

A TRANSLATION OF

رِسَالَةُ ابْنِ الْقَيِّمِ  
إِلَى أَحَدِ إِخْوَانِهِ



IBN AL-QAYYIM'S  
LETTER TO A BROTHER



THE SCHOOL OF SUNNAH



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*Ibn Al-Qayyim's Letter to a Brother* is a short, blessed book by the great Imam, Muhammad Ibn Abee Bakr Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyyah (d. 751H), famously known as Ibn Al-Qayyim. The book came to be known by this title because it is originally a letter from Al-Imam Ibn Al-Qayyim to one of his brothers in faith. In the letter, he reminds his friend of Allah and advises him on a number of important matters that all Muslims should know and act by.

Despite its short length, the book contains many benefits about heart and soul purification, the manners a believer should have in their journey to Allah, the characteristics of the true leaders of the believers, the importance of prayer, and much more.

Effort was made to deliver the intended meaning of the text and make the translation as readable as possible, without neglecting the original wording of the author. The translated text of the letter is on the parchment background, while all footnotes are mine.

We ask Allah ﷻ to accept it and make it a source of reward, and to have mercy over us and the author.

- Nader Ibn Muhammad

## بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Allah is the one asked, and the one whose answer is hoped for, to do good to the brother Ala' Al-Deen in this life and the hereafter, and to benefit [others] through him and make him blessed wherever he may be. For indeed, the *barakah*<sup>1</sup> of a man is in teaching good wherever he settles and advising everyone he mixes with. Allah, most-high, said, informing of *Al-Maseeh*<sup>2</sup>:

﴿وَجَعَلَنِي مُبَارَكًا أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُ﴾

*“And He has made me blessed wherever I am”*<sup>3</sup>

Meaning, a teacher of good; a caller to Allah; reminding of Him; encouraging obedience to Him. Thus, this is from the *barakah* of a man, and the one who is void of this is void of *barakah*, and the *barakah* of meeting with him and mixing with him is diminished.

In fact, the *barakah* of the one who meets with him and mixes with him is also diminished because indeed, he wastes time talking about what is happening and corrupts the heart. And every deficiency which enters upon a servant, its cause is wasted time and corruption of the heart. It results in losing his share of Allah and the diminishment of his rank and status to Him. For this reason, some of the shaykhs have

<sup>1</sup> *Barakah*: the quality of having abundant constant good.

<sup>2</sup> Eesa Ibn Maryam ﷺ.

<sup>3</sup> Maryam: 31

advised saying, “Beware of mixing with those whose company wastes time and corrupts the heart.”

For indeed, whenever time is lost and the heart is corrupted, all the affairs of a servant become in disarray, and he becomes one of those whom Allah said about:

﴿وَلَا تُطِيع مَنْ أَغْفَلْنَا قَلْبَهُ عَن ذِكْرِنَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ وَكَانَ أَمْرُهُ فُرُطًا﴾

*“And do not obey one whose heart We have made heedless of Our Remembrance and follows his own desires and whose affairs are in neglect.”<sup>1</sup>*

And the one who ponders the state of the creation will find them all - except the fewest of the few - to be of those whose hearts have become heedless of the remembrance of Allah most-high, have followed their desires, and their affairs and interests have become ﴿فُرُطًا﴾. Meaning, they have neglected what benefits them and results in their uprightness, and engaged in what does not benefit them, in fact, [they have engaged in what] results in their harm sooner and later. These [people], Allah has ordered His Messenger to not obey them, and thus, obedience of the Messenger is not complete except by disobeying them; for indeed, they only call to what suits them of following desires and heedlessness of the remembrance of Allah.

Whenever heedlessness of Allah and the final abode is coupled with following [one’s personal] desires, every evil comes about from the two, and often is one coupled with the other and inseparable from it.

<sup>1</sup> Al-Kahf: 28

The one who ponders over the corrupt states of the world in general and specific will find it<sup>1</sup> to be emanating from these two sources<sup>2</sup>; [that is] because heedlessness comes between the servant and picturing the truth and realizing it and knowing it, thus being from those who are misguided (الضالين), and following personal whims diverts him from seeking the truth and wanting it and following it, thus being from those who have deserved anger (المغضوب عليهم). As for the ones whom Allah bestowed His favor upon, they are the ones whom Allah favored by [helping them] realize the truth as it relates to their **knowledge**, and [helping them] adhere to it and prefer it over other than it as it relates to their **actions**. These are the ones upon the path of salvation, and other than them are upon the path of destruction.

Due to this, Allah, exalted, has ordered us to say every day and night several times:

﴿أَهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ \* صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ \* غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ﴾

*“Guide us to the straight path \* The path of those upon whom You have bestowed Your Favor \* Not of those who earned anger, nor of those who are astray.”<sup>3</sup>*

For indeed, the servant is completely compelled to be acquainted of the things that benefit him in his life and resurrection, and to prefer and want the things that benefit him, as well as avoid the things that harm

<sup>1</sup> i.e. the corruption in the world.

<sup>2</sup> Heedlessness of the remembrance of Allah, and following one’s personal whims and desires.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Fatiha: 5-7

him. Through the combination of these two<sup>1</sup>, he has been guided to the straight path.

However, if he misses out on **knowing** that, he will traverse the path of the misguided (الضالين), and if he misses out on **intending it and adhering to it**, he will traverse the path of those who have earned anger (المغضوب عليهم). Through this, one realizes the status of this great *dua*<sup>2</sup> and the serious need for it, and how happiness in this life and the next depends on it.

The servant is in need of guidance in every moment and breath, in everything he does and leaves off, for he is between matters that he cannot escape:

One of them: Matters that he went about in a way other than [the way of] guidance, out of ignorance. Thus, he is in need of seeking guidance to the truth in those matters.

Or: He may know the way of guidance regarding those matters, yet goes about them in an incorrect way intentionally. Thus, he is in need of repenting from that.

Or: Matters that he lacked guidance in, both through knowledge and actions. Hence, he missed out on being guided to having knowledge of

<sup>1</sup> The first is knowing the things that benefit us and harm us. The second is doing the things that benefit us and avoiding the things that harm us.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. the *dua*' in Al-Fatiha and how it contains asking Allah ﷻ to guide you to the straight path and help you avoid the path of المغضوب عليهم and الضالين.

them and realizing them, as well as intending them, seeking them, and performing them.

Or: Matters that he has been guided to in one aspect but not another, thus he is in need of complete guidance in them.

Or: Matters in which he was guided to their basis but not their specifics, thus he is in need of detailed guidance.

Or: A path which he has been guided to, yet is in need of more guidance within it, because being guided to the path is one thing and being guided within the very path is another thing. Do you not see that a man knows that the road to such-and-such country is such-and-such road, but is not good at traversing it? For indeed, traversing it needs a special guidance within the very journey, such as travelling at this time and not at that time, taking such amount of water in such-and-such valley, resting in that place and not that; this is guidance within the very journey. A person who knows that the road is this road may neglect this<sup>1</sup>, thus perishing and falling short of the goal.

There are also matters in the future which he needs to attain guidance on, just as he had attained [guidance on those matters] in the past.

Also, [there are] matters in which he is void of deeming as truth or falsehood, thus he is in need of being guided to what is correct regarding those matters.

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<sup>1</sup> i.e. he may know that this specific road leads to his goal, yet neglects the specifics needed to actually traverse that road, because knowing about it is one thing and actually traversing it is another.



Also, [there are] matters in which he believes that he is upon guidance, yet he is upon misguidance and does not realize it; thus, he is in need of changing that belief through guidance from Allah.

Also, [there are] matters which he did perform upon guidance, and so is in need of guiding others to [those matters] and directing [them] and advising [them]; neglecting that will make him lose out on guidance accordingly<sup>1</sup>. Also, guiding others, teaching them, and advising them opens the door of guidance for him, because indeed, recompense is according to the type of actions [one does]. Thus, the more he guides others and teaches them, the more Allah guides him and teaches him. Hence, he becomes [a person who is] *guiding* and *guided*, as is in the *dua*' of the Prophet ﷺ which has been narrated by At-Tirmidhi and others: ***“O Allah, beautify us through the beauty of Iman, and make us guides who are guided, neither astray nor leading others astray, peace for your allies and war for your enemies, loving through Your love the ones who love You, opposing through Your opposition those who oppose You.”***<sup>2</sup>

Also, Allah, exalted, has praised His believing servants who ask Him to make them leaders through whom others are guided. Allah, most-high, says regarding the characteristics of His [true] servants:

﴿وَالَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا هَبْ لَنَا مِنْ أَزْوَاجِنَا وَذُرِّيَّاتِنَا قُرَّةَ أَعْيُنٍ وَاجْعَلْنَا لِلْمُتَّقِينَ إِمَامًا﴾

***“And those who say: Our Lord, bestow unto us from our wives and offspring a comfort of the eyes, and make us, for the pious, a leader.”***<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> i.e. neglecting the act of guiding others through the guidance you were given will cause you to lose some share of your own guidance.

<sup>2</sup> Sunan At-Tirmidhi (3419).

<sup>3</sup> Al-Furqan: 74

Ibn Abbas said, “That we are used for guidance in good.” Abu Salih said, “Others follow our guidance.” Makhool said, “Leaders in piety, the pious follow us.” Mujahid said, “Make us followers of the pious, following their example.”

This explanation<sup>1</sup> was found problematic by those who do not realize the status of the understanding of the *Salaf* and the depth of their knowledge. They said that this ayah, according to this opinion, must be of the category that is reversed [in meaning], [thus] meaning “make the pious our leaders.” Refuge in Allah is sought that any of the Qur’an be reversed [in its meanings].

Rather, this is from the complete understanding of Mujahid رحمته, because a man cannot be a leader for the pious unless he takes the pious as his leaders; thus, Mujahid brought attention to this aspect through which they attain this goal<sup>2</sup>. It is by following the righteous *Salaf* before them, and, as a result, Allah makes them leaders for the righteous after them. This is from the best understanding of the Qur’an and most subtle, and has nothing to do with that which is reversed. Thus, the one who takes the people of Sunnah before him as leaders, those after him and with him will take him as a leader.

Allah used the term ﴿إِمَامًا﴾ “Imam” in the singular form, and did not say, “make us, for the righteous, Imams (leaders).”<sup>3</sup> It was said that

<sup>1</sup> The explanation of Mujahid رحمته .

<sup>2</sup> The goal of being leaders for the pious.

<sup>3</sup> Meaning, the word “Imam” in the verse is in the singular form instead of the plural form although the ones asking Allah are many.

“Imam” in the verse is the plural of “Aam” (أَمَّ), like صَاحِب and صِحَاب. This is the opinion of Al-Akhfash and it is somewhat distant. Further, it is not from the common utilized language such that the words of Allah are explained through it.<sup>1</sup>

Others said “Imam” here is a *Masdar* (the infinitive form), not an *Ism* (a noun); it is said “أَمَّ إِمَامًا”, as one says “صَام صِيَامًا” and “قَام قِيَامًا”. Meaning, make us of those who have an Imam. This [opinion] is weaker than the previous one.

Al-Farra’ said: He said “Imam” not “Imams”, being comparable to His statement:

﴿إِنَّا رَسُولُ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ﴾

*“We are the messenger of the Lord of the worlds.”*<sup>2</sup>

and did not say “the two messengers”, as it is of the singular which refers to plural, as the poet said:

يَا عَاذَلَاتِي لَا تُرِدْنَ مَلَامَتِي \* إِنَّ الْعَوَازِلَ لَيْسَ لِي بِأَمِيرٍ

and did not say “بأمرء”.<sup>3</sup>

This is the best opinion, except that it needs further clarification. That is that all the pious are upon one path; the one they worship is one; they are the followers of one book and one prophet; servants to one Lord. Hence, their religion is one and their prophet is one and their book

<sup>1</sup> According to this opinion, the word “Imam” in the verse would actually be a plural form, the plural of “Aam.”

<sup>2</sup> Ash-Shu’ara’: 16. The verse is referring to Musa ﷺ and his brother Harun ﷺ.

<sup>3</sup> The point being that the poet used the word “أمير” (the singular form) to refer to a group instead of “أمرء” (the plural form), thus further supporting this opinion.

is one and the one they worship is one. Thus, it's as if they are all one Imam for those who come after them; they are not like the Imams who differ, whose paths, views, and beliefs differ. Thus, following them is only following that which they are upon and it is one thing - and that is the leader in reality.

## Chapter

Allah, exalted, has informed that this leadership is only attained through **patience** and **certainty**, as He, most-high, said:

﴿وَجَعَلْنَا مِنْهُمْ أَيْمَةً يَهْتَدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا لَمَّا صَبَرُوا وَكَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يُوقِنُونَ﴾

*“And we made from among them leaders guiding by Our command when they were patient and were certain of Our Ayat.”<sup>1</sup>*

Thus, through patience and certainty leadership in the religion is attained. It was said patience in refraining from the *Dunya*, and it was said patience in adversity, and it was said patience in refraining from the forbidden. The correct opinion is that it is patience in all of that - patience upon the obligations of Allah, patience in avoiding the forbidden, and patience regarding His decrees.

Allah combined between patience and certainty because they are the [source of] happiness of a servant, and losing them causes him to lose his happiness. For indeed, the heart is afflicted by **desires** that go against the orders of Allah, and by **doubts** that go against His information<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, through patience one repels desires, and through certainty one repels doubts. For indeed, desires and doubts oppose the religion in every way; thus, no one is saved from the punishment of Allah except those who repel their desires through patience and their doubts through certainty.

<sup>1</sup> As-Sajdah: 24

<sup>2</sup> i.e. the things that Allah ﷻ has informed us of.

For this reason, Allah has informed of the invalidation of the actions of the people of desires and doubts. He, most-high, said:

﴿كَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ كَانُوا أَشَدَّ مِنْكُمْ قُوَّةً وَأَكْثَرَ أَمْوَالًا وَأَوْلَادًا فَاسْتَمْتَعُوا بِخَلْقِهِمْ فَاسْتَمْتَعْتُمْ  
بِخَلْقِكُمْ كَمَا اسْتَمْتَعَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ بِخَلْقِهِمْ وَخُضْتُمْ كَالَّذِي خَاضُوا﴾

*“Like those before you, they were mightier than you in power, and more abundant in wealth and children. They had enjoyed their share, as you have enjoyed your share as those before you enjoyed their share; and you delved as they delved.”*

This enjoyment of their share is their enjoyment of their share of desires. He then said, **“and you delved as they delved”**; this is delving falsely into the religion of Allah, and it is the delving of the people of doubts. He then said:

﴿أُولَئِكَ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ﴾

*“Those, their actions have become invalid in this world and in the Hereafter, those they are the losers.”<sup>1</sup>*

Thus, Allah attached the invalidation of actions, as well as loss, to following desires, which is enjoying the share, and to following doubts, which is delving falsely.

<sup>1</sup> At-Tawbah: 69

## Chapter

Just as Allah attached leadership in the religion to patience and certainty, the verse [also] contains two more principles:

One of them: Calling to Allah and guiding His creation.

The second: Guiding them according to the way He commanded through the tongue of His Messenger ﷺ, not according to their intellects, opinions, politics, feelings, and imitation of their predecessors without any evidence from Allah, because He said:

﴿يَهْدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا﴾

“guiding by Our command”

Therefore, these are four principles which the verse<sup>1</sup> contains:

**One of them:** Patience, and it is restricting one’s self from Allah’s prohibitions, restricting it to His obligations, and restricting it from being disgruntled and complaining of His decrees.

**The second:** Certainty, and it is firm decisive faith which contains neither doubt nor hesitation nor uncertainty nor skepticism regarding five principles that He, exalted, mentioned in His statement, most-high:

<sup>1</sup> The verse from Surat As-Sajdah mentioned previously.

﴿لَيْسَ الْبِرَّ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ ءَامَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ  
وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّنَ﴾

**“Righteousness is not that you turn your faces toward the east and west, but righteousness is one who believes in Allah, the Final Day, the angels, the book, and the prophets”<sup>1</sup>**

and in His statement:

﴿وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَالًا بَعِيدًا﴾

**“And whoever disbelieves in Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers, and the Final Day has certainly gone far astray”<sup>2</sup>**

and in His statement:

﴿ءَامَنَ الرَّسُولُ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ رَبِّهِ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ كُلُّ ءَامَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ﴾

**“The Messenger has believed in what was revealed to him from his Lord, and [so have] the believers. All have believed in Allah, His angels, His books, and His messengers.”<sup>3</sup>**

and believing in the Final Day is included in believing in the books and messengers.

Also, the Prophet ﷺ combined them in the *hadeeth* of Umar, in his statement, **“Iman is to believe in Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers, and the Final Day.”<sup>4</sup>**

Thus, whoever doesn't believe in these five foundations is not a believer; and certainty is to believe in those to the point that it becomes

<sup>1</sup> Al-Baqarah: 177

<sup>2</sup> An-Nisa': 136

<sup>3</sup> Al-Baqarah: 285

<sup>4</sup> Saheeh Muslim (8).



as if it is seen by the heart and witnessed by it - the connection between it and insight being like the connection between the sun and the moon to the eyesight. This is why some of the *Salaf* said, “Certainty is all of *Iman*.”

**The third:** Guiding the creation and calling them to Allah and His Messenger. He, most-high, said:

﴿وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ قَوْلًا مِمَّن دَعَا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا وَقَالَ إِنَّنِي مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ﴾

*“And who is better in speech than one who calls to Allah and does righteousness and says, ‘Indeed I am of the Muslims.’”<sup>1</sup>*

Al-Hasan Al-Basri said, “This is the one Allah loves; this is the ally of Allah; he submitted to Allah and acted by His obedience and called the creation to Him.”

This type is the best type of human and highest in station to Allah on the Day of Judgement. They are the ones Allah excluded from being losers. He, most-high, said:

﴿وَالْعَصْرِ \* إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ \* إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَتَوَاصَوْا

بِالْحَقِّ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ﴾

*“By time \* Indeed, mankind is in loss \* Except for those who believe and do righteous deeds and advise one another with the truth and advise one another with patience.”<sup>2</sup>*

Thus, Allah, exalted, swore that mankind as a kind are at loss, except those who complete themselves through *Iman* and righteous actions and

<sup>1</sup> Fussilat: 33

<sup>2</sup> Al-Asr: 1-3

complete others by advising them to have these two<sup>1</sup>. This is why Ash-Shafi'ee رحمه الله said, “If all people were to contemplate Surat Al-Asr it would have sufficed them.”

One cannot truly be from the followers of the Messenger except those who call to Allah upon insight; Allah, most-high, said:

﴿قُلْ هَذِهِ سَبِيلِي أَدْعُو إِلَى اللَّهِ عَلَى بَصِيرَةٍ أَنَا وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِي﴾

“Say: This is my way, calling to Allah, upon insight, I and those who follow me”<sup>2</sup>

Thus, His statement “calling to Allah” is an explanation of the way that he<sup>3</sup> is upon. Therefore, his way and the way of his followers is calling to Allah; thus, the one who does not call to Allah is not upon his way.

As for His statement:

﴿عَلَى بَصِيرَةٍ﴾

“upon insight”

Ibn Al-A'rabee said, “Insight (البصيرة) is being steadfast in the religion.”

It was also said that insight (البصيرة) is a lesson<sup>4</sup>, as it is said, “Do you not have an insight (بصيرة) from such-and-such?”, meaning a lesson.

The poet said:

فِي الدَّاهِبِينَ الْأَوَّلِينَ \* مِنَ الْقُرُونِ لَنَا بَصَائِرُ

<sup>1</sup> i.e. Iman and righteous actions.

<sup>2</sup> Yusuf: 108

<sup>3</sup> i.e. the Prophet ﷺ.

<sup>4</sup> i.e. a lesson learned; a moral.

However, the appropriate assessment [of the previous opinion] is that a lesson is the result of insight, because if he attains insight, he learns a lesson; thus, the one who is deprived of learning lessons, it's as if he has no insight.

And the origin of the word (البصيرة) refers to emergence (الظهور) and clarity (البيان); hence, the Qur'an is *basa'ir* (بصائر); meaning proofs, guidance, and clarification that leads to the truth and guides to success. That is why the trail of blood which is used to find the hunted prey is called "*baseerah*" (بصيرة).

The verse also proves that one who is not upon insight is not from the followers of the Messenger, and that his followers alone are the people of insight. This is why he said, "*I and those who follow me.*"

If the meaning is "I call to Allah, I and those who follow me," thus making "*and those who follow me*" linked to the pronoun in "*I call...*" - the link being acceptable because of the separation - then it is an evidence that the followers of the Messenger are the ones who call to Allah and His Messenger. However, if it is linked to the pronoun in "*my way*", meaning "this is my way and the way of my followers," then it is similar. Either case, his way and the way of his followers is calling to Allah.

**The fourth principle:** His statement:

﴿يَهْدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا﴾

"guiding by Our command"

There is proof in that [proving] that they follow what Allah sent down to His Messenger and guide [others] through that alone, not through other than it, of opinions, thoughts, ways, and views. Rather, they do not guide [others] except through His command alone.

The summary of this is that the leaders of the religion that they follow, it is they who combined between patience, certainty, and calling to Allah through the Sunnah and revelation, not through opinions and innovations. They are the successors of the Messenger ﷺ in his nation, and they are his special followers and supporters; and those who oppose them or fight them have opposed Allah and given Him notice of war.

Al-Imam Ahmed said in the introduction to his book in refutation of the *Jahmiyyah*:

“All praise belongs to Allah, the one who has made, in every period of time void of the messengers, people of knowledge who remain, calling those who went astray to guidance, patient upon their harms, bringing to life - through the book of Allah - the dead, and allowing the blind to see through the light of Allah. How many victims of Iblees have they brought to life, and how many misguided and confused have they guided; how excellent is their effect upon the people and how terrible are the effects of the people upon them.

They eliminate from the book of Allah the distortions of the extremists, the claims of the falsifiers, and the misinterpretations of the ignorant - those who have raised the flags of innovation and let loose the leash of *fitnah*. They are differing regarding the book, in opposition to the book, in agreement on separating from the book.

They speak about Allah and His book without knowledge. They speak with vague dialogue and deceive ignorant people with the doubts they cause them. Thus, we seek refuge in Allah from the trials of those who misguide.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Ar-rad ‘ala Al-Jahmiyyah* by Al-Imam Ahmed (pg. 170-174).

## Chapter

Of the things that one should be concerned with - as it relates to knowledge, realizations, pursuits, and intentions - is to know that every human, rather, every living being, only seeks that which brings them pleasure, bliss, and a good life, as well as that which repels the opposite of those things. This is a correct goal which contains six matters:

Of them: Knowing that which is beneficial for the servant and compatible with him, through which he attains his pleasure, joy, happiness, and good life.

The second: Knowing the path which leads to that.

The third: Traversing that path.

The fourth: Knowing the harmful, damaging, incompatible things which make his life miserable.

The fifth: Knowing the path that would lead him to that if he were to traverse it.

The sixth: Avoiding traversing it.

Therefore, these are six matters by which the pleasure of a servant, his joy, happiness, and correct state cannot be achieved unless they are fulfilled - and whatever is lacking among those will result in his ill state and miserable life. Every rational person strives for these things; however, most people have erred in attaining this desired, beneficial goal, either by not picturing it [correctly] and not knowing it, or by not

having knowledge of the path that leads to it. These two mistakes are caused by ignorance, and knowledge does away with those two.

Furthermore, he may attain knowledge of the goal and knowledge of the path to it, however there are intentions and desires in his heart that come between him and pursuing this beneficial goal and traversing its path. Thus, every time he intends on it, those desires and wills oppose him and come between him and that; and he is not able to leave them and put the goal before them except by one of two things: a tenacious love or a disturbing fear.

Thus, love for Allah, His Messenger, the final abode, and Heaven and its pleasures become more loved to him than these desires, while knowing that he cannot combine between the two, thus causing him to prefer the higher of the two loved things over the lower of the two; or he attains knowledge of the consequences of preferring these desires, of fear and pain, the pain of which is more severe and enduring than the pain of missing out on these desires. Therefore, if these two types of knowledge<sup>1</sup> settle in his heart, they will cause him to prefer what should be preferred and [cause him to] put it before other things; for indeed, **the distinguishing aspect of the [sound] intellect is preferring the greater of two desired things over the lesser of the two, and bearing the lesser of two undesirable things in order to be relieved of the greater of the two.**

Through this principle, you will recognize the intellects of the people, distinguish between a rational person and others, and the

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<sup>1</sup> i.e. knowledge of the beneficial consequences of choosing the right path over desires, as well as knowledge of the evil consequences of choosing desires over the right path.

differences in intellects will become clear. Where then is the intellect of one who prefers an immediate, troublesome, burdensome pleasure - being only like meaningless dreams or imaginations a sleeping person is pleased with - over pleasure which is of the greatest pleasures, and joy and happiness which is of the greatest happiness - eternal, never ceasing nor perishing nor ending? Yet, he sells it for this vanishing, dwindling pleasure which is filled with pain, is only attained through pain, and its end result is pain. If a rational person were to contrast its pleasure and its pain, its harm and its benefit, he would be ashamed of himself and his intellect; how can he strive to attain it and waste his time in being occupied with it, let alone favor it over that which no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and has never crossed the heart of any human?

Allah, exalted, has bought from the believers their own selves and made the price His Paradise, and He has established this contract upon the hand of His Messenger and *Khaleel* and best of His creation. A commodity which the Lord of the heavens and the Earth is buying, the pleasure of looking at His noble face and hearing His words in His abode is its price, and the one in charge of the contract is His Messenger; how can a rational person neglect it, disregard it, and sell it for a cheap price in a temporary, vanishing, perishing abode? Is this not from the greatest loss? This severe loss will only become apparent on the Day of *Taghabun*<sup>1</sup> when the scales of the righteous become heavy and the scales of the falsifiers become light.

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<sup>1</sup> The Day of *Taghabun* is one of the names of the Day of Judgement.



## Chapter

If you understand this introduction, then [know that] complete pleasure, happiness, joy, good living, and bliss lies only in knowing Allah, *Tawheed* of Him, finding comfort through Him, hoping to meet Him, and gathering the heart and concerns upon Him. For indeed, the most miserable life is the life of one whose heart is dispersed and whose concerns are scattered; his heart having no settlement which it settles at and no loved one that it finds comfort through, as one person explained through his words<sup>1</sup>:

وَمَا ذَاقَ طَعْمَ الْعَيْشِ مَنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ \* حَبِيبٌ إِلَيْهِ يَطْمَئِنُّ وَيَسْكُنُ

Therefore, good living, the beneficial life, and the comfort of the eye lies in feeling content and comfort with the first love. Even if the heart were to go through all loves, it will not find contentment or comfort through any of it, nor will his eye find comfort, until he feels comfort through his God, Lord, and Protector; the one whom he has no guardian or intercessor but Him, and cannot do without Him for the blink of an eye, as one person said<sup>2</sup>:

نَقَلَ فُؤَادَكَ حَيْثُ شِئْتَ مِنَ الْهَوَى \* مَا الْحُبُّ إِلَّا لِلْحَبِيبِ الْأَوَّلِ  
كَمْ مَنْزِلٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ يَأْلَفُهُ الْفَتَى \* وَحَنِينُهُ أَبَدًا لِأَوَّلِ مَنْزِلِ

<sup>1</sup> A line of poetry roughly translated as: He has not tasted the taste of living, he who has no loved one whom he finds comfort in.

<sup>2</sup> Roughly translated as: Move your heart wherever you will of desire, love is only for the first love. How many homes on Earth is a person accustomed with, yet his longing is always for the first home.

Therefore, be keen on making your concern one [concern], and that it is Allah alone, for this is the ultimate happiness of a slave. The person in this state is in an immediate paradise preceding the Paradise of the Hereafter and in immediate pleasure, as some of the impassioned ones said, “My heart goes through times that make me say if the people of Paradise are in a similar [state], they are indeed in a good life.”

Another said, “My heart goes through times that make it dance out of happiness.” Another said, “The people of the *Dunya* are unfortunate, they left it and didn’t taste the sweetest thing in it.” It was said, “And what is the sweetest thing in it?” He said, “Knowing Allah and loving Him and feeling comfort through His closeness and hoping to meet Him.”

There is no pleasure in the *Dunya* which resembles the pleasure of the people of Paradise except this. This is why the Prophet ﷺ said, “*Of the things in your Dunya which have been made dear to me are women and fragrances, and the comfort of my eye was made to be in the prayer.*”<sup>1</sup> Thus, he informed that two things of the *Dunya* were made dear to him, women and fragrances, and then he said, “*and the comfort of my eye was made to be in prayer.*”

And the comfort of one’s eye is above love, for not everything that is loved is a comfort to the eye; the eye only finds comfort with the highest loved things, that which is loved in and of itself, and that is none but Allah, the one whom there is no deity worthy of worship but

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<sup>1</sup> Musnad Al-Imam Ahmed (12293), Sunan An-Nasa’ee (3939).

Him. Everything other than Him is only loved under His love; thus, it is loved for His sake and not loved alongside Him, because loving [something] alongside Him is polytheism (*Shirk*) and loving for His sake is monotheism (*Tawheed*).

Thus, the polytheist takes equals other than Allah that he loves as he loves Allah, and the monotheist only loves whom he loves for Allah, hates whom he hates for Allah, does what he does for Allah, and leaves off what he leaves off for Allah. The religion revolves on these four principles; they are love and hate, which result in doing, refraining, giving, and preventing. Thus, whoever makes these all completely for Allah has completed *Iman*, and whatever of it is short of being for Allah results in a decrease of the servant's *Iman*.

The point is that that which is a comfort of one's eye is higher than what one merely loves. So, prayer is the comfort of the eyes of those who love [Allah] in this *Dunya*, due to what it contains of communicating with the one whom the eyes find no comfort, the hearts find no rest, and the souls find no peace, except through Him. Also, [it contains] the pleasure of remembering Him, humbleness and submission to Him, as well as closeness to Him, especially during the state of prostration, as that state is the closest a servant is to His Lord. [An example] of this is the statement of the Messenger ﷺ: “O Bilal, *relieve us through the prayer.*”<sup>1</sup> Thus, he informed that his relief ﷺ is in the prayer, just as he has informed that the comfort of his eye is in it.

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<sup>1</sup> Musnad Al-Imam Ahmed (23088), Sunan Abu Dawud (4985).

Where then is this compared to one who says, “We pray and are relieved of the prayer”?

The one who loves [Allah], his relief and the comfort of his eye is in the prayer. As for the heedless one who turns away, he has no share of that, in fact, prayer is big and burdensome to him. When he stands in it, it is as if he is [standing] upon hot coal until he rids himself of it. His most favorite prayer is the quickest and hastiest because indeed, his eyes find no comfort in it, nor is his heart relieved through it. If a servant’s eye were to find comfort through something and his heart finds relief through it, then the most difficult thing to him is separating from it. As for the pretender whose heart is empty of Allah and the final abode, one who is afflicted by his love for the *Dunya*, the most difficult thing to him and most disliked is an extended prayer - despite his free time, good health, and lack of preoccupation.

Of the things that should be known, is that the prayer which is a comfort to the eye and a relief to the heart is the one that combines six aspects.

**The first aspect:** Sincerity. It is that the carrying factor and caller to it be the servant’s desire for Allah, his love for Him, seeking His pleasure and closeness to Him, seeking His love, and complying with His order - in a way where no share of the *Dunya* is in any way the motive. Rather, he performs it seeking the face of His Lord The Most-High - out of love for Him, out of fear of His punishment, and out of hope for His forgiveness and reward.

**The second aspect:** The aspect of trueness and good-will. It is to empty his heart in it for Allah, expend his efforts in turning to Allah in it, gathering his heart upon it, and performing it in the best and most complete way inwardly and outwardly, for indeed, prayer has an inner [element] and an outer [element]. Its outer elements are the visible actions and audible statements. Its inner elements are *khushoo'*, watchfulness, emptying the heart for Allah, and turning to Allah completely in it - in a way where his heart does not turn away from Him to other things. These [inner elements] are like its soul while outer actions are like its body. Therefore, if it is void of its soul it becomes like a body which has no soul in it.

Shouldn't a servant be ashamed of facing his master in such a way? This is why it is rolled up as a worn-down garment is rolled and is thrown in the face of its owner, and it says, "May Allah neglect you as you neglected me." As for the prayer in which one completes its outer and inner elements, it ascends with light and clarity like the light of the sun until it is presented to Allah, and He is hence pleased with it and accepts it, and it says, "May Allah preserve you as you have preserved me."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The author here is referring to a *hadeeth* collected by Al-'Uqaylee in *Ad-Du'afaa'* (1/121) and by others, from the *hadeeth* of 'Ubadah Ibn As-Samit, with different wording, and it is a weak *hadeeth*.

## Chapter

**The third aspect:** The aspect of emulation and adherence. It is that he is completely keen on adhering to the Prophet ﷺ in his prayer and praying as he used to pray, whilst turning away from what the people have introduced into the prayer, of additions and reductions and ways, none of which have been relayed from the Messenger or any of his companions. He should not pay attention to the words of those who allow concessions and stop at the minimum of what they believe to be obligatory. Yet, others may have opposed them in that and obligated what they disregarded [as obligatory], and perhaps the established *hadeeths* and Prophetic Sunnah are on their side, yet they pay no attention to it and say, “We follow the *madhab* of so-and-so.” This does not excuse [a person] before Allah and is not an excuse for the one who abandons what he knows of the Sunnah. For indeed, Allah, exalted, only commanded [us to be] obedient to His Messenger and follow him alone, and did not command [us to] follow anyone other than him. Other than him is obeyed only if he commands what the Messenger commanded; everyone other than the Messenger, their opinions are taken and left off.

Also, Allah, exalted, swore by His honorable Self that we do not believe unless we make the Messenger a judge in the things that come about between us, then comply by his judgement and submit completely. Therefore, it does not benefit us to seek judgement from -

or comply with - anyone other than him<sup>1</sup>, nor does it save us from the punishment of Allah. This answer will not be accepted from us when we hear His call, exalted, on the Day of Judgment:

﴿مَاذَا أَجَبْتُمُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ﴾

“What did you answer the messengers?”<sup>2</sup>

For indeed, He must ask us about that and demand an answer from us; He, exalted, said:

﴿فَلَنَسْأَلَنَّ الَّذِينَ أُرْسِلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَنَسْأَلَنَّ الْمُرْسَلِينَ﴾

“Then surely, We will question those to whom [a messenger] was sent, and surely We will question the messengers.”<sup>3</sup>

And the Prophet ﷺ said, “It has been revealed to me that you will be tested through me and asked about me”<sup>4</sup>, meaning the questioning in the grave. Thus, the one whom the Sunnah of the Messenger has reached, yet leaves it for the opinion of any person, will come on the Day of Judgement and find out.

**The fourth aspect:** The aspect of *Al-Ihsan*. It is the aspect of watchfulness, and it is that he worships Allah as if he sees Him. This aspect only comes about as a result of complete faith in Allah and His names and attributes, to the point that he almost sees Allah above His heavens above His throne, speaking His commands and prohibitions, managing the affairs of the creation, the affair descending from Him

<sup>1</sup> i.e. the Prophet ﷺ.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Qasas: 65

<sup>3</sup> Al-A'raf: 6

<sup>4</sup> Part of a long *hadeeth* collected by Al-Imam Ahmed in his Musnad (25089), and the wording is: “As for the fitnah of the grave, then you will be tested through me and asked about me.”

and ascending to Him, and the actions of the servants and their souls at death being presented to Him.

Thus, he witnesses that all with his heart, witnesses His names and attributes, and witnesses a self-sufficient sustainer, all-living, all-hearing, all-seeing, mighty, wise, commanding and forbidding, loves and hates, is pleased and is angered, does what He wills and decrees what He wants, while being above His throne, none of the actions of His slaves or their statements or their inner selves is hidden from Him, rather, He knows the deception of the eye and what the chests hide.

The aspect of *Ihsan* is the basis of all actions of the hearts, for indeed, it necessitates shyness, veneration, magnification, fear, love, devotion, reliance, submission to Allah, humility before Him, cuts the whispers and inner talk, and gathers the heart and concerns upon Allah.

Thus, the share of a servant's closeness to Allah is according to his share of the station of *Ihsan*. The prayers differ according to it, to the point that the difference in the prayers of two men is like the difference between the heaven and the Earth, even though their standing and bowing and prostration is the same.



## Chapter

**The fifth aspect:** The aspect of [recognizing] the favor. It is that he witnesses that the favor is from Allah, exalted, being that He caused him to stand in this state, prepared him for it, and aided him so that his heart and body may stand in service to Him. Thus, if it weren't for Allah, exalted, none of that would have been, as the companions would chant in front of the Prophet ﷺ, saying:

وَاللّٰهُ لَوْلَا اللّٰهُ مَا اهْتَدَيْنَا \* وَلَا تَصَدَّقْنَا وَلَا صَلَّيْنَا

*“By Allah, if it weren't for Allah we would not have been guided,  
nor gave in charity nor prayed.”<sup>1</sup>*

Allah, most-high, said:

﴿يَمُنُونَ عَلَيْكَ أَنْ أَسْلَمُوا قُلْ لَا تَمُنُوا عَلَيَّ إِسْلَمَكُمْ بَلِ اللّٰهُ يَمُنُ عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْ هَدَاكُمْ لِلْإِيمَانِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ﴾

*“They consider it a favor for you that they have accepted Islam. Say: Do not consider your Islam a favor for me. Rather, Allah reminds you of His favor upon you for guiding you to faith, if you are truthful.”<sup>2</sup>*

Thus, Allah, exalted, He is the one who made the Muslim a Muslim and the one who prays one who prays, as the Khaleel ﷺ said:

<sup>1</sup> Saheeh Al-Bukhari (4104), Saheeh Muslim (1803).

<sup>2</sup> Al-Hujurat; 17

﴿رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمِينَ لَكَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِنَا أُمَّةً مُّسْلِمَةً لَّكَ﴾

*“Our Lord, and make us [both] Muslims to you, and from our offspring a Muslim nation for You”<sup>1</sup>*

And said:

﴿رَبِّ اجْعَلْنِي مُّقِيمَ الصَّلَاةِ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي﴾

*“My Lord, make me an establisher of the prayer, and of my offspring (as well)”<sup>2</sup>*

Therefore, the favor is from Allah alone for causing His slave to carry out obedience to Him, and this is of the greatest blessings upon him.

And He, most-high, said:

﴿وَمَا يَكُم مِّن نِّعْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ﴾

*“And whatever of blessings you have, it is from Allah”<sup>3</sup>*

And said:

﴿وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ حَبَّبَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْإِيمَانَ وَزَيَّنَهُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَكَرَّهَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْكُفْرَ وَالْفُسُوقَ وَالْعِصْيَانَ  
أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الرَّاشِدُونَ﴾

*“But Allah has made Iman beloved to you and beautified it in your hearts, and made Kufur, defiance, and disobedience despised to you. Those are the rightly guided.”<sup>4</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Al-Baqarah: 128

<sup>2</sup> Ibraheem: 40

<sup>3</sup> An-Nahl: 53

<sup>4</sup> Al-Hujurat: 7

This aspect is one of the greatest aspects and most beneficial for a servant - and the greater the servant's *Tawheed*, the more complete his share of this aspect is.

Of its benefits is that it comes between the heart and being impressed with one's actions and seeing them<sup>1</sup>; because indeed, if he witnesses that Allah, exalted, is the one who conferred that favor, the one who gave him the success, and the one who guided him to those actions, then witnessing those things will busy him from seeing them<sup>2</sup>, being impressed with them, and using them to transgress against the people. So, that is lifted from his heart, thus he is not impressed with them<sup>3</sup>, and [lifted] from his tongue, thus does not speak about them and consider them much - and this is the characteristic of actions that are raised.<sup>4</sup>

Of its benefits as well, is that he ascribes praise to the one entitled to it and deserving of it. Thus, he sees no praise belonging to himself, rather, he sees it all belonging to Allah, just as he sees that all blessings are from Him, [that] all bounty is from Him, and [that] all good is in His hands. This a part of complete *Tawheed*; therefore, his footing is not firmly established in the station of *Tawheed* except by knowing that and realizing it. Thereafter, if he knows it and becomes established in it, it becomes a conviction. And if it becomes a conviction to his heart, it will give fruit to loving [Allah], experiencing comfort through Allah,

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<sup>1</sup> i.e. considering your actions worthy.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. seeing his actions and considering them worthy.

<sup>3</sup> i.e. being impressed with his actions.

<sup>4</sup> i.e. raised to Allah ﷻ and accepted.

desiring to meet Him, and taking pleasure in His remembrance and obedience - in a way where the highest pleasure of the *Dunya* can never compare to it. And there is no good in one's life if his heart is blocked from this, and the path to it for him is closed, rather, he is as Allah, most high, said:

﴿ذَرَّهُمْ يَأْكُلُوا وَيَتَمَتَّعُوا وَيُلْهِمُ الْأَمَلُ فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ﴾

*“Let them eat and enjoy themselves and be preoccupied with [false] hope, for they will come to know.”<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Hijr: 3

## Chapter

**The sixth aspect:** The aspect of [witnessing one's] shortcomings, and that if the servant were to strive in the utmost way in carrying out the command and exert all his efforts, then he is still falling short and the right of Allah is greater, and that what He is to be met with, of obedience and servitude and service, is far above that, and that His greatness and glory necessitate a servitude which befits it.

If the servants and slaves of kings treat them in their servitude to them with veneration, magnification, respect, reverence, shyness, awe, fear, and sincerity, wherein they devote their hearts and limbs to them, then the Owner of Kings and Lord of the heavens and the Earth is more deserving of being treated like that, rather, [treated in a manner that is] many times [greater than] that.

And if a servant recognizes that he hasn't fulfilled his Lord's right through his servitude towards Him, in fact, not even close to His right, he will realize his shortcomings and will have no choice but to seek forgiveness and express regret for his shortcomings, negligence, and not carrying out what is befitting for Him of His right [over the people]. Also, [he will realize] that he is more in need of Him forgiving and overlooking his servitude than he is in need of seeking a reward from Him for it. And even if he were to fulfill its right<sup>1</sup> appropriately, it would only be the right which is deserved from him for being a servant.

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<sup>1</sup> i.e. the right of servitude and worship that Allah has over the person.

For indeed, the work and service of a slave for his owner is a right over him due to the fact that he is his slave and possession; thus, if he were to seek a wage for his work and service, the people would consider him dumb and foolish, even though he is not, in reality, his slave and possession, however, he is, in reality, the slave and possession of Allah in every sense.

Thus, his actions and service are a right [Allah has] over Him because he is His slave. Therefore, if He rewards him, it is only a bounty, favor, and goodness towards him which a slave is not entitled to from Him. Through this, we understand the statement of the Prophet ﷺ: ***“None of you will enter Jannah by his actions.”*** They said, “Not even you, O Messenger of Allah?” He said, ***“Not even me, unless Allah encompasses me with mercy from Him and grace.”***<sup>1</sup>

Anas Ibn Malik رضي الله عنه said, “Three records will be taken out for the servant on the Day of Judgement: a record which contains his good deeds, a record which contains his evil deeds, and a record of the blessings which Allah bestowed upon him. So, the Lord most-high says to his blessings, ‘Take your right from the good deeds of My servant.’ Thereupon, the smallest of his blessings rises and depletes all of his good deeds and says, ‘By Your Might, I still haven’t acquired my right.’ Thus, if Allah wants to have mercy over His servant, He grants him His blessings, forgives his sins, and multiplies his good deeds for him.”

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<sup>1</sup> Saheeh Al-Bukhari (5673), Saheeh Muslim (2816).

This is confirmed from Anas and is most indicative of the complete knowledge the companions had of their Lord and His rights over them, just as they are the most knowledgeable of this nation of their Prophet, his Sunnah, and his religion.

Indeed, this narration contains knowledge and realization that is not recognized except by the people of insight, those who have knowledge of Allah and His names and attributes and rights. Through this, we understand the statement of the Messenger ﷺ in the *hadeeth* which was narrated by Abu Dawood and Al-Imam Ahmed from the *hadeeth* of Zayd Ibn Thabit and Hudhaifa and others: ***“Indeed, if Allah were to punish the people of the heavens and the Earth, He would have punished them whilst not being oppressive to them, and if He were to have mercy over them, His mercy would be better for them than their actions.”***<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Collected by Al-Imam Ahmed in his Musnad (21589) and Abu Dawood in his Sunan (4699), and by others as well.

## Chapter

The sum of this matter is four things: A correct intention and prevailing strength, both coupled with hope and fear.

These four are the foundations of this matter, and every deficiency which enters into a servant's *Iman*, situations, outer state, and inner state, it is a result of the deficiency of these four or the deficiency of some of them. Thus, a rational person should contemplate these four and make them [the foundation of] his journey and conduct, and build his knowledge, actions, statements, and states upon them. The ones who prevailed only prevailed through those [four things], and the ones who fell behind only fell behind due to not having them.

And Allah knows best, Allah's aid is sought, upon Him is reliance, it is Him who is sought, He is the one asked to give us the success - and all of our brothers of the people of Sunnah - to actualize those [four foundations] through knowledge and actions, He is the owner of that and the bestower of that favor, He is sufficient for us and the best one entrusted with our affairs