looks and sees things. It is as if Allah surveys His Creation. There are markers and identifiers in creation. When things are out of kilter, the system strives to adjust itself. So the metaphor is of Allah surveying His Creation, looking at the public behavior of His Creation and Creatures, and then at the private behavior. Then He looks into the hearts of His Creatures, and then into their souls. Only then do you get a full picture. This is done moment by moment by moment. To the degree a person resonates, or (you may say) Allah accepts them for only what is worthy of Him, and only what is done for His sake or done in His sight, within sight of Him, what is done for the good; what is done for the righteous. And [He] looks over the mass of humanity and sees what is real and what is counterfeit, what is true and what is false.

In Qur'an Allah tells us, **“He knows the secret and that which is more hidden still.”**

(20:7) **“He knows the deception of the eyes, and that which the breast conceals.”**

(40:19) We are all part of this vast system of checks and balances, blessings, tests, and trials. There is a way to be in the rhythm. Sometimes you can time the lights when you

are driving. If you drive at 23 mph, you will make all the lights. If you drive at 41 mph on Route 50 when you get off of 495 you will make 14 lights if there is no traffic on your way into Seven Corners in Falls Church. Sometimes you can just time it and respond in the right way. Don't let anything disturb you, not even the car in front of you.

Developing this kind of consciousness and awareness, striving to have this kind of response, takes practice. It takes the quieting of the heart, sincerity, and submission, and attention to the *awliyā*, not just convenient interpretations of the Qur'an, the *Sharī'ah*, and the *Sunnah*. This *taslim*, this submission and service to Allah Swt is like the servant to the king, serving the One Who is the Provider, *al-Malik*, *al-Razzaq*. [It takes practice] to see life as an invitation by Allah; to be aware of His *Nai'ma* as an opportunity to practice giving thanks and gratitude; to understand that each one of us is assigned a number at birth, and when that number comes up, it's up. Sometimes that number is called and you come forward; it is not death, but the gift of a trial and tribulation. Sometimes you win the jackpot. [It takes this kind of consciousness] to realize there is no way we can understand the bounty of Allah.

“If you try to reckon the bounty of Allah, you will never be able to reckon it.”

(14:34) You could say that if one could really understand the bounties of Allah, the opportunities that come in this life couched in the goodness and rewards and tests and trials of the physical world, just that alone, everything would be seen to be that, and you would be overwhelmed. You wouldn't be able to do that. You'd find it impossible to express your gratitude, because you'd be expressing it every second. That's why Sidna Musa (as) said, **“O Allah! I thank you through my inability to thank you.”**

We realize how little is our gratitude, and how frequent are our demands and complaints. If we only knew the truth, we would really guard our tongues in Allah's presence. Since

Allah's presence is everywhere, we would guard our tongues. We would train our hearts and physical bodies to be on good behavior. That's why the Prophet Mohammed (sal) said, "***When someone really knows Allah, his tongue becomes weary,***" from repeating the Name of Allah. If we really know, we will act as if we don't know anything. If we really understood some of these secrets, we would put them in a place that we barely have access to, except by the permission of Allah to reveal them.

This process of committing ourselves, our *nafs*, our hands, our feet, our minds, our property, our family, our work, our health to the care and safe keeping of *al-Haqq, ar-Rahmān, ar-Rahīm* means that we cherish the knowledge we have, the secrets we hold within us that we really invest our time and effort into. Just like any other investment, it doesn't pay off right away. We have to do a lot with it. It is like buying a piece of land and then having to prepare it, and then having to plant the seeds in the field, and dealing with the good weather and bad weather, and then to harvest the crop and try to sell it for a good price. Some years its good, and some years it's not good; but the land itself is your sustenance. Your trust in that process is your future. It is like the story of the father who died and told his four sons that the treasure was buried in the land. They all went and dug up the land looking for the treasure, until they realize they had tilled the land and the treasure was the land itself. That was only the beginning. Then they had to plant seeds. Sometimes you don't see the fruits of your investment right away. If you are greedy, you try to get it to pay off faster.

In the same way, we shouldn't squander the knowledge we have that Allah Swt gave us access to. We have to act in a manner that is pleasing to the Prophet Mohammed (sal) and to Allah Swt. That means to act in a way that is proven. When we can't do that, we act in the way of those who repented. And when we do that, we act in a way of those who are forgiven. When that happens, we should act in a way of those who are careful.

When we do that, we should act in the way of those who are blessed. This is how cares are removed, even though they may be there, or the reason for them may be there. When we develop this commitment (even though we may not be very good at it), and we develop this attachment to this process and invest our time in *muraqabah* and in righteous acts (both are necessary), then we can enter the doorway to our *sirr* and we find that spiritual contentment, even amidst difficulty.

The time comes in everyone's life when they have to reflect upon what we are striving for and what we are striving to achieve in terms of affirming our faith. We have to be cognizant of what we associate with Allah, *shirk*; and what of our life is *nifaq*/hypocrisy, and what of our life is filled with *ikhlas*/sincerity. When that day comes, and it comes for everyone of us – it may come after our death but hopefully will come during our life – then this metaphor or this reality, the fire of Hell will be clearly visible to us, and the beauties of Paradise will be clear to us. You may not see fire lapping at your feet or fruits dropping from heavenly trees, but the direction will become clear to us, where our eyes should be turned.

Jilani (ra) responded to a question about this. *“On the day of resurrection, the Fire of Hell will say to the believer, ‘Pass through, O Believer. Your light has extinguished my flame.’ And it will call out to him as he passes through, ‘Move quickly! You need not hold back for fear of my passionate embrace, since my ardent love affair is not with you.’”* And you can take that also symbolically, too. Even on the Yawmi Qiyama, everyone will have the taste of that fire, but some will have no fear of it and will not feel it. You can take the literally or metaphorically for life. Every one of us has a taste of difficulty, pain, and suffering in this life. Some of us know the way to pass through it quickly, because that pain and suffering is not the lover of you. It is only the lover of those who are not prepared.

How we take what comes to us is very important. Sometimes it comes to us in the fire of passion, or the fire of illness; sometimes, literally, in an illness that has fire in it. Sometimes it comes to us as a reward for our gratitude. “Here’s the reward for your gratitude. You pass through this.” Others may look at you and say how could you possibly tolerate that? All you can say is, “I don’t know. It must have been because I believed, but I don’t really know. The secret is buried in my *sirr*.” In the same sense, it pays to be obedient. That poor lady in California, her child disappeared. They believe the child is still alive. One day your child is there; the next day your child runs away. Why does a child run away from the parent? Either the parent is very, very bad, or the child is lured away by something of this world, and disobeys the primary natural laws. When we disobey the primary laws of Allah Swt, we are like a runaway child or runaway slave.

The obedient servant stands ready to be asked to serve. Even though Allah Swt is aware, even though this person is causing no disruption in the system and seems to be invisible in the system, the absence of that person would cause disruption. That absence of that individual’s attention would cause disruption. You could say that Allah Swt is aware of the presence of even those who are transparent, who cause no disruption. On the Day of Awakening, even that transparent individual has to make a report: “This happened, but I did this. This temptation came, but I chose this. This opportunity came, but I didn’t pursue it. By Allah, You gave it to me anyway.” That’s how we are measured. Isn’t this also the measure of a righteous person in this world, a humble person in this world, who is rewarded by their humility and their sincerity and love and competency and contentment, and then Allah gives more.

The more Allah gives—money, name, fame, power—means nothing to such a person.

What is meaningful to them is who they are. Those things don't corrupt a good person.

They only corrupt a person who wants to be corrupted. We are told by our predecessors that we should be in the company of good people. We should be in the company of those people who are measured in their faith and actions in this world. Even if they find themselves deviating, they are people who are concerned, who care, who question themselves, and who repent. They turn back. They start again. People who are good people are not only successful people in the moment – and they may be successful but not know it – are people who never stop trying, never stop striving. This is at least some of the means to deal with those thoughts, tendencies, and cares that come to us.

A righteous man was once asked, "What do you yearn for?" He replied, "I long for all that destiny may have in store in a state of contentment with the Divine Decree, and in which personal wishes have been abandoned, and the heart has been taken out and placed between the Hands of its Transformer."

O Allah, give us in this world, good; and good in the hereafter. And protect us against the torment of the fire. However you look at the fire. Asalaamu aleikum.