

Al-‘Ubudiyyah

Being a True Slave of Allah

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah

Translated by: Nasiruddin al-Khattab



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Introduction

Praise be to Allah, we praise Him and seek His help and forgiveness. We seek refuge with Allah from the evil of our own selves and from our evil deeds. Whomsoever Allah guides can never be lead astray, and whomsoever Allah leaves astray cannot be guided.

I bear witness that there is no god but Allah alone, with no partner or associate, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His slave and Messenger.

The prominent scholar, defender of the Sunnah and opponent of *bid'ah* (innovation), Shaykh al-Islam Ahmad ibn 'Abd al-Halim ibn Taymiyah, may Allah have mercy on him, was asked about the *ayah*:

“O mankind! Worship your Lord...” (al-Baqarah 2:21)

What is worship (*'ibadah*), and what are its implications? Does it include all the issues of *deen* (religion) or not? What is the real essence of *'ubudiyyah* (enslavement to Allah)? Is it the highest level of achievement that can be attained in this world or in the Hereafter, or is there something higher? This is the issue that will be explained here.

*“I have only created jinns
and men, that they may serve
[worship] Me.”*

(al-Dharyat 51:56)

Dimensions of ‘Ibadah

‘Ibadah (worship) is a word that includes everything that Allah loves and is pleased with, whether it be words or deeds, open or hidden. So *salah* (prayer), *zakat*, fasting, Hajj, speaking truthfully, fulfilling one’s trust, treating one’s parents with kindness and respect, upholding the ties of kinship, keeping one’s promise, enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil, striving in *jihad* against the *kuffar* and *munafiqin*, being kind to one’s neighbours, orphans, the poor, wayfarers, slaves and animals, praying and making supplication (*du‘a’*), remembering Allah (*dhikr*), reading Qur’an, and other good deeds, all come under the heading of ‘*ibadah*.

Similarly, loving Allah and His Messenger, fearing Allah, turning in repentance to Him, being sincere towards Him, patiently accepting His rulings, being thankful for His blessings, being content with His decree, putting one’s trust in Him, hoping for His mercy, fearing His punishment, and so on, also come under the heading of worshipping Allah.

‘Ibadah (worship of Allah) is the ultimate goal which Allah loves and with which He is pleased. It is the purpose for which He created His creation, as He says in the Qur’an:

“I have only created jinns and men, that they may serve [worship] Me.”
(al-Dhariyat 51:56)

This is the Message with which all the Messengers were sent, as Nuh عليه السلام said to his people:

“...Worship Allah! You have no other god but Him...” (al-A’raf 7:59)

Hud عليه السلام, Salih عليه السلام, Shu’ayb عليه السلام and other Messengers also conveyed a similar message to their peoples. Allah said:

“For We assuredly sent amongst every People a messenger, (with the command): ‘Worship Allah, and eschew evil’: of the people were some guided, and some on whom error became inevitable (established)...” (al-Nahl 16:36)

“Not a messenger did We send before you without this inspiration sent by Us to him: that there is no god but I, therefore worship and serve Me.”
(al-Anbiya’ 21:25)

“Truly, this ummah [religion] of yours is one religion, and I am your Lord, so worship Me (alone).” (al-Anbiya’ 21:92)

“O messengers! Enjoy (all) things good and pure, and work righteousness; for I am well-acquainted with (all) that you do. And verily this Brotherhood [ummah; religion] of yours is a single Brotherhood, and I am your Lord and Cherisher: therefore fear Me (and no other).” (al-Mu‘minun 22:51-52)

So this ‘ibadah or worship was made a duty on His Messenger until death, as Allah said:

“And worship your Lord until there comes to you the certainty (i.e. death).”
(al-Hijr 15:99)

Allah described His angels and Prophets as being those who worship Him:

“To Him belongs whosoever is in the heavens and on earth. And those who are near Him (i.e. the angels) are not too proud to worship Him, nor are they weary (of His worship).” (al-Anbiya’ 21:19)

“Surely, those who are with your Lord (angels) are never too proud to perform acts of worship to Him, but they glorify His praise and prostrate before Him.”
(al-A’raf 7:206)

Allah condemned those who are too arrogant to worship Him:

“And your Lord says: ‘Call on Me; I will answer your (prayer): but those who are too arrogant to worship Me will surely find themselves in Hell - in humiliation!’” (Ghafir 40:60)

Allah described His creation as being in a state of servitude and enslavement to Him (‘ubudiyyah):