

تزكية النفس

SPIRITUAL PURIFICATION RETREAT

THE IMPORTANCE OF SWEETNESS &
DELIGHT IN WORSHIP

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The Importance of Sweetness and Delight in Worship

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



Prior to discussing the methods for achieving sweetness and joy in ‘Ibādah, it’s essential to understand what sweetness in ‘Ibādah really is. Sweetness and delight in ‘Ibādah refers to the sense of inner peace when performing an ‘Ibādah. It's the heart's happiness when the Muslim performs an ‘Ibādah — any type of ‘Ibādah! Sweetness and delight in an ‘Ibādah is the sensation of being energized to engage in an ‘Ibādah. It's the desire and feeling to remain immersed in the ‘Ibādah indefinitely. It's longing to prolong, for example, the Salāh, whether it's the Nafl Salāh or Fard Salāh or Qiyām Al-Layl. It's the reluctance to set aside the Mus’haf once you start reciting it. Sweetness in ‘Ibādah is what some refer to as the Jannah of this Dunyā. This feeling varies from individual to individual, depending on the strength or weakness of one’s Īmān. Look at the example of RasūlAllāh ﷺ in ‘Ibādah. Hudayfah Ibn Al-Yamān رضي الله عنه related that the Messenger ﷺ recited Sūrat Al-Baqarah, then Sūrat An-Nisā’, and then Sūrat Āl ‘Imrān in one Rak’ah, and it wasn't speed-reading because the Hadīth actually specifies that he recited those verses unhurried. On top of reciting those verses and those Suwar and those Ajzā’ with contemplation, on top of all that, whenever he passed verses that referred to the glory of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, he glorified Him. If he recited verses about how Allāh سبحانه وتعالى is to be begged, he would beg Him. When he recited verses dealing with the protection from Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, he sought Allāh سبحانه وتعالى’s protection. And it wasn’t a random night in the Messenger ﷺ’s life that he did so. It was a consistent habit throughout his life رضي الله عنه, because there are other narrations like that which are narrated by Ibn Mas’ūd رضي الله عنه.

Look at the Salaf, the remarkable accounts of the Salaf and their acts of worship are extensive! It’s inspiring to read about their unwavering commitment to Salāh, for example, and the countless, long nights that they devoted to standing in Salāh along with the performance of the various other ‘Ibādāt. Mu’adh رضي الله عنه cried on his deathbed, he expressed sorrow on his deathbed, and that sorrow wasn’t about leaving his family or wealth or any Dunyā matter. He was crying on his deathbed because he was going to miss standing in Salāh during the

cold nights, because he was going to miss being thirsty from fasting during the hot days. You have to — *you have to* feel the sweetness of ‘Ibādah to say something like that in such a predicament. There are similar narrations by Abu Ad-Dardā’ and Ibn ‘Umar and others رضي الله عنه أجمعين. Their ability to endure hardships and the long nights that they spent in ‘Ibādah shows that there was something deep within them that motivated them to engage in ‘Ibādah without feeling tired or getting bored. Al-Fudayl Ibn ‘Iyād used to say, *“When the sun sets, I feel happy because the darkness gives me a chance to be alone with Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, and when dawn breaks I feel sad, because that’s when the people start coming back around again.”* His delight was in spending time alone with Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, not with people. Most today would say something opposite to what he said. ‘Ibādah got them to forget their worries and their physical discomfort because they felt the sweetness and delight of that ‘Ibādah. The Messenger ﷺ and the men he raised, they found such joy in their ‘Ibādah that it kept them from noticing the pain in their feet even when they became swollen from the strain of standing for so long in ‘Ibādah. They felt comfort in being alone with Allāh سبحانه وتعالى and happiness in ‘Ibādah that can’t be compared to any worldly pleasure or desire. ‘Ibādah brought them a sense of peace and a calm heart. They felt that way because that’s the way the Messenger ﷺ raised them.

Nowadays, Muslims are encouraged to perform ‘Ibādāt. Parents, for example, motivate their children to perform ‘Ibādāt. They emphasize the importance of performing the ‘Ibādāt and they emphasize the seriousness of neglecting the ‘Ibādāt. However, they often overlook the necessity of teaching them how to experience the joy and sweetness of ‘Ibādāt. Many Muslims today perform Salāh like the pecking of a rooster without feeling any joy or delight in that Salāh. Some are eager to complete the Salāh before it actually begins. A lot of people fast or perform the other various ‘Ibādāt, like Qiyām, without feeling its sweetness, without feeling connected to it, and without having a bond with it. The Messenger ﷺ didn’t raise his Sahābah like that. He guided them to establish a connection between the ‘Ibādāt and the heart, prior to the commencement of the physical actions of the ‘Ibādāt. This is the crucial element that we’re missing out on today. When the Messenger ﷺ told Bilāl to make ‘Iqāmah for Salāh, he

didn't just say, *"Get up and make 'Iqāmah."* He was instructing him on concepts that went much deeper than the physical Salāh itself. In Sunan Abu Dāwūd, the Messenger ﷺ told Bilāl,

يَا بِلَالُ أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ أَرْحَنَّا بِهَا

Get up and perform 'Iqāmah and give us comfort by it.

أَرْحَنَّا بِهَا — Salāh is comfort. He was teaching him that Salāh should be a comfort zone. That's the sweetness and delight of 'Ibādah. Salāh and 'Ibādah aren't just about the physical movements and the words we utter. He said أَرْحَنَّا بِهَا. 'Ibādāt should also bring peace and comfort to our hearts. They should ease our worries and bring happiness to our souls. That's why when anything distresses a Muslim, he should find his relief in Salāh and in the other various 'Ibādāt. That's the sweetness of 'Ibādah that we seek to attain. To further deepen this meaning in the hearts of the Sahābah, the Prophet ﷺ instructed them in many, various ways. For example, in Sahīh Muslim he said,

أَقْرَبُ مَا يَكُونُ الْعَبْدُ مِنْ رَبِّهِ وَهُوَ سَاجِدٌ

The nearest a servant is to his Lord is when he's prostrating.

Contemplating that attains one delight in his 'Ibādah.

Some strictly adhere to every single, tiny Sunnah of the Salāh — that's great, that's how it should be, but then they might miss out on truly experiencing the sweetness of the Salāh. The same goes for Siyām and the other 'Ibādāt. It's

important to teach how to attain the sweetness of the 'Ibādāt, like Salāh, just as thoroughly as we teach the physical and verbal aspects of those 'Ibādāt.

Feeling the sweetness of the 'Ibādah impacts more than just the act of the 'Ibādah. When someone grows up finding happiness and joy in 'Ibādah, they're less likely to cross the boundaries of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى when they're alone. If the Shaytān tries to tempt them, they quickly remember Allāh سبحانه وتعالى and regain their Īmān. A generation that's not raised on feeling the sweetness of 'Ibādah is a weak generation. It's a generation that will easily be swayed by temptations. It's a struggling generation that will get dragged into this materialistic Dunyā. When we raise ourselves and our students and our children to feel the joy of worship, it'll replace and counter the Shaytānic pleasure of sins. A sin may appear to be pleasurable to some. The Shaytān and the Nafs can create an illusion of enjoyment around sinful acts. A heart that's spiritually troubled may even find some thrill in some of the sins, but when you experience the sweetness of the 'Ibādah, when you bow down in Salāh and feel the closeness to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, when you understand Allāh's Love and Kindness, when you realize His Generosity and Mercy, when you grasp all of this, your heart feels the pleasure and sweetness in 'Ibādah and that increases one's Īmān. Now the consequence of that is that when there's a sinful thought, when the enticing whisper of temptation arises in your mind, or if the opportunity to sin presents itself, you quickly turn to the various types of 'Ibādāt. Why? Because now, with that proper spiritual upbringing, you now find genuine joy and pleasure in engaging in these 'Ibādāt. Joy that's exceeding and surpassing the Shaytānic pleasure that's in sins.

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