TOPIC | I: THE KEY OF SPIRITUALITY

This key unlocks the fitrah by the individual acknowledging that Islam frees us from the worship of others, to the worship of the One who is deserving of worship - God Almighty. There are many things that humans have a tendency to "worship" or become "enslaved" to, from point of view that we want to know something the most, love something the most and obey something the most. This can be oneself, where we want to know, love and obey our own ego and desires the most. We think we are always right, we never want to be wrong, and we always want to impose ourselves on others. From this perspective, we are enslaved to ourselves. Allah describes those who take their own desires as a god: "Have you seen he who has taken as his god his [own] desire, and Allah has sent him astray due to knowledge [that Allah has concerning him] and has set a seal upon his hearing and his heart and put over his vision a veil? So who will guide him after Allah? Will you not then be reminded" (45:23).

We could also have a tendency to "worship" or be "enslaved" to society, culture, or material wants (i.e. possessions, fashion, money). We start to love these things more than anything else, we want to know more about them, and it leads us to 'obey' them over all else. Ultimately, everyone is a slave to something or someone and therefore, if we are not worshipping God, we are still worshipping something else. Yet, once a person accepts Allah as the One who is worshipped, they are no longer slaves to false masters, but rather a slave to the True Master.

Allah puts forth a profound example: "Allah puts forward this illustration: can a man who has several partners for his masters, of which they are at odds with each other, be considered equal to a man devoted wholly to one master? All praise belongs to God, though most of them do not know." (39:29). He is essentially telling us that if we do not worship Him, we end up worshipping something else. These things enslave us and they become our masters. The Qur'anic analogy is teaching us that without God, we have many 'masters' and they all want something from us. They are all 'at odds with each other', and we end up in a state of misery, confusion and unhappiness. However, God, who knows everything, including our own selves, and who has more mercy than anyone else, is telling us that He is our master, and that only by worshipping Him alone will we truly free ourselves from the shackles of the things we have taken as replacements for Him. From an existential perspective, worshipping Allah is true liberation.

Why Allah deserves worship?

- Allah is the most perfect Being: 'God', by the very definition, is the One who is entitled to our worship and all acts of worship are to be directed to Him alone; this is a necessary fact of His own existence. The Qur'an repeatedly highlights this fact about Allah: 'Indeed, I am Allah. There is no deity except Me, so worship Me and establish prayer for My remembrance.'' (20:14) and ''And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me.'' (51:56). Allah deserves to be worshipped because of who He is. Even if He did not give us anything He would still deserve worship.
- He possesses all the perfect names and attributes to the highest degree possible. It is because of these names and attributes that Allah must be worshipped. Any person who is wise, merciful and kind deserves some kind of praise. However, Allah who is The-Wise, The-Merciful and The-Kind, and all of that to the highest degree possible, is worthy of the most extensive form of praise (i.e. worship).
- Allah is also the only One entitled to our supplications and prayers. He knows best what is good for us, and He also wants what is good for us. Such a Being with these attributes must be prayed to, and to be asked assistance of. An important point regarding worshipping Allah is that it is His right, even if we are not recipients of any type of comfort. If we were to live a life full of suffering, Allah is still to be worshipped. Worshipping Allah is not dependent on some kind of reciprocal relationship; He gives us life, and we worship Him in return. No doubt Allah showers us with many blessings; however, He is worshipped because of who He is and not necessarily how He decides via His boundless wisdom to distribute His bounty.
- For our own benefit: "O mankind, worship your Lord, who created you and those before you, that you may become righteous" (2:21)
- It is our purpose in life and in line with our nature: The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "Every new-born child is born in a state of fitrah." (Muslim)
- He created and sustains the universe and everything in it: Allah says, "Is He [not best] who begins creation and then repeats it and who provides for you from the heaven and earth? Is there a deity with Allah? Say, "Produce your proof, if you should be truthful." (27:64)
- His favours & provisions: Allah says, "O mankind, remember the favour of Allah upon you. Is there any creator other than Allah who provides for you from the heaven and earth? There is no deity except Him, so how are you deluded?" (35:3)
- If we love ourselves, we must love Allah: We all want pleasure, happiness and to prolong our existence. This is a form of self-love. If we love ourselves, we must love Allah because it is He who sustains us, created us, created the causes in the universes to achieve pleasure and happiness. He is the source of love! When talking about God and love, Al-Ghazali said: "Therefore, if man's love for himself be necessary, then his love for Him through whom, first his coming-to-be, and second, his continuance in his essential being with all his inward and outward traits, his substance and his accidents, occur must also be necessary."

• Gratitude is one of the highest forms of worship: Allah provides us with innumerable favours: "And if you should [try to] count the favours of God, you could not enumerate them. Indeed mankind is [generally] most unjust and ungrateful." (14:34). We should be eternally grateful to Allah, because we could never thank Him for His blessings. For example, the human heart beats around 100,000 times a day, which is approximately 35,000,000 times a year. If we were to live up to the age of 75, the number of heartbeats would reach 2,625,000,000. Every heartbeat is precious to us. Anyone of us would sacrifice a mountain of gold to ensure that our hearts would function properly to keep us alive. Yet we forget and deny the One who created our hearts and enables them to function. This illustration forces us to conclude that we must be grateful to Allah, and that gratitude is a form of worship. He has given us favours we cannot enumerate, and if we could count them we would have to thank Him for being able to do that too.

Further Reading

The Divine Reality: God, Islam and the Mirage of Atheism – CHAPTER 15 (Hamza Tzortzis): https://www.amazon.co.uk/Divine-Reality-Islam-Mirage-Atheism/dp/0996545387

7 Reasons Why God Is Worthy Of Worship (Hamza Tzortzis): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yVbkVKXUuF0