

The need for du'a

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Man naturally likes to insure himself against harm, he doesn't like being hurt and everyone wishes good for himself. Ah! how wonderful it would be if life was without problems - but that's wishful thinking.

Life on earth is dangerous, often full of pain and tribulations. Of course every human being would like to avoid these, if he or she could. This is one of the reasons why people pay so much for insurance and lash out on guarantees to cover themselves.

It's the same reason why many superstitious people resort to believing in the stars, carrying a rabbit's foot, or avoiding black cats. But people usually learn how to try and avoid pain through life's own experience. It's understandable that the young have a particularly hard time because many haven't learned the 'ways of the world' so, they are educated the hard way: by sticking your finger in the fire, you learn fast - that was not a wise thing to do !

Often, when we get hurt, we call out for help. A child begins by calling on its Mother, who is often quick to respond. But later on in life, there are times when parents or friends are not there and there is no telephone or emergency number - who do you call on then ? That is the time that a person faces up to his weakness and his humanity, and usually, that is the time that he discovers faith. Yes ! There is someone else you can call - Your Lord, your True Sovereign King - your God.

There's a saying that you'll never find a disbeliever on a sinking ship. This is exactly the same message we find in the Qur'an; when man realises his weakness in the face of a mighty storm, then he knows that there is only One who can save him.

"Seest thou not that The ship sail through The Ocean by the grace Of Allah ? - that He may Show you of His Signs ? Verily in this are Signs For all who constantly persevere And give thanks. When a wave covers them Like the canopy (of clouds), They call to Allah, Offering Him sincere devotion, But when He has delivered them Safely to land, there are Among them those that halt Between (right and wrong). But none reject Our Signs Except only a perfidious Ungrateful (wretch)! O mankind! do your duty To your Lord, and fear (The coming of) a Day When no father can avail Aught for his son, nor A son avail aught For his father. Verily, the promise of Allah Is true: let not then This present life deceive you, Nor let the Chief Deceiver Deceive you about Allah."(1)

This reminds us that, in reality, there is no-one who can help you overcome the trials of this world, on land, sea or in the skies - except for Allah, Exalted is He, because everything is under His Will and Control. This is the realisation of enlightened souls, you may say the Muttaqin. And the highest amongst those imbued with the knowledge of this reality were Prophets, who were the most sincere in worship and the most righteous and perfect in belief and actions.

The Last Prophet and Messenger of God, Muhammad ﷺ, is a perfect example of the truly enlightened and conscious soul. Allah the Almighty has said in the Qur'an,

"You have indeed In the Messenger of Allah, A beautiful example
For anyone whose Hope is in God And the Last Day And who engages In the remembrance Of God much."(2)

In a tradition which was passed down to us, we read on the authority of Abu Abbas 'Abdullah, the son of Abbas, may Allah be pleased with them both, who said:

"One day I was behind the Prophet ﷺ, and he said to me, 'Young man, I shall teach you some words of advice. Be mindful of Allah and Allah will protect you. Be mindful of Allah and you will find Him in front of you. If you ask, ask of Allah. If you seek help, seek help of Allah. Know that if the nation were to gather together to benefit you with anything it would benefit you only with something Allah had already prescribed for you. The pens have been lifted and the pages have dried.'" (3)

And Abu Hurayrah reported that the Messenger of Allah, ﷺ said,

"When someone of you prays, let him not say, 'O Allah forgive me if that is Your wish.' But let him be firm in conviction and cherish a great hope and Allah does not consider anything too great which He is able to grant." (4)

Prayer in Islam is one of the most beautiful and profound aspects of worship; it is a direct channel to communicate personally with your Creator, Who is ever Present, and ever Ready to Respond.

"When my servants Ask thee concerning Me, I am indeed Close (to them): I listen To the prayer of every Suppliant when he calleth on Me: Let them also, with a will, Listen to My call, And believe in Me: That they may walk In the right way.' (5)

People have generally forgotten the power of Prayer - (in Arabic: Du'a - literally 'calling'). Today people have ignored this aspect of seeking help when it comes to facing troubles and trials because, in this technology driven world, people have become too arrogant. They believe that, somehow, they have become masters over their own destinies.

This is the characteristic of tyrants, transgressors and, unfortunately, of many people today. They have forgotten God. When people are healthy and strong, they think, "surely we're going to live forever." Their example is like that of the Pharaohs; they considered themselves as gods, because they had command over armies and owned large tracts of land, rich palaces and slaves. They built Pyramids to immortalise themselves, so that when they died, they would wake up with all their treasures in the afterlife. They refused to listen to the commands of God and to His Prophets and Messengers so, the truth is: they will actually wake up to the Fire!

One of the requirements of true prayer is to recognise that there is but one True God who commands all things in the heavens and on earth and to whom we will all be brought back to on the Day of Judgement. In essence this is the core of Prayer, and this can be found in the most important supplication Muslims say in the five daily acts of obligatory worship, al Salah - the name of this prayer is al Fatihah.


"In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful. Praise be to Allah The Lord of the Worlds; Most Gracious, Most Merciful; Master of the Day of Judgement. Thee do we worship, And Thine aid we seek. Show us the straight way, The way of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy Grace, Those whose (portion) Is not wrath, And who go not astray."(6)

The last verses of this Prayer show us what we must do to have our prayers answered. We must know the straight path - the universal path of all Prophets, the most truthful and sincere - and we must not follow the path of those who have earned Allah's anger, by ignoring His commands; and avoid the road of those who are astray, who mislead and are themselves misled.

So, the first condition of Prayer is to know, without doubt, that there is no-one in Heaven or on earth who can help you except the Lord and Creator of the Heavens and earth Himself - Allah, the Exalted, the Most High. No prophet or saint, no angel, no Imam or priest, no rabbi or politician, no idol or material object, nothing can help you or harm you - one atom - except by the Wish and Command of Allah, Exalted is He.

The Prophet Muhammad, sall Allahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said,

"Prayer is the marrow of worship." (7)

If we study the Prophet's life , we will see that his closeness to Allah was exemplified at every living moment by his intimate words and insistent calling upon his Lord; when he went to sleep, when he woke up, when he washed, when he walked out of his house, when he met his companions, when he travelled, when he ate or drank, even when he slept with his wife, or when he was engaged in battle. There was never a moment when he didn't remember his Lord and seek His support or obey His command. And so it is no wonder that all his prayers were answered, including, of course, the one he has saved for the Day of Judgement which will be reserved for interceding on behalf of his followers, those who died without setting up anyone or anything as partners besides Allah. (8)

He used to teach his companions whenever it came to a decision to choose, always to seek the guidance and preference of Allah. 'Narrated Jabir; The Prophet, sall Allahu 'alayhi wa sallam, used to teach us the Istikharah, a special prayer for deciding each and every matter, as he used to teach us Surahs from the Holy Qur'an; he used to say, 'If any one of you intends to do something he should offer two rak'ats of prayer, other than the obligatory prayer, and then say:

"Allah, I seek Your preference through Your knowledge and seek from You ability through Your power and beg You for Your infinite bounty, for You have power and I have none and You have knowledge but I know not, and You are the Knower of the Unseen. O Allah, if You know that this matter is good for me in my religion for my livelihood and for the consequences of my affairs then ordain it for me; and if You know that this matter is evil for me in my religion for my livelihood and for the consequences of my affairs then turn it away for me and turn me away from it and choose what is good for me wherever it may be and make me pleased with it.' After saying this then he should mention and name his difficulty and his need."(9)

The most frequent prayer of the Prophet ﷺ, was, "O, Allah, grant to us goodness in this world and goodness in the Hereafter and save us from the punishment of the fire." (10)

In the end we call upon Allah Almighty to grant us His mercy and forgiveness; Glory be to Allah and all Praises are due to Him. The Prophet, sall Allahu 'alayhi wa salla, used to end meetings by praying,

"Subhanaka Allahumina wa bihamdika ash hadu an la ilaha illa ant. Istaghfiruka wa atubu ilaiyk."

'Glory be to you, O Allah, and all Praise. I bear witness that there is no God except You, I seek Your forgiveness and turn and repent unto You. Ameen.' (11)
