

July 24, 2009

Khutbah

Title: [On Humility](#)

DVD title: Those who Strive for Humility, Strive in Dhikrullah
The Example of The Prophet Muhammad (sal) and His Followers

Opening Prayers. *Salām aleikum rahmatullahe barakatū*. Allah (Swt) has revealed to us in Holy Qur'an and it is the subject of today's *khutbah*, which is *khāshi'ūn* or *tadarā'*. He uses *tadarā'* and *khāshi'ūn* both for humility in Qur'an.

And We have sent messages to nations before you and gripped them with misfortune and hardship so that they might humble (*tadarā'*) themselves. Suratu-l-An'am (6:4)

In Suratu-l-A'raf Allah says:

Call upon your Lord humbly (*tadarā'*) and secretly. Truly He does not love the transgressors. Do not pollute the earth after it has been set wholesome in order. Call upon Him in fear and hope. Surely the Mercy of Allah is near to those who excel in goodness. (7:55-56)

Then again, using the other term: *khāshi'ūn*, He tells us in Suratu-l-Mu'minūn at the very beginning:

Successful are the believers, those who are humble (*khāshi'ūn*) in their *salah* and those who shun idle talk, and those who pay their *zakah*...

(23:1-4)

Finally, I want to give you a quotation from Qur'an for *khasha'a* to show how it is used:

Is it not time for the hearts that sincerely believe to yield (*takhasha'*) themselves to the remembrance of Allah and to the Truth that He has sent down? Would they not be like those who before them revealed the Book but then whose hearts were hardened by the passing of time?

(57:16)

It is a beautiful Spring day in summer, again. *Alhamdulillah*. I want to speak today about *tadarā* and *khasha'a*/humility, and the way the Qur'an speaks of it. Allah also says in another quotation from Qur'an:

The faithful servants of the Beneficent are those who walk upon the earth modestly and when foolish ones address them, they answer: “Salaam” Peace. (25:63)

There is a long ‘āyat in Qur'an, as you know, where it goes that Mohammed (sal) is the Messenger of Allah Swt, and those with him are hard against those disbelievers and merciful among themselves. It is addressed to Prophet Mohamed:

O Mohammed see them bowing and falling prostrate in worship, seeking bounty from Allah and His acceptance. The mark of them is on their foreheads from traces of prostrations. Such is their likeness in Torah and their likeness in the Gospel and rises like firmament upon its stalk alighting those who sow it. That He may enrage the

disbelievers in the sight of them, Allah has promised unto them a belief and do good work, forgiveness and an immense reward. (48:29)

One of the realities of life, and one of the capabilities that we have that Allah (Swt) has planted within us is the capability to be humble and to be modest. *Tadarā'*/humility is the opposite of arrogance, of pride. It should be seen as one's awareness of one's own true position before Allah (Swt). One has to allow the realization of one's place in this universe, one's place in the face of consummate compassion, consummate mercy, consummate tolerance, consummate love. Then, seeing that, being humbled by that, we should guide our conduct towards those attributes (or in short speak), towards Allah Swt, and guide our conduct towards people who are similar, who have those qualities.

It is said that one has to cross the threshold through the doorway, or to become like a mat spread on the pavement for people to worship, so that if one can sincerely confess that everyone seems to be much better than "I am myself," everyone is the wheat and "I am the shaft," then the inhabitants of Paradise will kiss that one on their head. In the narration that is attributed to Prophet Mohammed (sal) he stated: "***Whoever is humble, Allah exalts him; and whoever is haughty, Allah humiliates him.***" We get very clear idea of the value of humility. But our greatness is somehow inversely proportionate to behaving as though one were great and important. Just as one's true smallness is adversely proportionate to behaving as though one were small.

Humility, I think, is defined in many ways. Seeing oneself as having no virtues, or treating others with respect, or seeing oneself as the worst of all humanity is one aspect of humility, and is a means of practicing humility. But another way is to be aware of oneself, to be aware of one's *nafs ammāra*, to be aware of one's faults, aware of one's weaknesses and striving within one's own self to change them. Humility doesn't always

have to be seen by other people. Humility has to be felt by your own self. And sometimes no one can see what you are struggling with. No one can see the effort that you are making. That in itself is a correlative to humility. If you are striving very hard to not be arrogant, striving very hard to be tolerant, to develop good virtuous behavior and others do not see it, well, then it gives you an extra impetus so that you do not become arrogant, and you do not become angry and frustrated that your efforts are not being recognized. Just being alert to the *nafs ammāra*, and striving to suppress it is enough of a task for any one human being.

Whatever the definition of humility is, and we have seen a number of them in the quotations from Qur'an that I gave, every definition only expresses one side, one dimension of humility. The last of the *nafs*, the last of the ego relates to those people who are really, really are sincere. Not because they necessarily overcome every aspect of their *nafs ammāra*, but their sincerity is counted by Allah (Swt). Indeed such an individual (and hopefully we all are to some degree such an individual) never gives up thinking there is more to do, less arrogance to have, more confidence in Allah Swt, and less belief that we, ourselves, are in total control and total humility.

In other words, those who consciously engage in remembrance and *dhikrullah*, those who consciously engage in being compassionate and tolerant and peaceful—not just people who constantly engage in saying “Allah. Allah, Allah” and walk around with their beads—those who are consciously aware of Allah (Swt) are those people who are consciously aware of their responsibility to other human beings, to the planet. Those who strive to be consciously aware of Allah in a sense of *dhikrullah* are those people who in their prayers don't forget others in need, in their service, and think beyond their immediate self or their immediate families or tribes or nations. Those people will naturally become humble. They will immediately begin to see the rise and the fall of their

nafs ammāra and be able to suppress it. I hope, *insh'allah*, that we will all continue to strive to be such people.

A companion of the Khalif Umar (ra) saw him carry a pitcher of water on his shoulder. And he said to him, “Ya Umar! What are you doing, O Khalif of the Messenger of Allah (Swt).” Umar (ra) replied, “Some envoys have come from other countries and I felt some arrogance in my own heart. So I wanted to suppress it. I felt better than the ones who came out of the country to visit us. So I decided to carry water [to them].” He used to carry bags of flour on his back. Once he even accused himself while giving a khutbah, and he kept silent when people questioned or criticized his actions.

It is very important when we are put in positions to see ourselves that we do see ourselves. Unfortunately, we cannot have the hope and expectation that others will see ourselves seeing ourselves. They will just see us in our arrogance or they will remember us [as we were before]. As I used to say many years ago, you can change in six months, but it will take someone six years or more to see it.

Abu Hurayra carried wood while he was the deputy governor of Medina. And while he was the chief judge of Medina, Zaib ibn Thamad kissed ibn Abbas's hand. And Ibn Abbas, known as the interpreter and scholar of Qur'an, helped Zaib get on his horse.

Hassan (ra), the grandson of Prophet Mohammed (sal), sat with some children who were eating breadcrumbs. He ate those breadcrumbs with them.

Once, Abu Zahir offended Bilal. In order to obtain his forgiveness, he put his head on the ground and declared, “If the blessed feet of Bilal do not tread on this simple head, it will not rise from the ground.”

These people are not just people who are humble, but whose humility comes from seeing themselves, from self-reflection, not forced to be humble. These are examples of humility among the leaders of Islam. No one is exempt from humility because no one is exempt from arrogance. No one is exempt from forgiveness because no one is exempt from repentance and sin. We have to hold to what Allah (Swt) says about His Forgiveness of us and His Humility towards us, and not depend on other human beings who do not have that insight/*basīra*.

If you remember that the blessings of Allah, the spiritual energy/*fayyād* of Allah is what carries us through these difficult times with our own self. Allah (Swt) and His Messenger (sal), emphasized humility so much that one who knows has no doubt that service consists of humility. [As] we read in Qur'an, one example that I gave about the beauty of humility also can be heard in the *hadith* of Rasūla (sal). He said, "***God/Allah has told me that you must be humble. That no one must boast to another. Shall I inform you of the one that hell-fire will not touch? Hell-fire will not touch one who is near to Allah, who is amicable with people and mild and easy to get along with. Allah exalts one who is humble. That one sees himself as small while he is truly great in the eyes of the people.***" That is part of *hadith*. In another *hadith*, Prophet Mohammed (sal) says, "***O Allah, make me see myself as small.***"

So the real glory, exaltation and humility lies not in our own sight but in the sight of others and in the sight of Allah. But it begins with how we see ourselves. "If I am

humble, Allah will notice me.” “If I am humble, people will like me” is not the right approach. We have to really rid ourselves of that dependency on others and keep our dependency on Allah (Swt). The only way to do that is to go back and to remember Allah Swt in all things, and [go back to] what we have spoken about *dhikrullah*/ remembrance. We have to remember to see the majesty in this creation and all that we have been given, and see how much power we have and what we really don’t have. [We have to see] how we put ourselves into submission to strangers, to strange things, to consequences that we have no control over and we resist submission to Allah (Swt) and His Messenger.

Prophet Mohammed (sal) was a very humble person. He would see children on the road and he would stop and talk to them. He would greet them. He would play with them. If someone took his hand and wanted to lead him somewhere, he would take their hand and he would walk next to them. He didn’t object to it. He helped his wives with their housework and when people were working, he liked to work next to them. He mended his shoes. He sewed his own clothing. He milked the sheep. He fed the animals. He sat at the table with his servants. He always welcomed poor people warmly to his home and to his presence. He looked after widows and he looked after orphans. He visited those who were ill. He followed the funeral procession of those who had passed. He answered the call of the slaves in his community. This was the type of person that he was and we should be.

All of this is because he was aware of something. He was aware that Allah (Swt) is present. He is present in your compassion so He is present in poverty. He is present in love and so He is present in hate. He is present when people reject one another, and when people accept and forgive each other. So He is present in repentance. This is the type of person Muhammad (sal) was. You cannot do those things from ego. You cannot do those things from saying, “I was harmed. I was insulted. I was humiliated. I was

forgotten. I was. I was.” You have to get beyond that and see how Allah (Swt) wants us to be. Muhammad (sal) was aware of the Divine Presence. You cannot do these things consistently if you just want praise. There has to be a transformation in the heart and the soul of the individual who has lived this way; and that is the journey of life. If you do not come to the end of your life at least striving hard to overcome those resentments, angers, fears and doubts, arrogance and feelings of upset, then the life has no meaning, because transformation has to come. Many, many of us go to our graves that way.

Many saints, many scholars, many people who are honored with the nearness of Allah (Swt) have had many signs of their witnessing of this way of humility and modesty, but the signs of smallness are sometimes much better. One has to see it as natural. One has to see that at least they could change in certain circumstances. We have to reflect on the greatness of these possibilities. How do we make these transitions in our life? Real humility means that people have to know something about themselves. You have to know the value of your own self before the Magnificence of Allah. Then we have to make this fully realized potential ingrained in our self—the essential part of our nature, our actions, and our relationship with others and our selves.

Those who have realized their nothingness before Allah are balancing both their spiritual/religious life and their relationship with people. They obey the commandments of the *dīn*. People like that have no objection to the Truth. They have no criticism, they don't have argument with the Truth, nor doubt in the Truth because they don't have any better way of stating it either. They are convinced that what is contained in Qur'an and in the authentic traditions of Prophet Mohammed (sal) are true. If there is any apparent contradiction between the sources and human reasons, or between [the sources and] the established rationale and scientific fact; if a person is confronted with apparent contradictions between rationality and what is revealed in the Dīn of Islam, there is no

doubt in their minds that the *dīn* is what is true, and that there is a flaw in their understanding. All the miraculous wonders and pleasures and sweetness seen in this earth and felt by people are meaningless unless they are based in a teaching of humility. The Prophet Mohammed (sal), and the followers, and the rightly guided members of the family, and the followers of the Ahl al Bayt all strive to be examples.

All the pleasures are momentary, just like the pain lasts only as long as we may live. And most of them are momentary, too. The goodness, sweetness, and miracles that come from Allah Swt are endless. They lead to an endless peace, an endless security, and an endless understanding, but we have to strive for them in this world. Because this is the world where we are challenged by our desires and our fears, our confusions, our hopes, our aspirations, and our good intentions. We must remember that all things done with good intention are accepted by Allah. Even wrong actions done with good intentions are accepted. Right actions done with good intentions are accepted, and wrong actions that come out of good intentions with ignorance are accepted. Only wrong actions that are done with wrong intentions are condemned.

The truth is humility is something that is just out of the grasp of most of us. We feel we have to protect ourselves: who else is going to watch over us? Who else is going to watch out for my interests? We have to plan for ourselves. Who else is going to plan for me? We have to promote ourselves, who else will? Otherwise, how are we going to gain our status? How are we going to increase our material well-being? How are we going to pay for the food on the table? We have to impress others with our knowledge and capabilities. How else can we serve Allah? That's not the way it really works. The greatest knowledge, the greatest power, the greatest happiness, success, and fulfillment come only from Allah. If you would just sit still and be a good person, it all will come to you.

In reality, the one who worships Allah Swt really worships Allah Swt, and sees a great difference between adoring and loving Allah Swt and anyone else. In reality, the one who serves Allah Swt sees a great difference between serving Allah Swt and His Creatures and Creation. It's different than serving anything and anyone else. It doesn't mean you serve Allah Swt in some abstract form. It means you serve everyone *fī sabīlillah*. In truth, the one who is educated by Qur'an, by the Hadith and the Sīrah of Prophet Mohammed (sal) is potentially educated in every subject, because every subject is contained in that Book and life. If you want to be a scientist and you know Qur'an, your knowledge of science will be enhanced. If you want to be an archaeologist or historian, your knowledge will be enhanced—or philosopher, psychologist, doctor, lawyer, judge or farmer.

The teachings of the Ahl al Bayt and the *shuyukh*, in your life in this world, in your career will be enhanced. Those who are really humble attribute the fruits of their work and actions not to themselves; their successes, not to themselves; their knowledge, not to themselves; and their humility, not to themselves. They regard the people of honor with honor. They regard being loved, trusted, and followed by others as a test of their own sincerity and humility, and they don't display the favors of Allah easily.

Humility is a doorway, and one of the meanings of the root of the word for humility is doorway. It also means to lie down. Even the Latin word means to be on the ground. It is characterized as just, generous, merciful, helpful, and forgiving. We recognize what it is. To be near to Allah Swt is to keep those attributes and qualities near to you: qualities of generosity, mercifulness, helpfulness, and forgiveness; patience, tolerance, and love. The believer is nearest to Allah while prostrating before him, while recounting the benefits of al Islam, by reading Qur'an, by referring to Rasūlallah (sal) and those with knowledge, by trusting in the way they are being guided and taught. Real humility and

honesty grows in the heart of someone who remembers Allah Swt. *Insh'allah*, we can all be better at that. (Duas).

SECOND KHUTBAH

Make *du'ā* for the living and the sick, and those who have passed. Especially remember Khaled's father who had a slight stroke this week. Pray that Allah Swt gives him a healing and longer life, and he regains all his faculties, and make his way easy. Pray that Allah Swt gives serenity in our hearts and health in our bodies and peace in our minds. Pray for those who love us and whom we love, and those people in the world who we don't even know but who are in need of our prayers. Ask for the well being of those members of this community, this *ummah*, that Allah Swt may give you knowledge that is beneficial, and a certainty that will give you freedom and well-being, freedom from affliction. And to make your faces shine with the light of the Attributes of Allah Swt and rejoice on the day of resurrection among your friends. Make your hand to be spread over us, Allah Swt, and on our families and our children, and those who are with us by Your Mercy.

(Duas).