

12) Piety In Practice

One of the other cases in which the word ‘Taqwa’ has been used is in relation to human deed. Human beings are rewarded on the Day of Judgment for their deeds. On that day, man will reap what he has sown. Perhaps all the Quranic verses and narrations on ‘Taqwa’ are aimed at human deed which includes intention too.

In this relation, the Lord of the universe says: ***“O you who believe! Be careful of (your duty to) Allah, and let every soul consider what it has sent on for the morrow, and be careful of (your duty to) Allah; surely Allah is Aware of what you do.”***¹

In this verse, the word “Taqwa” has been used twice and ***“what it has sent on for the morrow (deed)”*** is in between. Perhaps, it refers to the fact that one, who wishes to do something, has to have good intention that is for the sake of God. He should keep away from false incentives. He should be thorough when doing something. Furthermore, he should exercise piety in it.

This will cover many affairs including the question of justice. In this connection, God says: ***“Act equitably, that is nearer to piety, and be careful of (your duty to) Allah; surely Allah is Aware of what you do.”***²

On benevolence and doing good, God says: ***“... if you do good (to others) and guard (against evil), then surely Allah is Aware of what you do.”***³

On assistance, God says: ***“... help one another in goodness and piety, and do not help one another in sin and aggression; and be careful of (your duty to) Allah; surely Allah is Severe in requiting (evil).”***⁴

On the foundation of mosque, God says: ***“And say: Work; so Allah will see your work and (so will) His Apostle and the believers; and you shall be brought to the Knower of the unseen and the seen, then He will inform you of what you did. ...certainly a mosque founded on piety from the very first day is more deserving that you should stand in it; in it are men who love that they should be purified; and Allah loves those who purify themselves. Is he, therefore, better who lays***

his foundation on fear of Allah and (His) good pleasure, or he who lays his foundation on the edge of a cracking hollowed bank, so it broke down with him into the fire of hell; and Allah does not guide the unjust people.”[5](#)

In the above-mentioned verses, God refers to the Dhirar Mosque that had been built to divide the believers who gathered in the Qoba Mosque. When the Holy prophet (SAW) migrated to Medina where people were attracted by his good character and manners, Abu Aamir the Monk, an aristocrat member from the Khazraj tribe and well-versed in Torah and Gospel, envied the Holy prophet (SAW) and continuously challenged him until he participated in the battles of Uhud and Hunain. He finally fled to Rome to prepare an army to fight against Islam. From Rome, he wrote a letter to build the Dhirar Mosque, but God informed the Holy prophet (SAW) of the issue.

When the Messenger of Allah (SAW) returned from the battles of Tabuk, the hypocrites came to him, saying: “O Messenger of Allah! We have built a mosque, so bless it with your coming.” They meant to give value to the mosque with the Holy prophet’s presence in it and to achieve their goal, but immediately the following verse was revealed:

“And those who built a Masjid to cause harm and for unbelief and to cause disunion among the believers and an ambush to him who made war against Allah and His Messenger before; and they will certainly swear: We did not desire aught but good; and Allah bears witness that they are most surely liars. Never stand in it at all...”[6](#)

Also al-Mofaddhal relates: “I was in the presence of Imam Sadiq (AS) when the question of deeds was brought up. I said: ‘How little my deeds are!’ The Imam said: ‘Be silent! Ask for forgiveness of God!’ Then he said: ‘A little deed with piety is better than many deeds without piety.’ I said: ‘Are many deeds devoid of piety?’ The Imam said: ‘Yes. It is like a man who feeds the poor, is kind to the neighbors, his house is open with generosity, but a door of unlawfulness is opened to him and he enters through it. Such a deed is devoid of Taqwa. There is another person who has nothing but never does an unlawful act.” [7](#)

These verses and narrations were used to say that our deeds should be righteous. Furthermore, the results of deeds are important, for our deeds have no value without result. In this connection, God says: ***“I swear by time, most surely man is in loss, except those who believe and do good.”***[8](#)

God has also said: ***“Whoever does good whether male or female and he is a believer, We will most certainly make him live a happy life.”***[9](#)

In another verse, God says: ***“Then (as for) those who believe and do good, they shall have forgiveness and an honorable sustenance.”***[10](#)

On the same topic, God says: ***“And the blind and the seeing are not alike, nor those who believe and do good and the evil doer.”***[11](#)

Elsewhere, God has said: ***“Shall We treat those who believe and do good like the mischief-makers in the earth? Or shall We make those who guard (against evil) like the wicked?”***[12](#)

There are narrations to the same effect, stressing that deeds have to be good and righteous. Furthermore, there should be no obstacles on their way of acceptance. The following is an example.

Ibn Fahad al-Hilli in his book *Uddatod-Da’ee* and Seyed ibn Tawus in *Falah as-Saa’il* mention that the Holy Prophet (SAW) has been reported by Mu’ath ibn Jabal as saying: “Before creating heavens, God created seven angels, appointing each of them in a heaven and made that heaven splendid with that glory. Then, God appointed an angel as gatekeeper to each of the gates of the heavens.

The guardian angels record man’s deeds day and night and send them up and a light like the light of the sun is sent for him to the lower heaven. When they reach the sky of the world, they refine the deed and add to it, but all of a sudden, the angel will say: Wait! Throw this deed against the face of its doer. I am the angel of backbiting. I will not let the deed of a backbiter pass on to heaven. This is the order of my Lord.’ He added: ‘Then the next day while carrying good deeds, the angels return and pass by the former angel, refine the deed and add to it till they reach the second heaven where the angel of that heaven will say: Stop here! Throw this deed against the face of its doer, for with this deed, he was following mean objectives in the world. I am the angel of worldly affairs and will not let the deed of this person pass on to others from here.’

He said: ‘The next angels take up the deed of God’s servant from whose charity and prayer they are happy. However, when they reach the third heaven, the angel will say: Throw this deed against the face of its doer. I am the angel who record arrogance. This person had good deeds but, he was arrogant to people. My Lord has ordered me not to let his deed pass on to others from here.’ Then he said: ‘The guardian angels took up the deed of God’s servant while it was shining like a star and his voice was up with glorification of God, fasting, and performing of Hajj. They were taking it up to the fourth heaven when an angel would say: Stop here! Throw it against the face and belly of its doer. I am the angel that record self-admiration. He was self-conceited. He had good deeds, but he was self-important. My Lord has ordered to stop his deed to pass on to others from here.’

Then he said: ‘The next stage, the guardian angels take up man’s deed which is like a bride ready for wedding. When they reach the fifth heaven, the good deed is accompanied by Jihad, and prayer with rays of light like those of the Sun.’ However, the angel will say: ‘Stop here! I am the angel recording envy. Throw it against the face of its doer and put it on his shoulder. He was envious against the seekers of knowledge and the obedient ones to God. Whenever he saw someone superior in devotion, he envied him. Here, that man’s deed is put on his shoulder while his deed curses him. Then he said: once again, the guardian angels take up man’s deeds to the sixth heaven, but the angel will say: Stop here! I am the angel recording mercy. Throw this deed against the face of its doer and make him blind, for he had no mercy on anyone. If anyone committed a wrongdoing or suffered a loss, he would blame him.

My Lord has ordered me to stop his deed from passing on from here. He said: The guardian angels take up to heaven man's deed which is accompanied by understanding, endeavor and piety while it has a sound like that of thunder and lightning. In addition, three thousand angels will accompany it. When they reach the angel in the seventh heaven, he will say: Stop here! Throw this deed against the face of its doer. I am the angel in charge of veiling. I will conceal from Him any deed which is not for the sake of Him.

This person intended to obtain a high position with the chiefs and to have reputation. My Lord has ordered me to stop him from passing on to others as long as his deed has not been refined for God. Then he said: This time, the guardian angels will take up man's deeds for which man is happy. Deeds like prayer, alms, fasting, Hajj, good temper, silence and remembrance of God which are accompanied by the heavenly angels as well as the seven angels rip all the veils till they stand before God and they testify for him in practice and with Du'a. However, God will say: You are the guardians of the deeds of My servants but I am the guardian of what passes in his heart. He did not intend Me with his deeds. My curse be upon him. The angles will say: Your curse and our curse be on him!

At this time, Mu'ath started weeping and then said: 'What shall I do to have devotion in my deed?' The Holy Prophet said: 'Follow your prophet in being certain about the unity of God.'

Mu'ath reports: 'I said: You are the Messenger of Allah and I am Mu'ath!' The Holy Prophet (SAW) said: 'O Mu'ath! If you have any shortcoming in your deed, do not criticize your brothers in faith and the carriers (memorizers and expert) of the Holy Quran. Blame *yourself* for your wrongdoing not your brethren. Do not ever justify yourself by reproaching your brothers in faith. Do not overestimate yourself at the price of humiliating your brothers. Do not dissimulate.

Let not your worldly desires interfere in your affairs of the hereafter. Watch your tongue when associating with people so that people will not keep aloof from you. Do not whisper in an assembly. Do not magnify yourself, for you will be deprived of the blessings. Do not reproach people, for the dog of hell will reproach you. God says: "***(I swear) by the Nashitat (the angels who draw out the souls of people)!***"¹³ Do you know what "Nashitat" is? It is the dogs of Hell that eat away flesh and bone!"

I said: 'Who can forbear this description?' The Holy Prophet (SAW) said: 'O Mu'ath! This will be easy to one for whom God has made it easy.'

The narrator says: 'Thereafter, I did not see Mu'ath recite the Holy Quran as much as he would read this tradition.'" ¹⁴

Allamah Sheikh Baha'ee says: "This tradition should make you understand that pure deeds are few. I wish you success in self-restraint."

Truly, piety in practice means that human beings should keep aloof from moral, ideological and scientific deviations. Whatever they do should be aimed at pleasing God. They should have only God in mind and

avoid passions and the obeying of Satan.

There are many people who mistakenly think they are doing good deeds whereas they are practically following their desires and Satan, though their deeds might be done in the name of prayer or religion.

About such people, God says: ***“Say: Shall We inform you of the greatest losers in (their) deeds? (these are) they whose labor is lost in this world’s life and they think that they are well versed in skill of the work of hands. These are they who disbelieve in the signs of their Lord and His meeting, so their deeds become null, and therefore, We will not set up a balance for them on the Day of Resurrection. Thus, it is that their recompense is hell, because they disbelieved and held My signs and My apostles in mockery.”***¹⁵

Imam Sajjad (AS) has been reported as saying: “O people, exercise divine piety and know that your return is towards Him. In this relation, the Holy Quran says: ***“On that day every soul shall find present what it has done of good and what it has done of evil. It shall wish that between it and that (evil) there are a long duration of time; and Allah makes you to be cautious of (retribution from) Himself.”***¹⁶

- ^{1.} [Qur'an, 59:18.](#)
- ^{2.} [Qur'an, 5:8.](#)
- ^{3.} [Qur'an, 4:128.](#)
- ^{4.} [Qur'an, 5:2.](#)
- ^{5.} [Qur'an, 9:105–109.](#)
- ^{6.} [Qur'an, 9:107.](#)
- ^{7.} [Wasa'il al-Shiah, vol. 11, p. 190.](#)
- ^{8.} [Qur'an, 103:1–3.](#)
- ^{9.} [Qur'an, 16:97.](#)
- ^{10.} [Qur'an, 22:50.](#)
- ^{11.} [Qur'an, 40:50.](#)
- ^{12.} [Qur'an, 38:28.](#)
- ^{13.} [Qur'an, 79:2.](#)
- ^{14.} [Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 67, pp. 246,248.](#)
- ^{15.} [Qur'an, 18:103–106.](#)
- ^{16.} [Qur'an, 3:30.](#)

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