

## 1) What Is Piety (Taqwa)

The word *Taqwa* or piety (to fear Allah and to guard against evil) is frequently used by laymen and experts and recommended by one group or the other. But what does it really mean? Each group has a special meaning of piety in mind. To clarify its meaning, we need to discuss the views of the lexicographers and scholars as well as those of Ahl al-Bayt and some of the mystics. Allamah Tarihi, may his soul rest in peace, has said that Taqwa in the holy Quran has several meanings as follows:

- a. Fear and awe: ***“Me alone should you fear”***<sup>1</sup>
- b. Obedience and worship: ***“be careful of (your duty to) Allah with the care which is due to Him”***<sup>2</sup>
- c. Purifying the hearts from sins: ***“And he who obeys Allah and His Apostle, and fears Allah, and is careful of (his duty to) Him, these it is that are the achievers”***<sup>3</sup> (Qur'an, 24:52).

It is said that “This last meaning is the real meaning of Taqwa and not the first two meanings.” He has also said: “Taqwa originally comes from the word *Waqaya* meaning *to ban* and *to keep*.” It is also said that “Taqwa comes from *Waqayah* meaning *safeguard* and *protect*.”

Raghib says: “*Waqayah* is to keep something from what harms it and Taqwa is to guard *self* from what it fears.” He further says that speaking religiously Taqwa is to guard self against sin. Its realization depends on abandoning what has been generally forbidden and even some of the permissible acts.

Allamah Majlisi, may his soul rest in peace, says: “And Allah safeguarded him from evil, a good safeguarding. I kept myself from His chastisement and from opposing Him.”

Elsewhere he says: “Taqwa means to safeguard and etymologically, it means self-restraint. Generally speaking, it means to keep self from what harms it in the Hereafter and the more it is restricted, it will be better for self.”

An ascetic was asked what Taqwa is. He said: “What will you do if you enter a piece of land full of thistles?” The one who had asked the question said: “I will keep away myself from it.” the ascetic said: “Do the same in world, it is Taqwa.”

An Arab poet says: “Be like one who walks on a piece of land with thistles in it; he will obviously keep away from it. Take no small sin lightly, for mountains are made up of sands.”

Imam Ali (AS) has been quoted as saying: “Taqwa is to avoid sins.”

Being asked about Taqwa, Imam Sadiq (AS) said: “Taqwa is to be present in a place God has ordered and to be absent from a place He has prohibited.”

A great part of supplications signifies the same meaning: “O Allah, find me not in a place You have forbidden.”

From what we discussed, we infer that Taqwa is self-restraint and safeguarding oneself from what is against the Lord. In this way Taqwa covers all the meanings mentioned herein.

[1.](#) Qur'an, 2:41.

[2.](#) Qur'an, 3:102.

[3.](#) Qur'an, 24:52.

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