

KNOWING ALLAH IN GOOD TIMES AND TOUGH TIMES

by Shaykh Taner Ansari

Bismillah er Rahman er Rahim [In the Name of Allah, The One Who Acts with Mercy, The Source of Mercy]. All praise belongs to Allah. He owns everything. All power belongs to Him and not to us. May His peace and blessings be on His Prophet Muhammad and his family and on all the other prophets and their families.

You're all here, my beloved kids. I love you all and I'm so happy that you want Allah and you want to advance to Allah, to progress and fight against your *nafs*. *Inshallah* (God willing), Allah will help you do all that and I'll be with you all along, *inshallah*. That is what Allah created me for—to guide you, to help you, to hold your hand, to go through the tough times and the good times. In the good times maybe you won't remember me, but through the tough times, I'm sure you will remember me. Everybody remembers me then. But please remember me in your good times, too. I like good times, also.

The World Has Always Been Like This

You know, our world is going through tough times. Come to think of it, when didn't Earth go through tough times? Every generation went through them. It is the same world, but for different people it means different things because of their points of reference. So the world looks different to everybody, although it is the same world. The same things are going on as always. When you look at television you see the wars going on in the world, because violence takes the headlines. They never show a happy couple. They always show what is wrong. They hardly ever show what is right. That is why you get a picture that the world is bad. The truth is that the world has always been like this. In this world goodness and evil are together; darkness and light are together; injustice and justice are together. That is why this is the world of tests. Everybody is here to be tested.

Take a look at the universe, and especially our solar system. Aren't you glad you aren't living on Jupiter? You'd be dead meat. You'd be fried. The same would happen if you were on Mercury, or the Moon. If you were on Saturn, the wind would take you all around the planet and make you fall off. You'd be too hot, then too cold, and in then out. I'm sure you would not like that. What I'm trying to say is that happiness is a mindset. The German poet Goethe, who was actually a Sufi, wrote a poem. He said, "Leave this sadness; throw out the worries, and take up the happiness." Of course, it is easy to say, but how do you do that? Goethe goes on to say that no matter how much you have lost, you still have something to look for in the sun and the moon and the stars. The sun will rise again. You still have something that you can be happy with.

Be Happy With Guidance

For believers, like you, the thing that we can be very happy with (and Allah has not given it to many people) is guidance. And then he has given you, along with this guidance, Shaykhs and Pirs to give you messages, to guide you and hold your hand, and to show you what you haven't seen. Allah the Most High, is a *Latif* God, which means Subtle. He has created you with His Divine Names *Al Rahman* (The One Who Acts with Mercy) and *Al Rahim* (The Source of Mercy). In this part of the universe, Allah gave the qualities of *Rahman* and *Rahim* to the planet Earth. We call it "Mother Earth" because it mothers us. It gives us food and then it kills

us, but it doesn't put an end to anything.

All these beautiful things are here for us. Think of the water that you drink. One of the most beautiful things is cold water on a hot summer day. A cold drink of anything, actually, except liquor, is good on a hot summer day. Hot chocolate or hot tea on a cold winter day; isn't that good? Who provides you with all this? Allah does. No matter how poor you are, how much is a cup of hot water, or cold water on a summer day? When I didn't have any money, I would go for entertainment into the park at the riverside and watch the river and the people catching fish. They could catch fish, but I couldn't. I caught branches and weeds and all that. I cleaned that river for them. But I was with Allah; I enjoyed His company.

So, what I want you to do is pay attention to Allah no matter what situation you are in. Don't miss Allah. Allah is there. Allah is not only in the hereafter; Allah is here on this Earth showing you His mercy, His qualities as *Rahman* and *Latif*.

What You Look For Is What You Get

So how can you not know Allah by these qualities? Allah has *Jamal* (Beauty, Majesty), and His *Jamal* is on this Earth, too. Then why is Allah manifesting his *Jalal* more to certain people? Because they ask for it, that's why. You go to the movies and find nobody is satisfied with just a shoot-out anymore. You have to see somebody blown up with a bazooka. Boom! If a movie is not R-rated, nobody is happy with it. No more romance and nice family shows, like "Leave it to Beaver", or "The Brady Bunch." All they have is sex, and that is not even really sex; it is just lust, to go along with the violence and adult language. This is what the world is asking for, and this is how Allah is answering. You want Allah's *Rahmat* (Mercy), you get Allah's *Rahmat*. Laws are made not only by your world, but by your actions. Try to treat your animals, friends, and neighbors nicely and then see what Allah is going to do for you.

Allah says in *Qur'an-i Karim* (Generous Quran), "Remember me and I will remember you." Now the question becomes, how are you going to remember Allah? That is how Allah is going to remember you. If you keep insisting on *Ya Qahhar* (O Destroyer), Allah is going to remember you with *Ya Qahhar*. So keep remembering Allah with *Ya Salam*, *Ya Hadi*, *Ya Adl*, *Ya Wadud* (Peace, Guidance, Justice, Love). See how important guidance is? We didn't know this before, but our Pirs came and said to do it. In this way, we are making this world a paradise, too. You can make a change in the world. That is why I'm here. To raise you. If you keep asking *Ya Salam*, Allah will give you His Peace. If you keep asking *Ya Hadi*, *Ya Hadi*, *Ya Hadi*, Allah will give you His Guidance. If you keep asking *Ya Adl*, *Ya Adl*, *Ya Adl*, Allah will give you His Justice.

But most people are after power so they won't have to be just. They think that with power they can abuse the other and take his or her belongings and make him like a slave. They want to be more powerful by dominating others. This is sick. Why? Because you are trying to prove that you are God. And Allah will lead you on. This is called *istidraj*. It is an important concept. I kept thinking about the meaning of this word and how I could translate it. Finally, it came to me yesterday: it means "to lead on." Allah will lead you on. Don't fall into that. If He gives you a little success in what you are doing you might say, "Oh yeah, man, I can do it now." Then Allah will say, "OK, so do it again" and you won't be able to.

Why can't you do it? Because Allah is God and you are not. Especially, I am not. I know that, for sure. Allah overrides my decisions all the time, but it's OK. Allah created me to work for

Him. He didn't create me so that He could work for me. And I'm happy to be working for Allah. If Allah doesn't dismiss me from His service, that is the biggest happiness for me.

So, please, don't give up. Don't be discouraged. There are still beautiful things in the world. Earth is very beautiful. It all depends on your mindset. Go and look for those beauties. Find the positive things on Earth. Then your life on Earth will be happier. I'm not saying you are going to be without some unhappiness, too. Depending upon your level of surrender, you are going to have some unhappiness. If you haven't cut your attachments all the way, of course, when Allah tests you and takes you away from certain things that you like, then it is going to be stressful. This is especially true for money and things like that.

Look From the Angle of Love

This is for all of you because you will all be, *inshallah*, my *khalifas* [representatives]. One of the biggest jobs of the Shaykh is motivation. We have to keep our motivation, under all conditions, because Allah is going to test the Sufi s, like everybody else. And when Allah tests, it is not that easy. It's not easy to continue to love Allah when He is hitting you. At that time, the Shaykh's job is to be able to change the point of view, as I am doing right now, and look at things from another angle, to preserve this love between the dervish and Allah. This love is going to bring you closer to Allah. When you lose love, it is all over. So that is why our Pir Abdul-Qadir Al Geylani says one should not get mad at Allah. Not that we don't, but that we shouldn't, because Allah is honestly and truly our only real Friend. Everybody else is going to leave you except Allah and you are going to be face-to-face with Allah at the end. So, don't put barriers between you and Allah, like money, fame, power, or anything else. Allah takes these things away so there will be nothing left between you and Him.

My Shaykh, Muhammad Ansari, says this world is for those who belong to it. If you are one of those people who belong to Earth, Allah will increase your earthly things. But, if you are for the Hereafter, to last forever with Allah, then Allah is going to increase your ability to do that. When Allah is taking something away from you, it means that Allah is giving you some other blessings instead. Of course, I may not be able to give these blessings to the landlord, but I have to be patient with this. Allah still pays the bills somehow. It comes down to the fact that whatever He wants happens, and that is OK. Do you understand?

I am so happy that you are all my kids. I love you all, and I mean it. Listen only love that matters in this world; nothing else. Everything else goes away and love is what is left in this world. Love is the biggest chemistry and catalyst that brings you closer to Allah. So please don't be stressed. Try to love Allah here and now. Love Him when you look at the water; when you look at the river; when you look at the flowers. Go and have a picnic – eat, drink and be happy, and praise Allah. Allah says in *Qur'an-i Karim* that we should look at the sun and adore Allah. Adore Allah who created the sun, not the sun itself. All of these creations are means for you to adore Allah, and Allah deserves to be adored, no matter what our situation is. No matter how dirty you are, who cleans you when you go to the shower or to the bathroom? Still, it is Allah who does.

Question: *It can be hard to love others when they lump all Muslims into the same boat.* That is not our goal. We don't care what they think. What matters is what Allah thinks. We cannot be responsible for their ignorance. They are responsible for their own ignorance.

Now I'm going to, *inshallah*, read something that Allah let me translate from Ahmed er Rifai's

book:

The Means of Guidance

Allah has *ilm* (knowledge). Allah the Most Excellent grants power or understanding to any of His creation He wants. I use the word creation to include everything, because you never know what He is going to do. He may give understanding to a tree, too. Our Prophet (pbuh) would talk to the trees. I talk to trees and spiders, and you can do that too. Likewise, Allah taught the wisdom of Qur'an to our Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and thus he enlightened the people. He (pbuh) is the means between the servant and the Lord. "Even as We have sent unto you a messenger from among you who recites our *ayat* [verse; revelation] to you, he makes you advance and teaches you wisdom." (*Sura Al-Baqara* 2:151) This is from the Qur'an.

Because the Prophet (pbuh) is the means for guidance, he is told "You verily guide them to a straight path." But the means is not the Guiding. Allah is the Guiding. Allah says in another *ayat*, "You cannot guide whom you love, but Allah guides whomever He wants." Allah alone is the Guide, but Allah, the Most High, chooses whomever He wants to guide with, and He chose Muhammad (pbuh) for guidance and teaching. He gave him His knowledge, and sent him as an example to others who want to be guided.

Allah is the Doer

So the critical point is "Who wants to be guided?" Do you want to be guided? Then you will be guided. Allah is sending you the means to guide you. You have to hold onto the means, but don't think that the means is guiding you. Allah is the Guide. The object of this guidance is Allah – and that's that. There is only one Guide and that is Allah and everything is done by Allah. But how does He do it? That is what we are trying to explain. If you don't understand this, you can fall into *shirk* [associating others with Allah]. Allah is the Doer. He does what He wants to do through his creatures, through those He chooses for his service. They can be in the angelic form, they can be in the form of *jinn* [unseen beings similar to humans], or they can be in a physical body like us. They can be in the form of trees, too. But who is the one who is really guiding? It is Allah Who is guiding. Who is the one really helping? Through your Shaykh, it is Allah that is helping. I am able to do nothing. I can't even help myself. But Allah can help somebody way over on the other side of the universe through me. It is Allah who is doing it, but I am the means.

Knowledge from the Presence

As with guidance, so also with teaching and training. Allah the Most High uses the Prophet (pbuh) as the means and Himself as the main teacher. This is confirmed in *Qur'an-i Karim*. Allah teaches you from His presence. That is called *ilm-i ladun* [knowledge from the presence]. Many *ayats* from the Quran show that the knowledge Allah gives is from His attribute of Infinite Knowing. It can be written into the heart of the people of *taqwa* [those who watch that Allah is pleased and are careful to keep from offending Allah]. Verse 29:49 of *Qur'an-i Karim* says that clear signs (*ayats*) are put in the heart of those that have been given knowledge. So it is not only our Prophet (pbuh), but other people as well who have been given knowledge. The Qur'an that was sent to Muhammad (pbuh) was taught (confirmed) to him by Archangel Gabriel, which means it is Allah's teaching. Angels receive information directly from Allah without any means and thus they become the outer means and confirmation between Allah and the prophets. Likewise, the prophets become the means between us and the angels. Allah is the Teacher of all and He is the One who guides and reveals all. Our Prophet (pbuh) is assigned to give people the message and explain it, and his decrees are for the outer. Allah, on the other hand, rules the inner.

I ought to give you an example and put stress on this point so you will not fall into *shirk*. We know that a book is incapable of writing, yet knowledge is spread by books. Knowledge belongs to the author. Contemplate that. If the Prophet (pbuh) is the book, Allah is the Writer. If the Prophet (pbuh)

is the means, Allah is the Doer.

So, that is one chapter of Ahmed er Rifai's book. There are many more chapters. The Pirs are blessing us with Allah's knowledge that is manifesting through them. We have to thank Allah and see how merciful He is for sending us these teachers, and not giving up for a thousand years. Do we deserve it? We deserve nothing. It is Allah's grace that you want to be guided. Allah is doing His part of guidance; He is the Guide. He uses various means to guide, and He is going to use you to guide somebody else. This is how He carries the torch from one to the other, and it will go on until Judgment Day. I'm happy that you are in His service, because nothing can top that. You are all blessed and you are all loved. That is why you are here today.

Minding Our Own Business

Ilm-i ladun means knowledge from the presence of Allah. That is what Allah is saying to the prophets – “We gave you knowledge from Our presence.” So in other words, you cannot find it in books. Allah teaches you directly. This is what I have been trying to tell you. The heart – the heart! Clean your heart; open your heart, so Allah can teach you directly, too. The subject matter of *haqq al-yaqin* [the truth of sure knowledge] is *ilm-i ladun* [knowledge from the presence]. Cleanliness is important for receiving this knowledge from the presence. Look, kids, I clean my glasses, and suddenly I see! This is what you need to do. Clean those glasses in your heart! One of the main ways to clean your heart is to keep from sticking your nose into what is not your business. The point of being a Sufi is to obey Allah and get closer to Allah. So when you start sticking your nose into other things, you are not getting closer to Allah. You are getting closer to yourself, because you are using your own mind, your own decisions, your own decrees. Where is Allah in this picture?

Let Allah tell you, “Do this, then do that.” I was wondering what I should do in this world where people are fighting. Whom should we help and whom should we not help? Then our Pirs came and told me, you don't have to help anybody. You belong only to one side. Your side is Allah. You are working for Allah. Did Allah tell you to do something? No. Then don't do anything. The human race is one race. If a Jew gets hurt, a human being is hurt; if an Iraqi gets hurt, a human being gets hurt, and if an American gets hurt, a human being gets hurt. We are the human beings. No matter who gets hurt, I am getting hurt. I don't want to get hurt. Why don't you guys behave yourselves? This is the side we take. We don't want violence in the world; we want peace. We don't want war; we don't want fights. We want Allah. If Allah says go fight; then we go fight. When He said to his Prophet (pbuh) go fight, then he did. Until then, he didn't. They tortured him; they threw stones at him, and he didn't do anything until Allah said, “Now you can defend yourself.”

Find a Moment of Peace

How long has the Earth been here? Remember that at the beginning of the creation, the angels asked, “Are you going to create somebody who causes bloodshed?” They must have seen this film before. I know where they saw this film before and so do you. If it stops at a certain point, it will start again. This is why I'm saying, if you find a moment of peace within yourself – if you can stop and smell the roses – that is a happy moment. You have to cherish that moment, no matter what is happening in the world. At any moment in time, somebody is dying and somebody is being born; somebody is getting married and somebody is getting divorced. We cannot just sit here and keep worrying about who is getting divorced and who is getting killed. If Allah wanted you to worry about all this, then it would be your job. But what does Allah tell

you? “Remember me much, sitting, standing, and reclining, and look into space and contemplate His creation and say ‘O my Lord, You didn’t create all this for nothing, and protect me from the torment of fire’.” So read Qur’an and find out what Allah wants from you and do that. Live your life.

What have I been telling you all? Please don’t make life miserable for yourself. Give up your attachments and enjoy your life. If you have food to eat, that is a happy occasion. Eat that food with enjoyment, and praise Allah and thank Allah because Allah says, “If you thank Me, I will increase My gifts.” So if you live the good moments and thank Allah, He will add to these good moments. If you keep looking somewhere else and don’t mind your business, then Allah will increase the negative moments, because that is what you want. This is not paradise here. Allah’s *Jamal* and *Jalal* are separate in the hereafter; here they are together. This is the only place where you can learn Allah totally. Do I make myself clear? Do you get the hint? Allahu Akbar!

—From Shaykh Taner’s *sohbet* May 21, 2004

Call of the Divine

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Editorial Staff: Shaykha Muzeyyen Ansari, Elizabeth Muzeyyen Brown,
Sheila Khadija Foraker, Daud Sander, Carol Janan Taylor, Ali Vargonen