

Chapter 49

Allāh, Most High, says,

“And if We let him taste mercy from Us after he has suffered hardship, he says, ‘This is my due. I do not think that the Hour is going to come, and if I am returned to my Lord, I will definitely find the best reward with Him.’ But We will inform those who are disbelievers of what they did and make them suffer a ruthless punishment.”¹

Mujāhid said, ‘This is result of my deeds and I am fully deserving of it.’²

Ibn `Abbās said, ‘i.e. this is from me.’³

Allāh, Most High, says,

“He said, ‘I have only been given it because of knowledge I have.’”⁴

Qatādah said, ‘because of my knowledge of enterprise and the methods of commerce.’⁵

Others said, ‘i.e. Allāh’s knowledge that I deserve it,’⁶ and this is the meaning of Mujāhid’s comment, ‘I have been given it because of my worth.’⁷

Abū Hurayrah reports that he heard the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ saying, “There were three people of the Children of Isrā’īl: a leper, a bald man, and a blind man. Allāh wanted to put them to test and so he sent an angel to them. He came to the leper and asked, ‘What would you like best?’ He said, ‘A good complexion, clear skin, and to have the thing that makes people loathe me removed.’ He touched him and his taint left him and he gave him a good complexion and clear skin. He asked, ‘What property do you covet most?’ He replied, ‘Camels (or he said: ‘cattle’ - the narrator, Ishāq, was uncertain),’ and so he gave him a pregnant she-camel and said, ‘May Allāh bless you in it.’

“Then he came to the bald man and asked, ‘What would you like best?’ He replied, ‘A good head of hair and to have the thing that makes people loathe me removed.’ So he touched him and removed what he had and gave him good hair. He asked, ‘What property do you covet most?’ He replied, ‘Cattle (or he said: camels),’ and so he gave him a pregnant cow and said, ‘May Allāh bless you in it.’

“Then he went to the blind man and asked, ‘What would you like best?’ He said, ‘That Allāh return my sight to me so that I can see people.’ He touched him and Allāh returned his sight to him. He asked, ‘What property do you covet most?’ He replied, ‘Sheep,’ and he gave him a pregnant sheep.

“These animals all gave birth and produced offspring. The one had a valley full of camels, the other a valley full of cattle, and the other a valley full of sheep.

“Then (the angel) went to the leper taking his form and appearance and said, ‘I am a poor man who has lost his means on his journey. Today I can seek none but Allāh and then you. I ask you, by the One who gave you a good complexion, good skin, and property, for a camel on which I can complete my journey.’ (The leper) offered the pretext, ‘I have many obligations,’ upon which (the angel) observed, ‘I seem to recognise you. Were you not a poverty stricken leper that people found unclean, and then Allāh, Mighty and Magnificent, gave you wealth?’ He said, ‘I inherited this property, elder son from elder son.’ He said, ‘If you are a liar in your claim, may Allāh return you as you were!’

“He then went to the bald man in his own form and appearance and said to him the same as he had said to the other and he replied to him in the same way. He said, ‘If you are a liar, may Allāh return you as you were!’

“Then he went to the blind man in his own form and appearance and said to him, ‘I am a poor man who has lost his means on his journey. Today I can seek none but Allah and then you. I ask you by the One who returned your sight to you for a sheep with which I can complete my journey.’ He said, ‘I was blind and Allāh restored my sight to me, so take what you want and leave what you want. By Allāh, I will not be hard on you about anything which you take for Allāh.’ He said, ‘Keep your property. You have all been tested and Allāh is pleased with you and displeased with your companions.’” It was recorded by Bukhārī and Muslim.⁸

Issues

1. The exegesis of the verse.
2. The meaning of, “*This is my due.*”
3. The meaning of, “*I have only been given it because of knowledge I have.*”
4. The important lessons contained in this wonderful story.

Commentary

The author quoted the verse of *al-Fuṣṣilat* as his chapter heading.⁹

Allāh, Most High, says,

“And if We let him taste mercy from Us after he has suffered hardship, he says, ‘This is my due. I do not think that the Hour is going to come, and if I am returned to my Lord, I will definitely find the best reward with Him.’ But We will inform those who are disbelievers of what they did and make them suffer a ruthless punishment.”

The author, may Allāh have mercy on him, mentioned the explanations of ibn `Abbās and other exegetes which suffice to elucidate the meaning of the verse.

Mujāhid said, ‘This is result of my deeds and I am fully deserving of it.’ Ibn `Abbās said, ‘i.e. this is from me.’

Allāh, Most High, says,

“He said, ‘I have only been given it because of knowledge I have.’”

Qatādah said, ‘because of my knowledge of enterprise and the methods of commerce.’ Others said, ‘i.e. Allāh’s knowledge that I deserve it,’ and this is the meaning of Mujāhid’s comment, ‘I have been given it because of my worth.’

Their comments are not contradictory or inconsistent; rather they were only mentioning individual cases subsumed by the meaning of the verse.¹⁰

Allāh, Most High, says,

“Then when We grant him blessings from us he says, ‘I have only been given this because of my knowledge.’ In fact it is a trial but most of them do not know it.”¹¹

al-`Imād ibn Kathīr said in exegesis to this verse,

He informs us that man, when faced with hardship and strife, humbles himself to Allāh [Mighty and Magnificent,] turns to Him in penitence, [and invokes Him]; then, when He grants

Him blessings, he transgresses and oppresses, saying, ***“I have only been given this because of my knowledge,”*** i.e. because of Allāh’s knowing that I am deserving of this. Were I not to hold a high status with Allāh, He would not have granted it to me. [Qatādah said, ***“Because of my knowledge,”*** because of my goodness.] Allāh, Most High, says in turn, ***“In fact it is a trial,”*** the matter is not as they think. We have only blessed him in this way in order to test him: will he be obedient or disobedient, despite the fact that We already know this. ***“In fact it is a trial,”*** a test ***“but most of them do not know it,”*** and this why they say what they say and claim what they claim. ***“Those who came before also said that,”*** i.e. many of those who came before them also said the same thing and made the same claim ***“but what they earned did not avail them,”*** their words were not correct, their hoarding did not avail them and neither did what they earned. [***“The evil deeds they earned caught up with them and the evil deeds which the wrongdoers among these people,”*** i.e. the addressees ***“earn will also catch up with them,”*** as they did with the former ***“and they can do nothing to prevent it,”***] an example of this lies in Allāh’s narrative concerning Qārūn,

“When his people said to him, ‘Do not gloat, Allāh does not love people who gloat. Seek the Abode of the Hereafter with what Allāh has given you, without forgetting your portion of this world, and do good as Allāh has been good to you. Do not seek to cause corruption in the earth for Allāh does not love the corrupters.’ He said, ‘I have only been given it because of knowledge that I have.’ Did he not know that before him Allāh had destroyed generations with far greater strength than his and far more possessions? The evildoers will not be questioned about their sins.”¹²

And Allāh, Most High, says,

“They also said, ‘We have more wealth and more children, we are not going to be punished.’”¹³

Abū Hurayrah reports that he heard the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ saying, “There were three people of the Children of Isrā’īl: a leper, a bald man, and a blind man. Allāh wanted to put them to test and so he sent an angel to them. He came to the leper and asked, ‘What would you like best?’ He said, ‘A good complexion, clear skin, and to have the thing that makes people loathe me removed.’ He touched him and his taint left him and he gave him a good complexion and clear skin. He asked, ‘What property do you covet most?’ He replied, ‘Camels (or he said: ‘cattle’ - the narrator, Iṣḥāq, was uncertain),’ and so he gave him a pregnant she-camel and said, ‘May Allāh bless you in it.’ ...

al-Nāqāh al-`Ushrā` means a pregnant camel. *Antaja*, and in one narration, *nataja*: took care of its giving birth. The *nātij* to a camel is what a mid-wife is to a woman. *Wallada*: to take care of its birth, as such the *muwallid*, the *nātij*, and the *qābilah* have the same meaning. *Hībāl*: means. *Lā ajhaduka*: I will not make it hard on you by taking back whatever you take or ask of from my wealth. This was stated by Nawawī.

This is a great ḥadīth. The point to consider here is that the first two rejected the blessing of Allāh, they did not acknowledge that He granted it, neither did they attribute it to Him, nor did they carry out the right of Allāh upon them (concerning it). As such they were beset by (His) displeasure. The blind man, however, did acknowledge the blessing of Allāh and did attribute it to Him, he did fulfil the right of Allāh concerning it, and as such deserved the good-pleasure of Allāh by virtue of his being grateful. This is because he met the three pre-requisites of gratitude: acknowledging the blessing, attributing it to the Blesser, and employing it in ways that He loves.

al-`Allāmah ibn al-Qayyim said, ‘The foundation of gratitude is to acknowledge the blessing of the Blesser in all submissiveness, humility, and love of Him. Whoever does not acknowledge the blessing, and is instead ignorant of it, has not shown gratitude. Whoever acknowledges the blessing but does not acknowledge the Blesser has not shown gratitude. Whoever acknowledges

the blessing and the Blessor but rejects it, such as one who rejects that He has actually blessed him by granting it to him, has actually been ungrateful. Whoever acknowledges the blessing and the Blessor, and does not reject it, but does not submit to Him, love Him, or be pleased with Him has also not been grateful. Whoever acknowledges the blessing and the Blessor, accepts it, submits to Him, loves Him, is pleased with Him, and employs it in ways that are beloved to Him, in obedience to Him, it is this person who is grateful. Therefore gratitude must subsume the heart's knowledge and the deed that ensues from this knowledge, and that is to incline towards the Blessor, to love Him, and to submit to Him.¹⁴

“*makes people loathe me,*” by their hating to see him and be in his proximity.

¹ *Fuṣṣilat* (41): 50

² Ṭabarī, *Suyūfī, Durr al-Manthūr*

³ Qurṭubī

⁴ *al-Qaṣaṣ* (28): 78

⁵ Māwardī and Qurṭubī record this as an opinion of ibn `Īsā. Ibn Abī Ḥātim #17123 records this from Qatādah with the words, ‘due to the good and the knowledge that I possess.’ Suyūfī, *Durr al-Manthūr*, references it to `Abd ibn Ḥumayd, ibn al-Mundhir, and ibn Abī Ḥātim.

⁶ as stated by Suddī. Suyūfī, *Durr al-Manthūr*, said it was recorded by `Abdu'l-Razzāq, `Abd ibn Ḥumayd, ibn al-Mundhir, and ibn Abī Ḥātim #17125

⁷ Suyūfī, *Durr al-Manthūr*, said it was recorded by Ṭabarī, Firyābī, `Abd ibn Ḥumayd, and ibn al-Mundhir.

⁸ Bukhārī #3464-6653 and Muslim #2964

⁹ Shaykh Sulaymān, *Taysīr al-`Azīz*, said, ‘The purpose of this heading – and Allāh knows best – is to alert one to the fact that whatever blessings the servant receives, he receives by the pure grace and beneficence of Allāh, without his deserving it. The Lord blessed him out of His generosity, kindness, and beneficence. Therefore the servant should not think that he warranted it for, were he to know his self, its weakness, indigence, and dire need of its Originator and object of worship, were he to know that he cannot possibly survive for so much as the blink of an eye without Him, were he to know that were he left to himself he would not have the ability to even get a sip of water, let alone anything else, (he would come to this conclusion). However man is blinded by his oppressiveness and ignorance and does not realise this, unless Allāh was to cover him with His mercy.’

Shaykh Sa`dī, *al-Qawl al-Sadīd*, said, ‘The purpose of this chapter is to show that whoever thinks that the blessings and provision he has been granted came to him because of his own labour, initiative, and cleverness, or that he deserves them because of a right he presumes to have over Allāh, then such a person has negated *Tawḥīd*. This is because a true believer is one who acknowledges the blessings of Allāh, outwardly and inwardly. He lauds Allāh for them, attributes them to His grace and beneficence, and he employs them in the pursuit of obeying Him. He does not think that he has a right over Allāh, instead he knows that the right, in its entirety, belongs to Allāh and that he is nothing more than a servant, no matter how he looks at it. It is through this that faith and *Tawḥīd* is actualised and it is the opposite which effectuates ingratitude, self-conceit, and an arrogance (engendered from thinking that he holds a high status with Allāh), which is one of the greatest of pitfalls.’

Shaykh `Uthmān al-Tamīmī, *Faḥḥ al-Ḥamīd*, said, ‘Some of the scholars, may Allāh have mercy on them, said, “Conceit, tyranny, lordliness, and envy revolve around three words: I, mine, I have. The people of these words are the leaders in this. Iblīs, the accursed, said, “*I am better than him.*” Pharaoh, the greatest of tyrants, said, “*Does not the kingdom of Egypt belong to me? Do not these rivers flow under my control?*”

Qārūn said, “*I have only been given it because of knowledge I have.*” We ask Allāh to preserve us! Anyone who has these attributes has no portion in the Hereafter except the Fire, we take refuge with Allāh from it! Allāh, Most High, says, “*The abode of the Hereafter – We grant it to those who do not seek to exalt themselves in the earth or to cause corruption in it. The successful outcome is for those who have taqwā.*”^{*}

* Verses: *al-A`rāf* (7): 12, *al-Zukhruf* (43): 51, *al-Qaṣaṣ* (28): 78, and *al-Qaṣaṣ* (28): 83 respectively.

¹⁰ Ṭabarī: Allāh, Exalted is His mention, states that ‘if We were to remove the illness and hardship this disbeliever is facing, lift the trying times and straitened circumstances he finds himself in, by way of mercy from Us, and, in its place, gift him with well-being, provide him with wealth, and relax his circumstances, he would say “*this is my due,*” with Allāh because Allāh is well-pleased with me, my deeds, and what I do.’

Qurṭubī: “*And if We let him taste mercy from Us,*” well-being, ease, richness “*after he has suffered hardship,*” harm, illness, trying times, poverty “*he says, ‘This is my due,*” this is something I deserve from Allāh, he thinks that the blessing is an obligation upon Allāh, Most High, to give. He does not realise that He has tested him with the blessing and hardship to ascertain his gratitude and patience. Ibn `Abbās said, “*‘This is my due’* means that this is from me.” “*I do not think that the Hour is going to come, and if I am returned to my Lord, I will definitely find the best reward with Him,*” i.e. Paradise. He hopes for great things, but without the necessary deeds, as such his hopes are vain. al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad ibn `Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib said, ‘The disbeliever has two vain hopes: in this world and the Hereafter. In this world he says, “*and if I am returned to my Lord, I will definitely find the best reward with Him,*” and in the Hereafter he says, “*Oh! If only we could be sent back again,*”, “*Oh, if only I were dust,*” “*But We will inform those who are disbelievers of what they did*” so as to requite them “*and make them suffer a ruthless*” severe “*punishment.*”

* Verses: *al-An`ām* (6): 27, *al-Naba`* (78): 40

Abū Ḥayyān: “*And if We let him taste mercy from Us,*” the blessing has been referred to as mercy because it ensues from Allāh’s mercy “*after he has suffered hardship, he says, ‘This is my due,*” resulting from my efforts and my hard work, he does not consider that it is from Allāh, or he thinks that it belongs to him and will never part with him, “*I do not think that the Hour is going to come,*” we do not think that we will resurrected and we think that what the Messengers came with concerning it will not happen. Allāh, Most High, states that they said “*We have no idea what the Hour is, we have only been conjecturing. We are by no means certain.*”^{*} “*and if I am returned to my Lord,*” if what the Messengers claim does actually happen “*I will definitely find the best reward with Him,*” i.e. the best state of blessing and grace, just as Allāh blessed me in this world. They stressed this by taking an oath and by bringing the words “*I will definitely find*” before the noun of *inna*, adding the *lām* of emphasis to the noun. Further emphasis is given through mention of the word *al-ḥusnā* which is the feminine of the superlative, *al-aḥsan*, as opposed to mentioning *ḥasanah*. “*But We will inform those who are disbelievers of what they did*” of evil deeds, a metonymy, *kināya*, indicating that they will be requited for them “*and make them suffer a ruthless*” a metonymy indicating severe “*punishment.*”

* *al-Jāthiyah* (45): 32

¹¹ *al-Zumar* (39): 49

¹² *al-Qaṣaṣ* (28): 76-78

¹³ *Saba`* (34): 35

¹⁴ Ibn al-Qayyim, *Madārij al-Sālikīn*, vol. 2, pp. 135-144

Ibn al-Qayyim, *Madārij*, vol. 2, pg. 244, said, ‘*Shukr* is to display the effects of the blessings of Allāh upon the tongue by way of praise and acknowledgment; in the heart by way of witnessing and love; and upon the limbs by way of submission and obedience.’

Fairozabādī, *Baṣa`ir Dhawī`l-Tamyīz*, said that *shukr* was built upon five pillars: submission to the One who gave the blessings; loving Him; acknowledging His blessing; praising Him for it; and not using it in any way that may displease Him.

Ibn Ḥajr, *Fath*, vol. 11, pg. 311, said, ‘*Shukr* comprises *ṣabr* upon obedience and away from disobedience. Some of the Imāms said that *ṣabr* necessitates *shukr* and cannot be completed without it, and the opposite; hence if one of them goes so too does the other. It is obligatory upon whoever is in a state of receiving favours to show *ṣabr* and *shukr*; *ṣabr* from disobedience. It is also obligatory upon whoever is in a state of trial to show *ṣabr* and *shukr*; *shukr* by establishing the rights of Allāh during that trial. Indeed servitude is due to Allāh in times of tribulation and in times of ease.’