Cultivating the Love of Allah

Sheikh Salman al-Oadah

A heart filled with the love of Allah is a heart that finds peace and tranquility. Allah says: “Indeed, by the remembrance of Allah do the hearts find contentment.” [*Sûrah al-Ra`d*: 28]

Allah promises those who believe and work righteousness that he will give them a life of goodness. He says: “Whoever works righteousness, man or woman, and has faith, verily to him we will give him a life that is good and pure.” [*Sûrah al-Nahl*: 97]

This life which is good and pure is by way of the radiance of one’s spirit, the coolness of one’s eyes, and the happiness of one’s heart towards Allah. Religion faith provides solace to the soul’s pain. It is the physician that cures our tears and our emotional wounds.

From our love for Allah stems our love for His Messengers, His Prophets, and His angels, Our love for Allah makes us love His righteous servants among our fellows. We want to be with those who love Him, associate with them, and adopt their good ways and manners.

From our love for Allah stems a desire to exhibit goodness to all of Creation. This desire manifests itself in our good words, our good deeds, our supplications, and our help. This in itself is a reason for happiness and contentment. Those who go forth to help others and fulfill their needs are the people with the most happiness and fulfillment in their lives.

The love for Allah comes by way of keeping His Book as a dear companion – by reading it, contemplating its meanings, and acting upon its teachings. Such companionship of the Qur’ân means that the reader is always with it. Whenever he completes one chapter, he moves on to another. He never finishes reading the Qur’ân except with the intention of starting again.

A person’s love for Allah is expressed through his love for prayer, since this is the way the soul can travel to its Lord. It brings rest to the spirit. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said to Bilâl: “Call the prayer, so that we may find rest in it.” [*Sunan Abî Dâwûd* (4985)]

Prayer safeguards us from sin and wrongdoing. Allah says: “Establish prayer, for prayer restrains from shameful and false deeds.” [*Sûrah al-`Ankabût*: 45]

We show our love to Allah by constantly seeking His forgiveness and by constantly striving to draw nearer to Him. A Muslim never despairs of Allah’s mercy and he never see his sins to be greater than Allah’s forgiveness. Indeed, Allah forgives all sins.

Allah says: “No one despairs of Allah’s mercy except those who have no faith.” [*Sûrah Yûsuf*: 87]

Allah says: “And who despairs of the mercy of Allah except those who are astray?” [*Sûrah al-Hijr*: 56]

Our penitence includes our repeatedly seeking Allah’s forgiveness with the prescribed wording for doing so while keeping the meaning of what we are saying clear in our minds. We must recognize and acknowledge our shortcomings before Allah. We should feel acutely how much we need Him and how much we must rely on Him at every moment of our lives.

We show our love for Allah by being aware of the numerous blessings He has bestowed upon us, despite all our sins and shortcomings.

A worshipper of Allah should never forget supplication. It is a door that is always open and never closed. Allah says: “Call upon Me. I will answer you.” [*Sûrah Ghâfir*: 60]

Allah says: “If My servants asks you about Me, for indeed I am near. I answer the supplication of the supplicant when he calls upon Me.” [*Surah al-Baqarah*: 186]

We must beseech our Lord in humility at every possible occasion and express our need of Him. Our hearts should be tied to Allah. We should wake up and pray to Him during the last third of the night, which is a special and most precious time for our worship. We should beseech Allah during the last hour of the afternoon on Friday and between the two calls of every prayer.

We should be careful that all of our sustenance is lawful and good. We should uphold our ties of kinship and honor our parents. We should respect the honor and wealth of our fellow human beings and never transgress against them.

We should receive in our hearts the glad assurance of the good that is bestowed by the One who when He wills something, just says “Be!” and it is.

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Is Allah Pleased with Me?

by Sheikh Sâlih al-Zahrânî

It should be known that obedience to Allah is one of the chief reasons for attaining Allah’s pleasure, while disobedience to Him is a reason for being subject to His wrath. This point is emphasized repeatedly in the Qur’ân and Sunnah.

Allah says: “And He is pleased with Islam for you as a religion.” [*Sûrah al-Mâ’idah*: 3].
He says: “And He is not pleased with ingratitude in His servants; and if you are grateful, He is pleased with this in you.” [*Sûrah al-Zumar*: 7]

Allah is pleased with those who are truthful. Allah says: “Allah will say: This is the day when their truth shall benefit the truthful ones; they shall have gardens beneath which rivers flow to abide therein for ever: Allah is well pleased with them and they are well pleased with Allah; this is the mighty achievement.” [*Sûrah al-Mâ’idah*: 119]

He is pleased with the believers. Allah says: “Their reward with their Lord is gardens of perpetuity beneath which rivers flow, abiding therein for ever; Allah is well pleased with them and they are well pleased with Him; that is for those who fear their Lord.” [*Sûrah al-Bayyinah*: 8].

Allah is pleased with the soul that is firm on faith. Such a soul will be addressed in the Hereafter by the words: “Return to your Lord, well-pleased (with him), well-pleasing (to Him)” [*Sûrah al-Fajr*: 28]

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: “Allah’s being pleased is in the parent’s pleasure, and His displeasure is in the parent’s displeasure.” [*Sunan al-Tirmidhî* (1899)]

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said about the person being pleased with Allah’s decree: “Whoever is pleased, He will be pleased with him; and whoever is displeased, His displeasure will be upon him.” [*Sunan al-Tirmidhî* (2396)]

The Prophet (peace be upon him) also said: “The mostly hated among men to Allah is the one who is severe, facing others with enmity.” [*Sahîh al-Bukhârî* (2457) and *Sahîh Muslim* (2668)]

Allah is pleased with belief, with Islam, and with our acts of obedience. He likes the believers who obey Him and is pleased with them.

Allah hates and condemns unbelief, hypocrisy and all other forms of disobedience. He is displeased with the unbelievers and hypocrites in all of their guises.

This is the overarching principle with respect to Allah being pleased or displeased with us. However, we should not think it is easy to use this principle to make assessments about actual people.

We cannot describe an individual by saying that Allah is pleased with him or displeased with him on the basis of our assessment of that person’s obedience or disobedience. Such a statement cannot be made about someone without direct evidence from the Islamic sources. By making such an audacious statement about someone without direct evidence form the Qur’ân and Sunnah, we are making a claim about the Unseen and giving a ruling from ourselves that is only for Allah to give.

A person may do what appears to the people to be good, but he may face an evil end. In this case Allah is not pleased with him. Another person may do what appears to the people to be evil, but he may face a good end. Then Allah will be pleased with him.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: “By Him besides whom there is no god, one of you will act like the people of Paradise until between him and Paradise there remains but the distance of a cubit, when what is written overtakes him and he begins to act like the denizens of Hell and thus enters Hell. And another amongst will act in the way of the denizens of Hell, until there remains between him and Hell a distance of a cubit, then what is written overtakes him and then he begins to act like the people of Paradise and enters Paradise.” [*Sahîh al-Bukhârî* (3208) and *Sahîh Muslim* (2643)]

We cannot make any declaration about the fate of someone in particular. However, we hope for the person whom we see performing good deeds and obeying Allah that Allah is pleased with him. Likewise, we fear for the person whom we see committing evil deeds and acts disobedience that he is earning Allah’s displeasure.

It is worth saying that works alone are not sufficient to earn Allah’s pleasure. Works need to be accompanied by true belief and faith in Allah.

Allah says about the deeds of the unbelievers: “And We shall turn to whatever deeds they did (in the worldly life), and We shall make such deeds as floating dust scattered about.” [*Sûrah al-Furqân*: 23]

When the Prophet (peace be upon him) was asked about one of the polytheists who died on unbelief, whether or not his good deeds and the help he gave to poor and needy will be of any benefit to him before Allah, he replied: “No. He had never said ‘Allah is my Lord’.”

A person should never be proud of his acts and think that Allah is pleased with him and has accepted his good deeds. Our deeds are assessed in the final outcome.

The Pious Predecessors used to fear that Allah would be displeased with them and would not accept their good works. One of them said: “If Allah accepts my work, I would like to die, because Allah says: ‘Allah only accepts from those who guard (against evil)’.” (The verse he quoted was to Sûrah al-Mâ’idah: 27.)

Likewise, we should not give a decision on behalf of Allah and decide for ourselves that Allah is displeased with a particular person or that He will not forgive that person.

The exception to this is where we have direct textual evidence attesting to Allah’s pleasure or displeasure at a certain individual.

For instance, we have clear evidence that Allah is pleased with the Companions. Allah says: “And (as for) the foremost, the first of the Muhâjirîn and the Ansâr, and those who followed them in goodness, Allah is well pleased with them and they are well pleased with Him, and He has prepared for them gardens beneath which rivers flow, to abide in them for ever; that is the mighty achievement.” [*Sûrah al-Tawbah*: 100]

The same applies particularly to the Companions who participated in the oath of *Ridwân* under the tree at Hudaybiyah. Allah says: “Certainly Allah was well pleased with the believers when they swore allegiance to you under the tree, and He knew what was in their hearts, so He sent down tranquility on them and rewarded them with a near victory.” [Sûrah al-Fath: 18]

Allah declares that he is pleased with His Prophet Ishmael (peace be upon him). Allah says: “And he enjoined on his family prayer and almsgiving, and was one in whom his Lord was well pleased” [*Sûrah Maryam*: 55].
And some of those whom Allah is displeased with and whom He has openly cursed are: Satan, Pharaoh, Hâmân, Qârûn and Abû Lahab.

We ask refuge with Allah from displeasing Him and beseech Him to guide us aright and bless us to attain his pleasure

Our Sins after We Repent from Them

Sheikh Salman al-Oadah

The Qur’ân and Sunnah speak frequently and emphatically about the fact that a worshipper who repents and asks forgiveness for his sins will be forgiven and will not be asked about those sins again. In fact, Allah tells us that those sins will be exchanged for good deeds.

Allah says: “Except those who repent and believe and work righteous deeds, for them Allah will change their evil deeds to good deeds, and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.” [*Sûrah al-Furqân*: 70]

Ibn Kathîr discusses the issue of evil deeds being changed to good deeds in his *Tafsîr*, saying:

There are two opinions on what it means…The second opinion is that those evil deeds that have passed are turned into good deeds by way of the true and sincere repentance itself. This is because every time that person remembers what he had done, he regrets it, feels remorse, and seeks Allah’s forgiveness. In this way, the sin becomes an act of obedience. On the Day of Judgment, even if he finds those sins recorded against him, they do him no harm and are turned into good deeds on the page of his account. This is what is established by the Sunnah and by the statements related to us from the Pious Predecessors.

Here is the text of that hadîth:

Allah’s Messenger said: “Indeed, I know the last person to leave the Hellfire and the last person to enter Paradise. A man will be brought and it will be said: ‘Set aside his major sins and ask him only about his minor ones.’ It will be said to him: ‘On a certain day did you do such deeds and on a certain day did you do such a deed?’ He will say: ‘Yes’, unable to deny anything of it. Then it shall be said to him: ‘For you is a good deed for each of those evil deeds.’ Then he will say: ‘O My Lord! I did other things that I do not see (recorded) here!’”

Thereupon Allah’s Messenger (peace be upon him) laughed until we could see his molar teeth. [*Sahîh Muslim* (190)]

The human being, by nature, is prone to err. This is why the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: “Every descendant of Adam is oft to err, and the best of those who err are those who are oft to repent.” [*Sunan al-Tirmidhî* (2499) and *Sunan Ibn Mâjah* (4251)]

The Prophet (peace be upon him) also said: “If you were to not commit sins, Allah would remove you and replace you with a people who would commit sins and then seek Allah’s forgiveness, so Allah could forgive them.” [*Sahîh Muslim* (2749)]

Ibn al-Hanafiyyah relates from `Alî that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: “Indeed Allah loves the believing servant who falls into trials and then repents.” [*Musnad Ahmad* (605, 810) with a weak chain of transmission]

Ibn Hajar al-`Asqalânî mentions this statement in *Fath al-Bârî* with the wording: ‘The best of you are those of you who fall into trials and then repent.” quoting it from *Musnad al-Firdaws* from `Alî.

Therefore, we must make ourselves upright and not pine over our past faults. We must know that none of us are going to gain admission into Paradise by virtue of our deeds, but only by Allah encompassing us with his mercy and His grace.

The believer may very well at times be weak and indulgent. However, he does not establish himself upon a sin and he does not persist in his heedlessness. He neither despairs of Allah’s mercy nor sees renewal as hopeless. Instead, he resolves himself to seek Allah’s forgiveness and to follow up his evil deed with works of righteousness. He knows for certain that Allah is the Most Merciful of all and the best in forgiveness.

Allah’s mercy encompasses all things. Allah says: “Indeed the mercy of Allah is near to those who do good.” [*Sûrah al-A`râf*: 56]

We should resolve, then, to be from among those who do good.

We must make it our habit to remember Allah, to thank Him, and to seek His forgiveness, for indeed good deeds wipe away evil ones. If we slip and commit a sin, we must make sure not to follow it up with another sin.

Instead, we must hasten to what is good and wipe away the effect of that evil deed from our slate. We must cleanse our countenance of it and remove its pain from our souls.

The believer knows that he has no power on his own to turn from sin to obedience, from heedlessness to awareness, and from weakness to strength, except by the grace of Almighty Allah. Therefore, we ask Allah, by his grace and generosity, to turn us towards Him by his mercy, forgive us, and not to leave us to our own devices.

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How We Should Treat Each Other

Sheikh Khâlid al-Saq`abî

Islam teaches us how our relationships with one another should be. The most serious principle to be adopted in this regard is that of loving and hating for Allah’s sake. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: “Whoever loves for the sake of Allah, hates for the sake of Allah, gives for the sake of Allah, and forbids for the sake of Allah, has indeed perfected his faith.”

This is the most important principle that should govern our interpersonal relationships. It ensures that our relationships with other people are not based on personal interests or ulterior motives. A Muslim is not just thinking: What can I get out of it? Such shallow relationships continue only so long as there is some personal benefit to be had.
And come to an end when those interests are fulfilled

On the other hand, a relationship based on the love for the sake of Allah is an enduring relationship that will never come to an end, not even by death. It will continue forever. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: There are seven whom Allah will shade with His shade on the day when there is no shade but His shade…” and he mentioned among them: “… two men who love each other for the sake of Allah, meeting and parting for that reason alone.” [*Sahîh al-Bukhârî and Sahîh Muslim*].

Ibn Hajr, in his commentary on this hadîth, makes it clear that though it mentions men in its wording, women are most certainly included in its meaning.

There are numerous rights that people have over one another. These rights help to shape our relationships. I would briefly like to mention eight of these rights that we as Muslims should seriously strive to put into practice in our dealings with one another. I shall reinforce what I say with practical examples from the lives of our pious predecessors.

1. There is a financial right that we have over one another. Each one of us has the duty of providing financial support to someone who is in need of it. We do not, however, have to bring harm upon ourselves in doing so.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) informs us that Allah says: “My love became obligatory for those who give to each others for My sake.”

Yazîd b. `Abd al-Malik said: “I feel ashamed before Allah to ask Him to grant entry into Paradise for one of my brothers and then feel stingy to give him a gold or silver coin.”

2. We must likewise provide food and clothing for those who need it. May Allah bless Abû Sulaymân al-Dârânî who said: “If all the life of this world was contained in one morsel of food that was in my hand, then a brother approached me for it, I would love to give him that morsel.” He also said: “I may put a morsel of food into the mouth of my brother and find its taste in my own mouth.”

3. We must also support each other with our physical efforts and our labors. We should always be willing to lend a helping hand and to do something personally for the sake of someone else.

Muhammad b. Ja`far said: “I promptly do what my enemies want me to do, because I loathe that they should be disappointed with me.” If this is the case for our enemies, then how should our conduct be with our friends?

4. We must express our feelings of good will to others. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: “If any of you loves someone, let him tell him that.”

It is also right for us to defend the honor of another when someone tries to speak ill about him or her. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: “Whoever defends the reputation of his Muslim brother will have a right from Allah to defend him from Hell on the Day of Judgment.”

5. We must forgive and excuse each other’s mistakes and shortcomings. These mistakes might be deficiencies in a person’s religion – someone committing a sin – or they may be in the way that person treats us. In the first case, what is needed from us is sincere advice. It should be our ardent desire to try and guide our brother or sister back to what is right.

It was related from the lives of our pious predecessors that two brothers in religion were very close to each other, then one of them fell into sin. People encouraged the pious man to abandon his sinful friend. He refused to do so and said: “He needs me in this trial more than he has ever needed me before. I must help him and pray to Allah to return him back to how he used to be.”

As for any mistreatment we might experience at the hands of another, we should overlook it and remember that no one is perfect and we cannot expect from anyone that he will never exhibit to us bad behavior at some time or another.

6. We must pray for others both during their lives and after they die. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: “A Muslim’s secret supplication for his brother will be answered. There is an angel at his head each time he offers supplication for his brother the angel says: ‘Âmîn, and the same for you’.”[Sahîh Muslim]

The Companion Abû al-Dardâ’ said: “I offer supplication for seventy of my brethren while prostrating in prayer.”

7. We must be faithful in our relationships. Our faithfulness to one another is something that must continue even after a person dies by our keeping up contact with that person’s children and dear ones. Your love for that person was intended for the Hereafter, so if this love ceases when that person dies, then it never really existed.

It has been said that a little faithfulness after death is much more precious than a lot of faithfulness during life.

8. We must be easy in our dealings with people and not expect too much from them. It is not good to place burdens on people that will be hard or costly for them. Imam al-Fudayl said: “Often, when people abandon one another, it is because of the burdens that they impose on each another.” When people deal easily with each other, it increases the love that exists between them.

May Allah help us to put these principles into practice in our lives, and may He increase the love that we feel for each other for His sake.

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The Beauty of Our Speech Lies in its Honesty

Dr. Walîd Qassâf

The Prophet (peace be upon him) on many different occasions prohibited his followers from exaggeration and from speaking in an unnatural, pretensious manner, just as he forbid them from obstinacy and affected airs. All of these tendencies distance what we have to say from the truth and mark our words with the taint of dishonesty and impropriety. Our words in this way lose their ability to influence the hearts of others and instead provoke suspicions of hypocrisy, deception, and chicanery.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: “The obstinate in speech will meet with destruction.” [ *Sahîh Muslim* (2670)] and: “The excessive in speech will meet with destruction.” [ *Musnad Ahmad* (8085)]

The Prophet (peace be upon him) also said: “The most despised of you to me and the most remote from my company on the Day of Resurrection will be the prattlers, the braggarts, and the verbose.” [ *Sunan al-Tirmidhî* (2018)]

From an Islamic perspective, true eloquence of speech eschews contrivance and pretension. Such a manner of speaking, as we have already mentioned, belies any notion of genuineness, while demanding a deliberate and forced effort on the part of the speaker. It indicates neither a sound disposition nor a clear literary style.

As `Umar relates: “We were prohibited from putting on affected airs.” [ *Sahîh al-Bukhârî* (7293)]

Moreover, affected eloquence and verbosity, aside from sounding ugly and contrived, makes the speaker look like he wants to dupe others or at least get the better of them. Indeed, we find that the braggart or the verbose speaker only fills his mouth with words and gushes them forth out of ostentation and haughtiness, in an attempt to flaunt his eloquence.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) made this clear when he was asked: “We know what prattlers and braggarts are…but who are the verbose?”

To which he replied: “They are the prideful ones.” [ *Sunan al-Tirmidhî* (2018)]

The Prophet (peace be upon him) emphasized just how strongly forced and contrived speech should be shunned when he said: “Truly Allah detests the man of eloquence who rolls his tongue (in speech) like a cow rolls its tongue.” [ *Sunan Abî Dâwûd* (5005)]

A group of people approached the Prophet (peace be upon him) and spoke to him about a stillborn child that they were liable to pay compensation for. They objected to this liability, saying: “Pay we indemnity for one who neither ate nor drank nor cried, so as upon life it naught betook? Bade we not then its blood to overlook?”

The Prophet (peace be upon him) turned to them and said, lamenting their ostentation in speech and deriding their pretentious rhyming: “Are you rhyming in the manner of the people of ignorance?” [ *Sunan al-Nasâ'î* (4823)] In another narration, it reads “Are you rhyming in the manner of soothsayers?”

Pretentious speech and the hunt for the most wild, exotic, and unfamiliar words is contrary to good literary taste and balanced literary instincts. It is as far as one can get from a beautiful or elegant style. On the other hand, showing concern for perfecting one's speech, beautifying it, and judiciously choosing one's words carefully has nothing to do with the odious practices that the Prophet (peace be upon him) has warned us against. Al-Ghazâlî points out this distinction in his landmark work *Ihyâ `Ulûm al-Dîn* , wherein he explains how perfecting one's speech and being precise in one's choice of words is something desirable. Along with choosing words that are elegant and beautiful, they are the essentials of eloquence. Pretence and artifice, on the other hand are loathsome, since they actually bequeath to one's speech a sense of baseness and ignobility.

In this context, al-Ghazâlî discusses the Prophet's statement: “Indeed, in eloquent speech there is magic.” [ *Sunan Abî Dâwûd* (5007 and 5009)] He shows how this statement can be taken in two ways. In one way, it can be seen as implying a form of praise; in another, a type of censure. It is obvious how it implies praise. It is saying that eloquent speech has the ability to move people's hearts and can inspire them to accept the truth and respond favorably to it and to act upon it. As for the implication of censure – which is what some have understood from the statement – this is when a person resorts to pretence and to artifice in order to influence people and corrupt them, making falsehood seem like truth and making truth appear as falsehood. It is as if he employs in this way a bewitchment to take them from the truth, beguile them, and beautify the image of falsehood.

Al-Khattâbî writes in his commentary on this hadîth:

People have disagreed regarding its interpretation. Some have said that it is a condemnation of employing artifice in speech and the use of contrivance in embellishing and beautifying it in order to please one's listeners, influence their hearts, mislead them from what is clear, and beguile them…” [ *Ma`âlim al-Sunan* ]

Speech, when employed in this way, is a means of deception and of misrepresenting the truth by using the sugar-coating of artifice and the confusion of wordplay It is a bewitchment that takes souls away from the truth. It is related that the Prophet (peace be upon him) explicitly forbade employing speech for this purpose, saying: “Whoever learns the art of embellished speech to imprison with it the hearts of men, Allah will not accept from him on the Day of Resurrection any excuse or compensation.” [ *Sunan Abî Dâwûd* (5006) – with weakness in its chain of transmission]

From this we should be certain that the definitive qualities of the literary arts in Islam are honesty and the rejection of pretence, excess and exaggeration.

“This religion is easy…”

Sheikh Salman al-Oadah

Abû Hurayrah relates that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said “This religion is easy. No one becomes harsh and strict in the religion without it overwhelming him. So fulfill your duties as best you can and rejoice. Rely upon the efforts of the morning and the evening and a little at night and you will reach your goal.” [*Sahîh al-Bukharî*]

These words of the Prophet (peace be upon him) defines for us the concept of moderation in its proper Islamic context. When it comes to understanding the principles of Islamic Law, our definitions must be drawn from established sources and not purely from the discretion of the individual. Otherwise, our definition might yield a practical model that justifies nothing but itself. Many of our accepted and established principles have begun to take forms that represent only one narrow vision and that are unable to cope with the many demands of Islamic work and propagation.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) says: “*This religion is easy*.” Ease is moderation. So our religion is moderate and we as a nation of people are moderate.

Allah says: “Thus We have made you a moderate nation”. [*Sûrah al-Baqarah*: 143]

The Prophet (peace be upon him) then goes on to outline the defining qualities of moderation:

1. He says: “*So fulfill your duties…*” The Arabic word used is “*saddadû*” which literally means to aim to hit something on target, like how an arrow hits its mark. This tells us that moderation never entails going outside of Islamic Law. The rulings of Islamic Law must be derived from the Qur’ân and Sunnah. The idea of ease and moderation in no way implies a relaxation of Islamic Law, nor does it imply that a person can follow his own inclinations in either his religion or his general dealings. Therefore, if we lose sight of Islamic Law and its rulings, an important quality of moderation will invariably be lost.

2. Then he says: “*…as best you can…*” After providing the first quality of moderation, he complements it with this quality, so that those who are ill acquainted with the wisdom and purposes behind Islamic Law do not become insistent upon following a limited, personal vision in applying its rulings to themselves and others.

A person will not be able to fulfill his duties properly unless he realizes that he has limitations of mind and character that keep him from measuring up to those duties, no matter how clear and simple they may seem. Allah created Adam a creature with little self control. The human being cannot do anything perfectly without divine intervention, so this is why the Prophet (peace be upon him) says: “*…as best you can*”, to indicate that perfection is not what is expected.

We can go as far as to say that demanding perfection from people runs contrary to the principle of moderation that we are discussing. The principle of moderation requires us to recognize that perfection cannot be maintained or even achieved.

3. Then he says: “*…and rejoice*.” He does this after defining moderation with the idea of fulfilling one’s duties to the best of one’s ability, which defines moderation in an abstract sense. Then we are told to rejoice.

Since working for the religion is a way of fulfilling our duty to Allah and of obeying His Messenger, we can see the importance of the glad tidings being referred to in this hadîth. Most of the problems and difficulties that exist between people are the result of partisanship and biases rather than on matters that are necessitated by Islamic Law. This is why sincerity to Allah in our actions has to be one of the principles of moderation.

4. Finally, he says: “*Rely upon the efforts of the morning and the evening and a little at night and you will reach your goal*.” This shows us that one of the principles of moderation is to consider what is possible and to stay within those limits. This goes for an individual as well as for the environment in which he works. It also means that everyone should work within his own capacity and avoid being obstinate when dealing with others.

The principle of doing what is within one’s capabilities has both conceptual and practical dimensions. It means that we keep up our Islamic work while recognizing both the need for what we are doing and the limitations of our abilities. This gives us a good opportunity to embrace a large number of Islamic efforts of various types. We must never distance ourselves from others and their efforts unless they truly go against the established and indisputable principles and teachings of Islam. We should never do so on the basis of mere opinions and assumptions.

One of our problems is that the understanding of moderation that many people have does not comprise all four of these defining qualities. Some people overlook the need to adhere to Islamic Law in formulating their concept of moderation and come up with ideas that are ambiguous and ill-defined.

Others do just the opposite and go overboard in demanding perfection, though Allah demands from us only what is within our abilities, and that is with respect to the Law. Even less is expected of us in matters of juristic discretion. Today, however, many Muslims shun those who do not measure up to their opinions and views, and they are even more abhorrent to those who actually disagree with them.

It is regretful that they shun each other on the pretense of defending established Islamic principles – like the principle of moderation or the principle following the Qur’ân and Sunnah, or that of adhering to the ways of the pious predecessors. When they do this, they fail to make a distinction between the principles themselves and their own understanding of them. Therefore, they accuse each other of violating the principles of Islam without realizing that their disagreement has little to do with these principles, but more to do with their own interpretations.

The fact that many Islamic workers fail to understand the concept of moderation correctly is the reason why there is an inexcusable amount of confusion and contradictions to be found within the field of Islamic work today. We must praise Allah that, in spite of this problem, there is still a lot of good being carried out and there is still a lot of moderation and a lot that is praiseworthy.
*Adapted from “Understanding Moderation”*

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