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| **Date** | Saturday, October 31, 2015 |
| **Topic** | Worship |
| **Part** | 9 |

**Narrated Al-Mughira: The Prophet used to offer night prayers till his feet became swollen. Somebody said, to him: “Allah has forgiven you, your faults of the past and those to follow”. On that, he said, “Shouldn’t I be a thankful worshiper of Allah?**

Common misconceptions about prayers:

1. Prayer is to be performed in order to seek forgiveness of sins.
2. Prayer is to be performed to get some compensation.

An often heard response to the above hadith: We understand that the 5 daily required prayers, but why do you do so many extra despite the fact that all your sins have been forgiven?

* The Prophet was just acknowledging his state of being and expressing his feelings.
* *What is this teaching me?* Prayer is about being THANKFUL worshipper of God.
* No matter how much I acknowledge His past and the present favors upon me is all for my past feelings. I have to renew my acknowledgment about my feelings, my conclusions about my existence and the existence of the other beings, my life and the innumerable bounties he bestows on me right now. The Prophet is teaching me to be more responsive in acknowledging my reality i.e. my thankfulness to the Creator.

***How can I become a thankful worshipper of God?***

* Seize every opportunity to acknowledge your reality.
* If you really feel that you are a CREATED being and that everything is given to you by your Creator, you cannot help but be in a state of thankfulness.

The challenging part for anyone is to realize their utmost dependence on Him. *How do I get to that state?* Start questioning your existence. *Where is my existence coming from?* Someone is giving me existence. There must be a reason that I am given existence. *What is that reason...?*

* Living in consciousness of this createdness is sufficient enough to get us to express our thankfulness to the Creator.

Example: You want something:

* The only One who can guarantee and give it to you is Him and we see the wisdom prevalent all over the universe.
* While I cannot guarantee anything, I know that my Creator knows my desire.
* **Knowing is not enough, I need to express it.** I need to connect my existence to the Source that is the only way I can be in peace within myself. Question the Source of existence of everything around you, and you shall discover that everything points to the One who is giving you existence. Everything in the universe is a point of reference to the Source.

Lack of understanding of worship comes from the lack of understanding of the nature of belief. The notion of ‘worship’ is missing from our understanding of belief if we reduce prayer to the forms of actions only.

* We cannot separate *iman* (belief) and worship
* Analogy: If there is no tree, there would be no fruit.
* We cannot grow a fruit without the tree.
* If we want the fruit (result) we need to grow and feed the tree (*iman*)
* We think that *iman* is a one-time event. But in reality, *iman* needs our constant attention.

Fasting on Ashura or Thursdays/Mondays is like an envelope

* We need to fill the envelope with something meaningful
* The Prophet, through his example, is telling us that we need to fill our envelopes with thankfulness, teaching us how to use the envelope (opportunity-any kind of ritual)
* They have been sent to guide us so that we may know, for example, which days are the ‘envelopes’ for fasting and how we should fill in the envelope.
* We should not get obsessed with details about the envelope BUT rather we ought to concern ourselves with what we fill in the envelope.

Prayers (and other ritualistic actions) are assumed to be an act done when we are seeking something.

* If I pray, I will get something
* Almost like a spiritual transaction
* We need to focus on the ‘contents’ of our envelopes
* Envelopes: Rituals, Holy Days, etc.
* Contents: Awareness and sense of recognition of our existence

Again, going back to the hadith above, the point in worshipping has nothing to do with asking to be forgiven. When you realize your mistake, acknowledge it and work on yourself i.e. not fall into it again. The purpose of worship is to be a thankful worshipper of God i.e. I am just acknowledging my status and expressing my feeling. Worship has to do with my understanding of my state of being: the recognition of my stance and His stance.

Continuation: *The Words, page 54, fifth point (fourth paragraph)*

**“As for the time of ‘Asr in the afternoon, it calls to mind the melancholy season of autumn and the mournful state of old age and the somber period at the end of time. It is also when the matters of the day reach their conclusion, and the time the Divine bounties which have been received that day like health, well-being and beneficial duties have accumulated to form a great total, and the time that proclaims through the mighty sun hinting by starting to sink that man is a guest-official and that everything is transient and inconstant. Now, the human spirit desires eternity and was created for it; it worships benevolence, and is pained by separation. Thus, anyone who is truly a human being may understand what an exalted duty, what an appropriate service, what a fitting way to repay a debt of human nature, indeed, what an agreeable pleasure it is to perform the afternoon prayer. For by offering supplications at the Eternal Court of the Everlasting Pre-Eternal One, the Eternally Self-Subsistent One, it has the meaning of taking refuge in the grace of unending, infinite mercy, and by offering thanks and praise in the face of innumerable bounties, of humbly bowing before the mightiness of his dominicality, and by prostrating in utter humility before the everlastingness of his Godhead, of finding true consolation of heart and ease of spirit, and being girded ready for worship in the presence of His grandeur.”**

To reduce religion to a set of commandments is such a ridiculous position to be in

* The Creator does not just issue commands
* Rather, He educates us on how we ought to live
* The Quran cannot be read as a book of commandments

Guest-official: I am not permanent, I am appointed for a certain period.

Clock analogy:

* We do not see the hour hand moving, but we know it is by observing the second hand moving, which represents a day in our lives.
* Similarly, through the observation of life and death in this universe, we can be sure that I will be recreated in a different form
* The order-er of this universe is teaching me that this world is transient in its entirety
	+ Everything is changing with different frequencies
* I, too, will rise in a different and new form

Our experience of night and day is a perfect way to understand our transient and continuously changing reality.

* The Creator is teaching me that at some point the sun, moon, galaxy, stars, etc will ALL pass
* Everything is created and exists by His Will

Every day we get hungry and we feed ourselves.
Every day we clean ourselves and get dirty again.
Every day we go to sleep and wake up in the morning.

* We constantly see the cycles in this universe
* The existence of this life is such that everything is created, subjected to change (dirt, sleep, death), and a new form gets created again (cleanliness, morning, life in a new form)
* Everything around us is being given existence and then we see that it passes in one form but is re-created in another form
* This universe is also an act of creation and it will come to an end and there will be a new morning created in another form
* In the Quran, we are told that there will be a NEW CREATION (*khalkun jadid*) as a response to the human beings’ given desire for an eternal happiness in a constant creation, i.e. not transient.

The seed of our existence is our soul

* We experience it within ourselves that we dislike for things to end
* We seek ‘eternal happiness’ and ‘perfection’
* This seed will grow into the tree of *tuba*

I love this life, yet it must come to an end

* We have to search for the meaning of this life
* If things really come to an end, this life is absolutely meaningless but that is a contradiction
* Death cannot be an end of existence
* Life should continue but in a different form, not like the one we are experiencing here which is subject to transience.

Each single day we are given an opportunity to experience the transience of this universe and the reality that a permanent abode awaits.

* *How?*
* Through the various cycles of change and re-creation we observe all around us.

We need to fill the envelope of the ‘asr prayer’ with our desire for eternity

* During the time of asr we can most evidently feel that impending arrival of ‘death’
* When we pray, we ought to express our desire for eternal life
* Do not just pray *asr* for the sake of praying (that would be akin to mailing out an empty envelope)