

Dhikr - Remembrance of Allah

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From: *Kitab at-Tasheel li 'Uloom at-Tanzeel'* - "The Sciences of Tafsir"¹

Sa'id ibn al-Musayyab said, "Its meaning is 'Remember Me with obedience and I will remember you with reward!'" It has been said that it means 'Remember Me with supplication and glorification and the like of that.'

The commentators, particularly the Sufis, have said a great deal in commentary on this subject using words with restricted and qualified meanings, and there is no proof of restriction. In general this ayah is an explanation of the nobility of *dhikr*, which the saying of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, made clear, as he narrated it from his Lord, "I am in My slave's opinion of Me, and I am with him when he remembers Me. If he remembers Me in himself, I remember him in My self. If he remembers Me in an assembly, I will remember him in an assembly better than them"

There are three types of *dhikr*:

- the *dhikr* of the heart,
- *dhikr* with the tongue,
- with the two of them together.

Know that *dhikr* is the best of actions in general, even if in some hadith there is related some superiority to some other action, such as the prayer, etc., for that is only because of what they contain of the meaning of *dhikr* and being present with Allah ta'ala.

There are three aspects to the proof of the superiority of *dhikr*:

First, the texts which have been narrated about its superiority over all other actions. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "Shall I not tell you of the best of your actions, and the most pure of them with your King, and the most exalted of them in your ranks, [those which are] better for you than your meeting your enemy and striking their necks and they striking your necks?" They said, "Certainly, Messenger of Allah." He said, "Dhikr of Allah." The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was asked, "Which actions are the best?" He said, "Dhikr of Allah." Someone said, "Is *dhikr* better or jihad in the way of Allah?" He said, "Even if the mujahid were to strike at the *kuffar* until his sword broke and he was coloured with the blood, the person of *dhikr* would be better than him."

Second , that Allah exalted is He, wherever He commands us to do *dhikr* or praises *dhikr*, He has stipulated a great deal of it, so He says, "*Remember Allah with much remembrance*" and "*those who remember Allah a great deal*" and He does not stipulate that for any other action.

Third, that *dhikr* has something extra which belongs to it especially and does not belong to anything else, which is presence in the Highest Presence, and arrival to nearness which is indicated by that which is narrated in the hadith which mention 'sitting with' and 'withness', for Allah, exalted is He, says [in the hadith Qudsi], "I sit with the one who remembers Me", and He says, "I am in My slave's opinion of Me, and I am with him when he remembers Me."

People have two stations with respect to their intentions in *dhikr*:

- the intention of the generality is to earn rewards,
- the intention of the elect is nearness and presence.

How great a distance there is between the two stations, and how great it is between one who takes his reward and he is behind a veil, and one who draws near until he is one of the elect of the beloved ones.

Know that *dhikr* has many types, of which there is "*La ilaha illa'llah*", and *tasbeeh, takbir*; praise, "*La hawla wa law qunwata illa billah*", "*husbuna'llahu wa n'i'ma'l-wakeel*" and the *dhikr* of every name of Allah ta'ala, and sending blessings on the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and seeking forgiveness, etc. Each *dhikr* has its special quality and its fruit.

- As for "*La ilaha illa'llah* - There is no god but Allah", its fruit is tawhid, and I mean the tawhid of the elect because every believer obtains the *tawhid* of the ordinary people.
- As for *takbir* "*Allahu Akbar* - Allah is greater", its fruit is exaltation of the Possessor of Majesty.
- As for praise and the [Divine] Names whose meanings are good treatment and mercy such as ar-Rahman "The Universally Merciful" and ar-Raheem "The Specifically Compassionate" and al-Kareem "The Nobly Generous", and al-Ghaffar "The Oft Forgiving" and the like of them, their fruit is three stations, gratitude, strength of hope, and love, for the One Who Treats [us] Well is unavoidably beloved.
- As for "*La hawla wa law qunwata illa billah* - There is no power and no strength but by Allah" and "*husbuna'llahu wa n'i'ma'l-wakeel* - Allah is enough for us and an excellent guardian" their fruit is dependence on Allah and surrendering [all affairs] to Him, and strong trust in Allah.
- As for the [Divine] Names whose meanings are showing and grasping, such as al-'Aleem "the All-Knowing" and as-Samee' "the All-Hearing" and al-Baseer "the All-Seeing" and al-Qareeb "the Near" and the like of them, their fruit is *muraqabah* "fearful watchfulness".
- As for sending blessings on the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, its fruit is strong love for him, and carefully guarding the following of his sunnah.
- As for *istighfar* "seeking forgiveness" its fruit is going straight in tagwa, and guarding the preconditions of turning in penitence [to Allah from one's wrongdoing] along with the hearts rejection of the causes which led to previous wrong actions.
- Then the fruit of the *dhikr* which unites the names and attributes is gathered together in the unique *dhikr* which is our saying, "*Allah, Allah*". This is the goal and the limit.