

The Blessings of Allah (God) (Author: Rizwan Ahmed) – **SPEECH NOTES**

In the name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, The Most Merciful

I hope that this will be a reminder for myself and all of us. I will also be using the words Allah and God interchangeably.

While thinking about this topic what occurred to me that this is something we take for granted. Our environment has become so artificial now that we are losing the ability to be grateful for favours of God. We have become distracted by the internet, television and the fast pace of life in the concrete artificiality we have created for ourselves. Sometimes there are blessings that are obvious to us and some not.

We tend to look at blessing from a materialistic point of view – how much money do we have, how fast a car do we drive, how big a house etc. Without these people feel unblessed.

Rather than look at what blessings God has bestowed up on us we start looking at what He hasn't given to us. We are always in a state of wanting more and not being satisfied with what we have. For example we overlook the fact that the majority in this country have food, shelter, clothing, clean running water etc. Whereas in other parts of the world they would do anything to share this blessing with us.

The reality of course is that our lives are a continuous succession of Allah's gifts. Many people, due to their outlook on life or their circumstances, fail to see that they are receiving Allah's bounty. Allah has made it clear that we will never be able to count all of His blessings upon us, since they are innumerable.

In the Qur'an God gets us to look outside of that and talks about various blessings such as the rain he sends in due measure, the blessings of our hearing, sight and understanding and reasoning. Planets swimming along in their perfect orbits, mountains that help keep the Earth stable and many more things.

In Islam recognising and acknowledging Gods favours is important.

Part of this acknowledgement is recognising that God and is our sole creator, sustainer, cherisher and the provider of all our needs and entirely independent of the creation in fulfilling this.

God asks us to remember his blessings on us and be grateful for them.

QURAN

And if you were to count Allah's favors, you would not be able to number them; most surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. [Sūrah al-Nahl 16: 18]

QURAN

And He gives you of all that you ask Him; and if you count Allah's favors, you will not be able to number them; most surely man is very unjust, very ungrateful. - Qur'an (14:34)

HADITH:

The Prophet (SAW) said:

“Allah is pleased with a person who eats some food and then praises Him for it, or who drinks some drink and then praises Him for it.”

EXAMPLES

Many to choose from but just looking at some of these blessings such as sight:

This is something we take for granted until something happens to us.

Just to highlight the weight of the blessing of eyesight from one tradition:

There is a tradition where a man will be come before God on the day of judgement:

There was once a man who had spent his whole life in piety. He came on the Day of Judgement with a mountain of good deeds, confident of his having earned his way to Paradise. The angels asked him whether he wanted to go Paradise by Allah's mercy or by virtue of his good deeds. Since he had spent his whole life doing good, he felt confident and said that he would like go to Paradise by virtue of his deeds. So the angels put his mountain of good deeds on one side of the scale and on the other side put his two eyes. The weight of his two eyes sent all his good deeds flying into the air.

This example alone shows us how precious the gift of sight is in that the man's mountain of good deeds was nothing compared to the blessings of his sight.

This blessing is so precious that in a narration from the Prophet (SAW) we are told that the reward for the person who bears the loss of their eye sight with patience is Paradise.

Another blessing is clean running water. We just have to turn a tap to receive clean water but there are people around the world who will walk miles for water to drink that we wouldn't even consider bathing in let alone drinking.

Or even we look out our bodies – we have around 37 trillion cells in the body – each a micro ecosystem in itself but it perfectly communicates not only internally with the various processes taking place within it but also with thousands of other cells in the body. This all take place without us being aware in the slightest. We breathe for the most part without effort. Our heart beats without conscious effort. Imagine if we had to consciously coordinate these things. We simply would not be able to manage.

It is only when things go wrong sometimes that we appreciate a blessing and realise we tend to take things for granted. Years ago I used to suffer from sciatica from 2002 to 2008 and used to walk in pain and with a limp. I was ill like this for six years. When I went on the Hajj in 2008 I drank Zam Zam water to be cured and got better in one day. This is because the Prophet (SAW) told us that Zam Zam water is for whatever it is drunk for. So I drank with the intention of being cured of my bad back and got better in day and have not suffered since.

The thing that struck me most is that now that I could walk normally again I realised in all that time I had actually forgotten what it felt like to walk without a limp or pain. Walking with a limp and pain had become the norm for me. Now that I could walk again it felt like a brand new sensation. This highlighted how much for granted I had taken the act of walking. The reason I had forgotten is that I never savoured or appreciated the ability to walk without pain or a limp in the first place and recognise this as a blessing from Allah.

It took me to become ill and get better again to appreciate even that blessing.

Even thinking about a simple cold. When we get a cold, we lose our sense of taste. Eating then becomes a task rather than a pleasure, as we can't taste food anymore. Once we get that sense of taste back we are grateful we can taste and enjoy our food again.

Another time to appreciate blessings is Ramadhan. Ramadhan is a time to get closer to God and be grateful – a time to shed negative behaviour and develop positive behaviour and become a better human and a part of that is to be appreciative of what we have as well as trying to get closer to God.

It is a time of reflection and turning back to our creator but also a time to acknowledge and be thankful for the blessings of God. We have food, running water etc when we break our fast and are fortunate to have this but there are millions around the world who are perpetually fasting because of their situation and not by choice. I'm ashamed to say every year Ramadhan is a wake up call for me as I myself am reminded after experiencing hunger and then eagerly waiting to break my fast at sunset that there are people around the world who feel like this every day. It is only then I feel blessed that I have food and water to break my fast with. The plight of those less well off around the world truly hits me and like many others suddenly find myself being a lot more charitable during this month.

From an Islamic perspective one the greatest blessing of all is having faith and a close relationship with God. It is not all about material gain.

HADITH

Prophet Mohammed (SAW) said

Richness is not having many belongings, but richness is the richness of the soul (contentment).

Being satisfied and content with what one has. This then leads us on to consider that sometimes there maybe things we perceive in the negative but may actually be blessings in disguise.

BLESSINGS IN DISGUISE

On another note we should also recognise that there may be blessings come our way but we simply don't recognise. – a blessing in disguise if you will.

There may be hidden blessings in that maybe sometimes a calamity we are unaware of is about to befall us but God brushes it aside for us. We will never thank him for it but He has done so out of His Infinite Mercy.

I've always remembered once when I was walking I saw a woodlice in my path that I stepped over to avoid squashing it. I chose not to step on it out of natural compassion to avoid kill a living creature and to please Allah. Afterwards it occurred to me that the woodlice was completely unaware as to how close it came to being squashed. But that woodlice will never thank me for saving it or be aware how close it was to having it's existence come to an end. Which comes back to the point of how often does Allah save us from a calamity that he has brushed aside from us that we are not even aware and will never even thank Him for.

Sometimes for example calamities or hardship we endure can also be a blessing. How often do we find that when going through adversity that we come out wiser and stronger at the end of it.

From a faith perspective in Islam, calamities and trials can be seen as a blessing in that they are seen as purification from sins when borne with patience and can also elevate our status in the hereafter

HADITH

The Prophet (SAW) said, "No fatigue, nor disease, nor sorrow, nor sadness, nor hurt, nor distress befalls a Muslim, even if it were the prick he receives from a thorn, but that Allah expiates some of his sins for that."

So even calamity is seen as a blessing especially if that calamity acts as not only a purification but more importantly it causes us to turn back to God which is a blessing in itself.

The fact that God sent the calamity your way to wake you up as a reminder should make us feel happy as out if His Mercy, He is trying to help you make your way back to Him.

Essentially He is tapping you on the shoulder to give you a reminder.

As I mentioned earlier one of the greatest blessings is having a close relationship with God and if God Himself is calling you back we should feel happy.

In closing once we recognise blessings of God then we should also then show gratitude for them.

SHOWING GRATITUDE FOR BLESSINGS:

This gratitude may be in the heart, in submission and humility; on the tongue, in praise and acknowledgement; and in the physical faculties, by means of obedience and submission.

We can also thank God by using the blessing we have been granted to service the rest of creation

Using these gifts for good things and not bad or sinful things especially if you recognise that ultimately they are a gift or a blessing from God and technically still belong to Him as our creator.

For example we would not be happy if we lent someone a laptop and found that the person that borrowed it had used it to view things that they shouldn't be viewing in the same vein the gifts we have we should also use wisely and for good.

We are also taught that we will be asked about these blessings and how we used them. We will be asked on the day of judgement about how we used our eyes, our ears, our understanding etc.

But as I mentioned we can use them to serve creation:

Just to share two saying from the Prophet Muhammed (SAW) which emphasise the importance of serving creation.

HADITH

The Prophet (SAW) said:

"The best of people are those that bring most benefit to the rest of mankind." [Daraqutni, Hasan]

HADITH

He also said:

"The most beloved of people according to Allah is he who brings most benefit, and the most beloved of deeds according to Allah the Mighty, the Magnificent, is that you bring happiness to a fellow Muslim, or relieve him of distress, or pay off his debt or stave away hunger from him. It is more beloved to me that I walk with my brother Muslim in his time of need than I stay secluded in the mosque for a month. Whoever holds back his anger, Allah will cover his faults and whoever suppresses his fury while being able to execute it, Allah will fill his heart with satisfaction on the Day of Standing. Whoever walks with his brother Muslim in need until he establishes that for him, Allah will establish his feet firmly on the day when all feet shall slip. Indeed, bad character ruins deeds just as vinegar ruins honey." [Tabarani, Hasan]

So these are encouragements to share what we have with others to benefit others whether though our wealth, our time or health.

HADITH

Ibn Abbas reported: The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "There are two blessings which many people waste: health and free time."

Finally it also worth remembering a blessing is not an end; rather, it is a means to an end. As its purpose is to encourage men and women to offer greater thanksgiving and hopefully get closer to God and ultimately earn Paradise.

Ending with verse of Qur'an:

And if you were to count Allah's favors, you would not be able to number them; most surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. [Sūrah al-Nahl 16: 18]