

التَّوَكَّلُ

At-Tawakkul

According to the *Qurān* and *Sunnah*

“If you put your trust in Allāh with His due tawakkul, you would verily be given provision as the birds are given provision, which fly out early hungry and returns in the evening with full bellies.”

Prophet Muhammad

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allāh The most Beneficent The most Merciful

Tawakkul

Tawakkul in Allāh (i.e. putting your trust in Allāh) is a worship of the truthful and it is the way of the sincere. Allāh the Exalted commanded His prophets, messengers and his close friends among the believers to perform it. Allāh the Exalted said:

وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى الْحَيِّ الَّذِي لَا يَمُوتُ وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِهِ وَكَفَى بِهِ بِذُنُوبِ عِبَادِهِ خَبِيرٌ

“And put your trust (O Muhammad) in the Ever Living One Who dies not and glorify His Praises, and He is sufficient as the All-Knower of the sins of His slaves.”

(Al-Furqān 25:58)

And He said:

وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى الْعَزِيزِ الرَّحِيمِ (217) الَّذِي يَرَاكَ حِينَ تَقُومُ (218) وَتَقْلُبُكَ فِي السَّاجِدِينَ (219) إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

“And put your trust in the All-Mighty the Most Merciful Who sees you (O Muhammad) when you stand up (alone at night for *tahajjud* prayers) and your movements among those who fall prostrate (along with you to Allāh in the five compulsory congregational prayers). Verily, He only is the All-Hearer the All-Knower.” (Ash-Shu'arā 26:217-220)

And He commanded the believers to do this:

وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ

“And let the believers put their trust in Allāh.” (Al-Māidah 5:11)

So what is *tawakkul* exactly?

- Linguistically *tawakkul* means: depending, leaning, relying, trusting or counting on someone else in any issue.
- Terminologically *tawakkul* means: the heart's true reliance (or depending, leaning, trusting) upon Allāh in bringing about what is beneficial and keeping harm away, in both issues of *dunyā* and *ākhirah*.

The true *tawakkul* which Allāh has commanded – and He praised those who perform it – has been described in detail in the *Qurān* and *Sunnah*.

Establishing the reasons even if they are small

Along with the hearts complete reliance upon Allāh, another thing is required in order for a person's *tawakkul* to be in accordance with the *Qurān* and *Sunnah*, and that is “establishing the reasons”. This means to perform something which Allāh has created as being a reason for something else, such as: water to quench the thirst, reading to acquire knowledge, working to make a living, etc.

This is in accordance with the teaching of the Prophet Muhammad (*sallAllāhu alayhi wa sallam*) who himself would establish the reasons and advise his followers to do the same.

It is narrated from Az-Zubayr (*radiAllāhu ‘anhu*) who said:

فَرَأَيْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - حِينَ ذَهَبَ لِيَنْهَضَ إِلَى الصَّخْرَةِ ، وَكَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - قَدْ ظَاهَرَ بَيْنَ دِرْعَيْنِ فَلَمْ يَسْتَطِعْ أَنْ يَنْهَضَ إِلَيْهَا ، فَجَلَسَ طَلْحَةُ بْنُ عُبَيْدٍ اللَّهِ تَحْتَهُ ، فَنَهَضَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - حَتَّى اسْتَوَى عَلَيْهَا

“So I saw the Messenger of Allāh (*sallAllāhu alayhi wa sallam*) when he went to stand upon a rock – and the Messenger of Allāh (*sallAllāhu alayhi wa sallam*) verily appeared in two armors (on the day of Uhud) so he was not able to climb it. So Talhah ibn ‘Ubaydillāh sat beneath him. Then the Messenger of Allāh (*sallAllāhu alayhi wa sallam*) climbed (upon Talhah) until he stood upon it.” (Sunan Al-Kubrā by Al-Bayhaqī)

So the Prophet (*sallAllāhu alayhi wa sallam*) – despite of being the Messenger of Allāh and protected by Allāh – still appeared in two armors as a way of establishing the reasons in order to perform the right *tawakkul* and be an example for his followers.

And it is narrated by Anas ibn Mālik (*radiAllāhu ‘anhu*) who said:

قَالَ رَجُلٌ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَعْقَلُهَا وَأَتَوَكَّلُ أَوْ أَطْلُفُهَا وَأَتَوَكَّلُ قَالَ اعْقَلُهَا وَتَوَكَّلْ

“A man said: ‘O Messenger of Allāh, should I tie her (i.e. his camel) and have tawakkul, or set her free and have tawakkul?’ He (sallAllāhu alayhi wa sallam) said: **“Tie her and have tawakkul.”**” (Sunan At-Tirmidhī)

Even if the reasons are small and seem insignificant, it is still prescribed that the believer should establish them along with the heart’s full reliance upon Allāh and the certain knowledge that absolutely nothing exists or occurs without it is in accordance with His Decree.

Allāh the Exalted said about His prophet Ayyūb (*alayhi as-salām*) who had fallen very ill:

وَأَذْكُرُ عَبْدَنَا أَيُّوبَ إِذْ نَادَى رَبَّهُ أَيُّ مَسَّنِي الشَّيْطَانُ بِنُصْبٍ وَعَذَابٍ (41) ارْكُضْ بِرِجْلِكَ هَذَا مُغْتَسَلٌ بَارِدٌ
وَشَرَابٌ (42)

“And remember Our slave Ayyūb when he invoked his Lord (saying): ‘Verily, the Shaitān has touched me with distress and torment.’ (He was told:) ‘Strike (the ground) with your foot. This is a spring of water to wash in, cool and a drink.’” (Sād 38:41-42)

And hitting the ground – even in a healthy state – is not a way of acquiring water. But Allāh wants to teach us that it is necessary to establish the reasons despite of the weakness that might be in it. The commandment and creation belongs to him and whatever happens is with His will, but the reasons must be performed.

This does not mean that the slave must rely upon the reasons rather than relying upon Allāh. The slave must know that Allāh is the One Who made the reasons, and He has created the results of the reasons. Furthermore, if Allāh wants to separate a reason from its effect – and thereby render the reason useless, even if it is performed – then He can verily do so. This is what happened when Ibrāhīm (*alayhi as-salām*) was thrown into the fire but it did not burn him, because Allāh ordered it not to do so.

فُلْنَا يَا نَارُ كُونِي بَرْدًا وَسَلَامًا عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ

“We (Allāh) said: ‘O fire. Be you coolness and safety for Ibrāhīm (Abraham).’” (Al-Anbiyā 21:69)

So the heart must be completely reliant upon Allāh and not the established reasons, while the reasons are performed in obedience to the teachings of the *Qurān* and *Sunnah*.

Finding the balance

So the believer must find the balance when performing *tawakkul* so he does not go to the one extreme where he misinterprets *tawakkul* in a way where he ends up saying to himself: 'It doesn't matter what I do or do not do, whatever Allāh wants will happen', and then he thinks this is the true *tawakkul*.

Or that the slave goes to the other extreme where his heart ends up relying upon the reasons rather than relying upon Allāh, in a way that he believes that the reasons themselves are the way to bringing about good and keeping away harm. An example of this could be people who think that it is the doctors and medicine that cures illness – and that without it there is no possibility of being cured – instead of seeing these as a mere reason Allāh has created to achieve good health, and that good health exclusively is a bestowing from the Most Merciful.

Ibn Taymiyyah – *rahimahullāh* – said:

وَمَا يَنْبَغِي أَنْ يُعْلَمَ ، مَا قَالَهُ طَائِفَةٌ مِنَ الْعُلَمَاءِ ، وَهُوَ : أَنَّ الْإِلْتِمَاتَ إِلَى الْأَسْبَابِ شِرْكٌ فِي التَّوْحِيدِ ! وَخَوْ الْأَسْبَابِ أَنْ تَكُونَ أَسْبَابًا ، نَقْصٌ فِي الْعَقْلِ ، وَالْإِعْرَاضُ عَنِ الْأَسْبَابِ بِالْكَلْبِيَّةِ قَدْخٌ فِي الشَّرْعِ . وَمَعْنَى التَّوَكُّلِ وَالرَّجَاءِ ، يَتَأَلَّفُ مِنْ وُجُوبِ التَّوْحِيدِ وَالْعَقْلِ وَالشَّرْعِ .

"And what should be known is that which a group among the scholars said, and that is: That turning (only) to the reasons is shirk in Tawhīd. And cancelling that the reasons are reasons (i.e. not believing that they have an effect) is a defect in the intelligence. And totally turning away from (i.e. rejecting) the reasons is a breach of the (Islamic) Law. And the meaning of tawakkul (putting one's trust in) and raja' (hope) consists of the obligation of Tawhīd, the intelligence and the (Islamic) Law." (Majmū' Al-Fatāwā, vol. 8, p. 169)

Ibn Taymiyyah – *rahimahullāh* – also said:

وأهل السنة لا ينكرون وجود ما خلقه الله من الأسباب ولا يجعلونها مستقلة بالآثار ، بل يعلمون أنه ما من سبب مخلوق إلا وحكمه متوقف على سبب آخر ، وله موانع تمنع حكمه ، كما أن الشمس سبب في الشعاع ، وذلك موقوف على حصول الجسم القابل به ، وله مانع كالسحاب والسقف . والله خالق الأسباب كلها ، ودافع الموانع

"And Ahlus-Sunnah do not reject the presence of what Allāh has created of the reasons and they do not make them independent (from Allāh) in their effect. Rather, they know that there does not exist a

created reason except that its judgement is dependent upon another reason. And it (also) has obstacles which prevent its judgement. Just like the sun is a reason for sunlight, and that is dependent upon that the body (or object) reaches in front of it, and it (i.e. the sunlight) has obstacles such as clouds and the roof. And Allāh is the Creator of all reasons and He is the cause for the obstacles.” (Dar Ta’ārud Al-‘Aql Wan-Naql, vol. 9, p. 29)

And Ibn Al-Qayyim – *rahimahullāh* – said:

بل لا تتم حقيقة التوحيد إلا بمباشرة الأسباب التي نصبها الله مقتضيات لمسبباتها قدرا وشرعا ، وأن تعطيلها يقدر في نفس التوكل . كما يقدر في الأمر والحكمة . ويضعفه ، من حيث يظن معطلها أن تركها أقوى في التوكل ، فإن تركها عجز ينافي التوكل الذي حقيقته اعتماد القلب على الله في حصول ما ينفع العبد في دينه ودنياه ، ودفع ما يضره في دينه ودنياه ، ولا بد مع هذا الاعتماد من مباشرة الأسباب ، وإلا كان معطلا للحكمة والشرع ، فلا يجعل العبد عجزه توكلا ، ولا توكله عجزا

“Rather the reality of Tawhid will not be fulfilled, except by performing the reasons that Allāh has installed which are necessities for that which they result in both in the Decree and the (Islamic) Law. And the cancellation of them is a breach of tawakkul itself. Just as it is a breach in the commandment and wisdom. And it makes him (i.e. the slave) weak, since the one who cancels them thinks that this is stronger tawakkul. But, verily, leaving them is incapability which negates tawakkul, which reality is the heart’s reliance upon Allāh in achieving that which benefits the slave in his religion and dunyā and keeping away what harms him in his religion and dunyā. And along with this reliance there must be the performance of the reasons. Or else he is cancelling the wisdom and the (Islamic) Law. So the slave should not see his incapability as tawakkul, not should he see his tawakkul as incapability.” (Zād Al-Ma’ād, vol. 4, p. 15)

In other words, the one who completely leaves the establishment of the reasons should not regard this as him or her being stronger in *tawakkul*, nor should the one who puts his or her trust in Allāh regard this as incapability. Rather, a balance should be found that consists of the heart’s trusting in the *Qadr* of Allāh and being pleased with whatever has occurred and what occurs, while the body establishes the reasons which have been created for whatever wants to be achieved. The slave must strive achieve this standpoint in his or her *‘aqidah* (belief, conviction), not leaning to either of the two extremes.

Ibn Hajr Al-‘Asqalānī mentions the following narration from Ibn ‘Abbās (*radiAllāhu ‘anhu*) who said:

كَانَ أَهْلُ الْيَمَنِ يَحْجُونَ وَلَا يَتَزَوَّدُونَ وَيَقُولُونَ نَحْنُ الْمُتَوَكِّلُونَ فَإِذَا قَدِمُوا مَكَّةَ سَأَلُوا النَّاسَ فَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى

"The people of Yaman would make hajj but they would not bring provisions (for their journey), and they would say: 'We are the ones who have tawakkul'. Then when they arrived to Makkah they would ask (provisions) from people. So Allāh the Exalted revealed:

وَتَزَوَّدُوا فَإِنَّ خَيْرَ الزَّادِ التَّقْوَى

"And bring provisions (with you for the journey). Verily the best provision is At-Taqwā (piety, righteousness etc.)." (Al-Baqarah 2:197)

Ibn Hajr said in his explanation:

قَالَ : وَفِيهِ أَنَّ التَّوَكُّلَ لَا يَكُونُ مَعَ السُّؤَالِ ، وَإِنَّمَا التَّوَكُّلُ الْمَحْمُودُ أَنْ لَا يَسْتَعِينَ بِأَحَدٍ فِي شَيْءٍ ، وَقِيلَ : هُوَ قَطْعُ النَّظَرِ عَنِ الْأَسْبَابِ بَعْدَ تَهْيِئَةِ الْأَسْبَابِ ، كَمَا قَالَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ : اغْقَلْهَا وَتَوَكَّلْ .

"He (Al-Muhallab) said: And in it (i.e. what also can be understood from this hadīth) is that tawakkul is not along with asking (people for favors or provision). Verily, the praised tawakkul is that a person does not ask anyone for help in anything. And it is said: It is stopping with looking at the reasons after setting up the reasons. Just like he (alayhi as-salām) said: 'Tie her (i.e. your camel) and then have tawakkul.'" (Fath Al-Bāri Sharh Sahīh Al-Bukhārī)

And Mu'āwiyah ibn Qurrah – rahimahullāh – narrates:

أَنَّ عُمَرَ بْنَ الْخَطَّابِ لَقِيَ نَاسًا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْيَمَنِ ، فَقَالَ : "مَنْ أَنْتُمْ؟" . قَالُوا : نَحْنُ الْمُتَوَكِّلُونَ ، قَالَ : "بَلْ أَنْتُمْ الْمُتَكَلِّبُونَ ، إِنَّمَا الْمُتَوَكِّلُ الَّذِي يُلْقِي حَبَّهُ فِي الْأَرْضِ ، وَيَتَوَكَّلُ عَلَى اللَّهِ" ،

"That 'Umar ibn Al-Khattāb found some people from the people of Yaman. So he said: 'Who are you?' They said: 'We are those who have tawakkul.' He said: 'No, you are the ones who are dependent (upon people). Verily, the one who has tawakkul is the one who plants a seed in the ground and (then) puts his trust in Allāh.'" (At-Tawakkul 'alā Allāh" by Ibn Abī Dunyā)

In Sunan At-Tirmidhī it is narrated that 'Umar ibn Al-Khattāb (radiAllāhu 'anhu) said:

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ لَوْ أَنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ تَوَكَّلُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ حَقَّ تَوَكُّلِهِ لَرَزَقْتُمْ كَمَا يُرْزَقُ الطَّيْرُ تَعْدُو خِمَاصًا وَتَرُوحُ بِطَانًا

“The Messenger of Allāh (sallAllāhu alayhi wa sallam) said: ‘If you put your trust in Allāh with His due tawakkul, you would verily be given provision as the birds are given provision, which fly out early hungry and returns in the evening with full bellies.’”

Muhammad ibn Abdur-Rahmān Al-Mubārakfūrī said in his explanation of this *hadīth*:

وَقَالَ الشَّيْخُ أَبُو حَامِدٍ : وَقَدْ يُظَنُّ أَنَّ مَعْنَى التَّوَكُّلِ تَرْكُ الْكَسْبِ بِالْبَدَنِ وَتَرْكُ التَّدْبِيرِ بِالْقَلْبِ وَالسُّعُوطُ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ كَالْحُرْفَةِ الْمُلقَاةِ أَوْ كَالْحِمِّ عَلَى وَضْمِهِ ، وَهَذَا ظَنُّ الْجُهَالِ ، فَإِنَّ ذَلِكَ حَرَامٌ فِي الشَّرْعِ ، وَالشَّرْعُ قَدْ أَتَى عَلَى الْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ فَكَيْفَ يُنَالُ مَقَامٌ مِنْ مَقَامَاتِ الدِّينِ بِمَحْظُورٍ مِنْ مَحْظُورَاتِ الدِّينِ ، بَلْ نَكْشِفُ عَنِ الْحَقِّ فِيهِ فَنَقُولُ : إِنَّمَا يَظْهَرُ تَأْثِيرُ التَّوَكُّلِ فِي حَرَكَةِ الْعَبْدِ وَسَعْيِهِ بِعَمَلِهِ إِلَى مَقَاصِدِهِ . وَقَالَ الْإِمَامُ أَبُو الْقَاسِمِ الْقُشَيْرِيُّ : اعْلَمْ أَنَّ التَّوَكُّلَ مُحَلُّهُ الْقَلْبُ ، وَأَمَّا الْحَرَكَةُ بِالظَّاهِرِ فَلَا تُنَابِي التَّوَكُّلَ بِالْقَلْبِ بَعْدَمَا يُحْفِقُ الْعَبْدُ أَنَّ الرِّزْقَ مِنْ قِبَلِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى ، فَإِنْ تَعَسَّرَ شَيْءٌ فَيَتَّقِدِيرِهِ وَإِنْ تَيْسَّرَ شَيْءٌ فَيَتَيْسِّرِهِ .

“And Shaykh Abu Hamīd said: ‘And he might think that the meaning of tawakkul is to leave earning (a provision) with his body, and leaving the planning of the heart and falling on the ground as a thrown piece of cloth or as meat on a meat block. And this is the belief of the ignorant ones. Because verily is this forbidden in the (Islamic) Law. And the Law praised those who have tawakkul, so how is a (praised) status from the statuses in the religion, achieved through a forbidding thing among the forbidden things in the religion? But we reveal the truth regarding this, so we say: Verily does the effect of tawakkul manifest itself in the movement of the slave and his effort with his work for his goals.’ And the Imām Abū Al-Qāsim Al-Qushayrī said: ‘Know that the place of tawakkul is in the heart. But the outwardly movement does not negate tawakkul in the heart when the slave has realized (or established) that the provision comes from Allāh the Exalted. So if something becomes difficult, then it is due to His Decree and if something becomes easy then it is due to Him making it easy.’”
(Tuhfah Al-Ahwadhī)

Conclusion

The true tawakkul which Allāh has ordered – and praised those who perform it – is a combination of (1) the heart’s complete reliance upon Allāh, putting your trust in Him and knowing with certainty that nothing in the heavens and on Earth will take place except by His permission, and (2) to establish the created reason which must be fulfilled in order to achieve what is wanted, without trusting in the reason itself and believing that it independently has an effect on anything without the permission of Allāh.

So the one who wants Islamic knowledge establishes the reasons for achieving this by reading books, listening to lectures etc., all along with his heart solely relying upon Allāh, asking Him for knowledge and knowing that Allāh is the Granter of knowledge.

And the one who wants for his or her children to have Islamic manners and knowledge establishes the reasons for achieving this, such as telling them about the Prophet (*sallAllāhu alayhi wa sallam*) and the *Sahābah* (*radiAllāhu ‘anhum*) from an early age, teaches them *Qurān* and creates an atmosphere that allows for the children to love Islam and not be distracted so much of the evil in the present societies. All this, along with the parent’s heart solely relying upon Allāh to grant them righteous children, calling upon Him to bestow this and knowing that only Allāh is the Giver of guidance.

And so it is with every goal that the slave has, be it in *dunya* or *akhirah*.

The slave is advised to correct his or her *tawakkul*, seeking the pleasure of the Most Merciful.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ

“Verily Allāh loves those who have *tawakkul* (in Him [i.e. put their trust in Allāh alone]).”
(Āli ‘Imrān 3:159)

And all praise is due to Allāh, Lord of all the worlds.

And may the peace and abundant blessings be upon Muhammad, his family, his companions and those who follow hid guidance until the Day of Judgement.