

نزك الينفس

SPIRITUAL PURIFICATION RETREAT

THE HONOR OF BEING A SERVANT OF ALLAH

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The Honor of Being a Servant of Allāh

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



Today, Inshā'Allāh, we'll talk about how honorable it is to be a servant of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, an 'Abd of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. And for you to understand how honorable it is to fall under the 'Ubūdīyyah of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى you need to understand that Allāh سبحانه وتعالى made 'Ubūdīyyah to Him the description of the best of His creation and those closest to Him. Being an 'Abd of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى is the most esteemed rank a person can achieve. An 'Abd of Allāh, a slave of Allāh, is nothing but honor and praise, and that's why Allāh سبحانه وتعالى referred to His chosen prophets as His servants in their most noble missions. When Allāh سبحانه وتعالى wants to praise someone, He calls him His 'Abd, His servant, His slave — the honorary, special form of 'Ubūdīyyah. Allāh سبحانه وتعالى referred to His most beloved Messenger ﷺ, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, who reached the pinnacle of 'Ubūdīyyah to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, as His servant, and He referred to him as His servant when He was telling us about one of the most significant, honored moments for the Messenger ﷺ, the Night of his Isrā' where he reached a place no one else had ever reached. When mentioning that to us, Allāh سبحانه وتعالى referred to him as His slave.

سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَسْرَى بِعَبْدِهِ

Glory be to the One Who took His servant...

Allāh سبحانه وتعالى could've referred to him by his name or by one of his qualities, or any of the other titles or means that Allāh سبحانه وتعالى could've used. But the description of the Messenger ﷺ as the Slave of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى in this special, honorable occasion shows what an honorable title and status it is. If there had been a more prestigious, esteemed title than being the 'Abd of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى it would have been used to address the Messenger ﷺ in that elevated position, when Allāh سبحانه وتعالى elevated him high above to where no one had

ever reached. And in the context of Isrā' again, Allāh سبحانه وتعالى also, again, referred to him as His 'Abd.

فَأَوْحَىٰ إِلَىٰ عَبْدِهِ مَا أَوْحَىٰ

And He revealed to His Servant what He revealed

In another esteemed context, when discussing the revelation of the book to the Messenger ﷺ, Allāh سبحانه وتعالى also refers to him as His 'Abd.

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَىٰ عَبْدِهِ الْكِتَابَ

All praise is for Allāh Who has revealed the Book to His servant.

And also in another verse,

تَبَارَكَ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ الْفُرْقَانَ عَلَىٰ عَبْدِهِ لِيَكُونَ لِلْعَالَمِينَ نَذِيرًا

*Blessed is He who sent down the Criterion upon His Servant that he may be to the worlds
a warner*

In expressing gratitude over the believers by sending them the Messenger ﷺ, which is, without a doubt, a great honor to the Messenger ﷺ, Allāh سبحانه وتعالى referred to him as His servant and slave.

هُوَ الَّذِي يُنْزِلُ عَلَى عَبْدِهِ آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ

It is He who sends down upon His Servant verses of clear evidence...

When Allāh تعالى سبحانه expressed gratitude by keeping him safe, which is another great honor to the Messenger ﷺ, He referred to him as His slave.

أَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِكَافٍ عَبْدَهُ

Is Allāh not sufficient for His servant?

In another respected context, when He mentioned the worship of the Messenger ﷺ, He referred to him as His slave.

وَأَنَّهُ لَمَّا قَامَ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ يَدْعُوهُ كَادُوا يَكُونُونَ عَلَيْهِ لِبَدًا

And that when the Servant of Allāh stood up supplicating Him, they almost became about him a compacted mass."

He challenged the Kuffār,

وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَى عَبْدِنَا

And if you are in doubt about what We have revealed to Our servant...

In fact, in Sahīh Bukhāri it was reported by ‘Abdullāh Ibn ‘Amr Ibn Al-‘Ās رضي الله عنه that the Messenger ﷺ was referred to in the Tawrāh as being the slave of Allāh.

انت عبي ورسولي

The same with the other Messengers سبحانه وتعالى Allāh. عليهم الصلاة والسلام. Allāh honored them by referring to them as His slaves. That shows how honorable that title is.

وَإِذْكُرْ عَبْدَنَا أَيُّوبَ

And remember Our servant Ayyūb.

وَإِذْكُرْ عَبْدَنَا دَاوُدَ

And remember Our servant, Dāwūd.

Another verse,

وَوَهَبْنَا لِدَاوُدَ سُلَيْمَانَ ج نَعْمَ الْعَبْدُ

And We blessed Dāwūd with Sulaymān — what an excellent servant (he was)!

About عليه السلام 'Isā,

لَنْ يَسْتَنْكِفَ الْمَسِيحُ أَنْ يَكُونَ عَبْدًا لِلَّهِ

Never would the Messiah disdain to be a servant of Allāh...

In the verse about Zakarīyyah,

ذِكْرُ رَحْمَتِ رَبِّكَ عَبْدَهُ زَكَرِيَّا

[This is] a mention of the mercy of your Lord to His servant Zakarīyyah

It's consistent, just like with the Messenger ﷺ. They're the most cherished by Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, they're the most honored by Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, and Allāh سبحانه وتعالى refers to them as His servants and slaves because it's a title of respect.

وَأَذْكُرْ عَبْدَنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ أُولَى الْأَيْدِي وَالْأَبْصَارِ

And remember Our servants, Ibrāhīm, Ishāq and Ya'qūb — those of strength and [religious] vision.

He called the angels by the same name.

بَلْ عِبَادٌ مُّكْرَمُونَ

Rather, they are [but] honored servants.

Honored servants — عِبَادٌ مُّكْرَمُونَ is honored servants.

وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ الرَّحْمَنُ وَلَدًا سُبْحَنَهُ ۚ بَلْ عِبَادٌ مُّكْرَمُونَ

And they say, "The Most Merciful has taken a son." Exalted is He! Rather, they are [but] honored servants.

The inhabitants of the Jannah we refer to with the same title.

عَيْنًا يَشْرَبُ بِهَا عِبَادُ اللَّهِ يُفَجِّرُونَهَا تَفْجِيرًا

A spring of which the [righteous] servants of Allāh will drink; they will make it gush forth in force [and abundance].

The bottom line is that ‘Ubūdīyyah to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى is an honor and being an ‘Abd of Allāh عبيده is a title of honor and praise.

In Islām, the concept of ‘Ubūdīyyah revolves around liberating individuals from all forms of bondage and ‘Ubūdīyyah to others. It allows them to become

devoted servants solely to their Creator and Lord Allāh جل في علاه. 'Ubūdīyyah to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى liberates the servants from bondage to disbelief, immorality, wickedness, disobedience, and it guides them towards the realms of obedience to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, to righteousness, to gratitude, and honor. A person who is an 'Abd to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى is honored because he only fears Allāh سبحانه وتعالى alone. That liberates him from fearing anyone else in his heart, everything after that will seem small. True 'Ubūdīyyah to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى is a promise that you will worship Allāh سبحانه وتعالى alone according to how Allāh wants you to worship, to follow His commands, and to avoid what He has forbidden. Ikhlās and Mutāba'ah, it's very simple. That will make you honorable. Being only an 'Abd of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى brings happiness like no other. Especially when you know that your birth, your sustenance, your death, and everything else is only in the hands of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful. When those who follow misguidance tell you they're liberating, they're in reality leading individuals to 'Ubūdīyyah to desires and to pleasures that render a person like cattle, even more misguided.

'Ubūdīyyah to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى is the essence of freedom from everything other than Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, it's the essence of dignity. Being an 'Abd of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى is the only thing that liberates a heart from 'Ubūdīyyah to creation, and it frees it from the humiliation and submission to anything other than Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. Those who worship Allāh سبحانه وتعالى alone are only bound to Him, their Creator, their Owner, their Controller, their Sustainer. Honor, dignity, and elevation come in 'Ubūdīyyah to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى and disgrace and humiliation come in worshipping anything other than Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. When you bow your head down in humility to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى during the nighttime in 'Ubūdīyyah to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, Allāh will raise your head high in honor throughout your day and throughout your life. What's astonishing about 'Ubūdīyyah to Allāh سبحانه is that in *all* forms of servitude, the Master benefits from the servant, except in the case of a believer's 'Ubūdīyyah to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, it's the *servant* who gains, because Allāh سبحانه does not need any of His creation.

وَاللَّهُ الْغَنِيُّ وَأَنْتُمُ الْفُقَرَاءُ

and Allāh is the Free of need, while you are the needy.

This special, honorary ‘Ubūdīyyah to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى is special. It’s only for the believers. It’s ‘Ubūdīyyah to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى by submission, love, and obedience. This special ‘Ubūdīyyah, when one submits by choice, is what truly brings honor to an individual, and everyone is at levels in this ‘Ubūdīyyah. The highest rank, of course, belongs to the Messenger ﷺ and then the messengers and prophets. The return and benefit for ‘Ubūdīyyah to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى is enormous. There are many verses in the Qur’ān that mention this. Protection from the Shaytān,

إِنَّ عِبَادِي لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانٌ

Indeed, My servants - no authority will you have over them...

وَلَا أَغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ

and I will mislead them all

إِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمُ الْمُخْلَصِينَ

Except, among them, Your chosen servants.

No fear,

يَعْبَادِ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْكُمْ الْيَوْمَ وَلَا أَنتُمْ تَحْزَنُونَ

O My servants, no fear will there be concerning you this Day, nor will you grieve

Glad tidings,

فَبَشِّرْ عِبَادِ

So give good tidings to My servants

The verses on that are many. All that is the special ‘Ubūdīyyah to Allāh سبحانه. That’s the special, honorary, ‘Ubūdīyyah to Allāh تعالى.

Allāh تعالى سبحانه referred in the Qur’ān to all His creations as His servants, including the non-believers. So how does that make sense? One of course needs to understand that everything in the heavens and in the earth is a servant of Allāh تعالى سبحانه, whether by choice or by force. Everything is subservient to Allāh تعالى سبحانه and you can understand it by understanding that Ibn Al-Qayyim categorized ‘Ubūdīyyah to Allāh تعالى سبحانه as two types, a specific one and a general one. The general type of ‘Ubūdīyyah is by compulsion, it’s not by choice. Everyone in the heavens and in the earth is a servant of Allāh تعالى سبحانه, whether they’re good or bad, believers or disbelievers. There’s no way to escape this type of ‘Ubūdīyyah to Allāh تعالى سبحانه. This kind of ‘Ubūdīyyah does not suggest any privilege or honor. This general ‘Ubūdīyyah includes all creations, believers included. Believers share the general ‘Ubūdīyyah with the Kuffār, but the private, specific, honorable ‘Ubūdīyyah is reserved for the believers alone. The worst of the Kuffār are called His slaves. The ones who say that about Allāh تعالى سبحانه which makes the heavens burst, and the earth split, and the

mountains crumble, are 'Ibād of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. The ones who abuse Allāh سبحانه وتعالى with slander are 'Ibād of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى.

إِنْ كُلُّ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِلَّا آتِي الرَّحْمَنِ عَبْدًا

There is no one in the heavens and earth but that he comes to the Most Merciful as a servant.

In this context, this general context, they're slaves of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. Allāh سبحانه وتعالى referred to the sinners and disbelievers as his servants.

وَيَوْمَ يُحْشَرُهُمْ وَمَا يَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَيَقُولُ أَأَنْتُمْ أَضَلَلْتُمْ عِبَادِي هَؤُلَاءِ

And [mention] the Day He will gather them and that which they worship besides Allāh and will say, "Did you mislead these, My servants..."

He called them His servants despite their misguidance.

وَمَا اللَّهُ يُرِيدُ ظُلْمًا لِّلْعِبَادِ

And Allāh wants no injustice for [His] servants.

Many verses, and Allāh سبحانه وتعالى said,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ حَكَمَ بَيْنَ الْعِبَادِ

Indeed, Allāh has judged between the servants.

سبحانه وتعالى, And Allāh

قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ فَاطِرَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ عِلْمَ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ أَنْتَ تَحْكُمُ بَيْنَ عِبَادِكَ فِي مَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ

Say, "O Allāh, Creator of the heavens and the earth, Knower of the unseen and the witnessed, You will judge between your servants concerning that over which they used to differ."

This includes everyone, the righteous and evil. This form of ‘Ubūdīyyah offers no indication of privilege or prestige for the disbelievers and sinners. So why are the Kuffār called ‘Ibād of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى? Because the term ‘Ubūdīyyah or ‘Ibādah, that term comes from the context or meaning of الذل والخضوع, humility and submission. Some people willingly demonstrate their humility towards Allāh سبحانه وتعالى and their submission towards Him. They become with that among the special, honorary category, the special ‘Ubād, the special worshippers. Others, however, will submit by force. So the special, honorary ‘Ubūdīyyah that’s in the Qur’ān, it’s about those who willingly turn to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. The general ‘Ubūdīyyah is for everyone, everyone is under the control of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. Everyone will submit to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. Everyone will stand before Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, by force or by choice. The distinction between the special or general ‘Ubūdīyyah to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى is like the distinction between the general or special Sujūd to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. The special Sujūd to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى in the Qur’ān refers to the believers making Sujūd. They’re honored for that; they’re praised for making Sujūd to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى by choice. Allāh سبحانه وتعالى said,

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِهِ وَيُسَبِّحُونَهُ وَلَهُ يَسْجُدُونَ

Indeed, those who are near your Lord [i.e., the angels] are not prevented by arrogance from His worship, and they exalt Him, and to Him they prostrate.

And Allāh سبحانه وتعالى said,

إِذَا تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُ الرَّحْمَنِ خَرُّوا سُجَّدًا وَبُكِيًّا

When the Verses of the Most Gracious were recited unto them, they fell down prostrate and weeping.

However, there's general Sujūd, and that refers to everyone. Everyone will submit to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, believers and non-believers. This does not suggest any privilege or honor. It's like the verse,

وَلِلَّهِ يَسْجُدُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ طَوْعًا وَكَرْهًا وَظِلَالُهُم بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْآصَالِ

And to Allāh prostrates whoever is within the heavens and the earth, willingly or by compulsion, and their shadows [as well] in the mornings and the afternoons.

Unto Allāh سبحانه وتعالى falls in prostration everyone in the heavens and in the earth, by force or by choice, willingly or unwillingly. The distinction between the special and general 'Ibādah, special and general Sujūd, is also like the special and

general Qunūt. Qunūt, we mean by that the obedience to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. Allāh سبحانه وتعالى praised the believers for their obedience.

أَمَّنْ هُوَ قَنِيتُ أَنَاءَ اللَّيْلِ سَاجِدًا وَقَائِمًا يَحْذَرُ الْآخِرَةَ وَيَرْجُو رَحْمَةَ رَبِّهِ

Is one who is devoutly obedient during periods of the night, prostrating and standing [in prayer], fearing the Hereafter and hoping for the mercy of his Lord, [like one who does not]?

Is he who is obedient to Allāh, prostrating and standing in Salāh during the night and he who fears the Ākhirah and wants the mercy of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, is he like one who disbelieves? And He said about Maryam عليها السلام,

وَكَانَتْ مِنَ الْقَانِتِينَ

And she was of the devoutly obedient.

She was obedient to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. This is the praised type of obedience. The general obedience that does not suggest any privilege or honor is like the general Qunūt — it's the general Qunūt and it's mentioned in the verse,

وَلَهُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ كُلُّ شَيْءٍ قَانِتُونَ

To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth. All are obedient to Him.

All are obedient to Him, meaning they will all come in humiliation and submission, خاضعون أذلة. So there's the general 'Ubūdīyyah and the general Sujūd, and the general obedience to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى that does not suggest any privilege or honor. There's the special 'Ubūdīyyah, there's the special Sujūd, and there's the special obedience to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, that's for those who submit willingly to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى and that's an honor for them Dunyā and Ākhirah.

The bottom line is that one who submits to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى attains the peak of honor. 'Ubūdīyyah, submission to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى is nothing but honor, and the title of 'Abdullāh represents the highest form of honor. 'Ibādah is an honorable task, and that's why Al-Qādi 'Iyād said in one of his poems,

ومما زادني شرفاً وتيهاً وكدت بأحمصي أطأ الثريا

What makes me so proud, he's saying — what makes me feel so distinguished, what makes me feel so honored, so much that I feel like I want to step over the stars — I mean out of everything, what do you think he chose? What made him so proud? Being a slave of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى.

ومما زادني شرفاً وتيهاً وكدت بأحمصي أطأ الثريا

دخولي تحت قولك يا عبادي وأن صيرت أحمد لي نبيا

What made him so proud and so distinguished and so honored? He said it's that I fall under "Yā 'Ibādy". The ultimate honor for me, he's saying, is being included under "O my Servants!" And also, he mentioned, "And that you have chosen

Ahmad ﷺ as my messenger.” He’s basically saying I’m so ecstatic at being included under Ya ‘Ibādy. I’m so excited that I feel like jumping over the stars. Take pride in whatever you wish, there’s no pride except in being an ‘Abd of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. It’s an honor you can choose to attain; it’s under your control. If you desire this honor, it’s up to you to become a servant of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. If you want to achieve a high status with Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, then strive to be an ‘Abd of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. A person reaches the highest level and the utmost honor and closeness to perfection based on how they embrace ‘Ubūdīyyah to Allāh سبحانه. The more someone embodies ‘Ubūdīyyah to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, the closer to perfection they are, the higher their status becomes.

وصلی اللہ علی سیدنا محمد وعلی آلہ وصحبہ وسلم