

Lesson 22: The Realm of Right and Falsehood

“O Abu Dharr! Right is heavy and bitter while falsehood is light and sweet. All too often, an hour’s licentiousness results in protracted sorrow and grief.”

Right and Falsehood and the Instances of Their Application

One of the general axioms which is discussed in Islamic culture and has wide applications is the concept of ‘Right and Falsehood [*haqq wa batil*]’. In the Gracious Qur’an, right and falsehood have been employed in regard to objects of worship; in the case that Allah, the Exalted, is asserted as the right object of worship and the rest of the objects of worship are known as false:

...ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ وَأَنَّ مَا يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ هُوَ الْبَاطِلُ

“That is because Allah is the Truth, and that which they call upon besides Him; that is the falsehood...”¹

Sometimes, right and falsehood are treated in the field of beliefs, opinions and notions and at times they are discussed in the scope of actions and deeds. One of the issues which the Gracious Qur’an teaches us is that the world is intertwined with right and falsehood. It can be asserted that the formation of this cosmos is combined of two elements; right and falsehood.

Allah is the foundation of right and falsehood which is a parasitical matter that manifests itself under the auspices of right. On the basis of the teachings of the Qur’an, this mixture of right and falsehood is not eternal, a day will come when right will be completely separated from falsehood and will remain stable and falsehood will be exterminated:

...بَلْ نَقْذِفُ بِالْحَقِّ عَلَى الْبَاطِلِ فَيَدْمَغُهُ فَإِذَا هُوَ زَاهِقٌ

“Nay! We cast the truth against the falsehood, so that it breaks its head, and lo! It vanishes...”²

Elsewhere, Allah likens falsehood to foam:

أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَسَالَتْ أَوْدِيَةٌ بِقَدَرِهَا فَاحْتَمَلَ السَّيْلُ زَبَدًا رَابِيًا وَمِمَّا يُوقِدُونَ فِي النَّارِ ابْتِغَاءَ حُلْيَةٍ أَوْ مَتَاعٍ زَبَدٌ مِثْلُهُ كَذَلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْحَقَّ وَالْبَاطِلَ فَأَمَّا الزَّبَدُ فَيَذْهَبُ جُفَاءً وَأَمَّا مَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ فَيَمْكُثُ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَذَلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ

“He sends down water from the cloud, then watercourses flow (with water) according to their measure, and the torrent bears along the swelling foam, and from what they melt in the fire for the sake of making ornaments or apparatus arises a scum like it; thus does Allah compare the truth and falsehood; then as for the scum, it passes away as a worthless thing; and as for that which profits the people, it tarries in the earth; thus does Allah set forth parables.”³

There is a delicate point, which becomes apparent once we pay heed to the reality of foam, in the comparison between falsehood and foam. Foam denotes bubbles which appear on top of water: when man looks at a water basin full of soap foam, he sees bubbles floating and going up and down. If a person looks at that water basin for the first time, it is the foam which attracts his attention and he becomes heedless of the water under that water basin and is the source of that foam. He imagines that reality is this same foam which appears on top of the water floating up and down and has various colors, despite the fact that the foam has acquired its reality from that same water and is itself under the auspices of water.

The world is synthesized of right and falsehood, but falsehood exists as a parasitical companion of right. It is possible for falsehood to become more manifest than right, to have a lot of sparkling, to have a lot of bloom and thrive, but in the laws [or principles] of nature right is like water and falsehood is like its foam and does not last long and becomes exterminated and that which endures is right that is beneficial to people.

Falsehood, like foam, is manifest for a few moments and after that, reveals its true reality and truth. Of course, once we measure these moments with our standards, we think that one moment ought not to last more than a few seconds or a minute, but a hundred and also a thousand years are nothing more than one moment for the One who has total knowledge of the past eternity and the future eternity; His standards are different from our criteria.

The criteria which we employ in measuring times and immortality [or continued existence] of things differ from the standards of [Allah] the Right. The length of times, whether it were a moment, an hour, a year or a century, does not have any credibility for someone whose perception conceives right. He perceives what is beyond our sights and conceives horizons which are very high and enduring and when he takes those criteria and standards into account, falsehood is not a matter worth paying attention to and it lacks

endurance [or continued existence].

The Visible Appearance of Right and Falsehood

The theme of the Noble Prophet's (S) words in this section is that right is heavy and bitter and falsehood is light and sweet. To explain this sentence, it ought to be said that a believer who is pre-occupied with the prosperity of the hereafter must take the exigencies of his faith into consideration, reflect about his spiritual and psychological perfection and get rid of all the hurdles of the way and attain his aim.

It is natural for a believer who is at the beginning of the journey to expect everything to be light, easy, pleasant and sweet. He has not made himself ready to bear hardships and bitterness; it is for this reason that he is likely to stumble along the way and trespass the bounds of right and/or if as before he carries on along that way, he is sad and worried about all the hardships and problems along the path of good and right.

The question is always asked of man regarding why right is heavy and bitter and man is confronted by strenuous hardships but on the contrary falsehood is easy and sweet. Perhaps, this query may arise that, God forbid, is Allah stingy and does not let His friends derive benefit from the pleasures and sweetness of the world and places on their shoulders heavy and hard duties? What prevented Him from making right sweet so that all the people might become followers of the truth and not be misguided?

When we compare the life of a believing person with that of an infidel, we observe that a believer has to endure a lot of problems; we notice how he has to kill themselves in order to procure one piece of licit bread, how he has so many problems with his family, mate, children and neighbors. In contrast, his corrupt and licentious neighbor or relative has a pleasurable and pleasant life and has no problem whatsoever.

As a result of this comparison, he asks this question, "Why does Allah who, according to uncountable *hadiths*, loves the believers and has heaped a lot of praise on them, confront them with these encumbrances and hardships? Consider how much a believer has to suffer pains in order to procure the needs of his lives. Once he has made up his mind to marry, he sometimes has to search for years to find a suitable mate. Wherever he goes to ask for a girl's hand in marriage, they feign disdain and do not give him a wife. But the others easily select wives of their choice.

This same comparison exists between believing and infidel societies; when we compare the Muslim people of Bosnia-Herzegovina with their non-Muslim neighbors, we ask ourselves why the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina have to endure all these hardships and tragedies. Why do the unbelievers live in peace in their vicinity and neighborhood and the Muslim nation has to every moment bear seeing their lives, properties and families being trampled underfoot and for the callous Serb nation to prevail over them? If Allah is a Supporter of the believers, then why does He not help them?

These questions arise in different forms for us and every person has a response to them suiting his knowledge. But in any case, ambiguities exist for most of us. Perhaps, the people whose faith is mightier say that what occurs is based on the expedience of Allah.

There is no opportunity here to embark upon academic issues in order to give responses to these questions, amongst them the question as to why right is bitter and why Allah has not made it sweet so that all people might be inclined to it and not be seduced to falling into perdition and our aim is to derive practicable results from and strive to make the matter clear because if an issue does not completely become clear for man, it does not leave an impressive effect on the heart and/or the Devil seduces him and by bringing doubts up becomes a hurdle of effective fruits in the heart and after the clarification of issues and overcoming the hurdles, there no longer remains any room for doubts and the Devil's insinuations.

Man and His Free Will, Volition and Allah's Temptations

Man's life in the world is founded on choosing the correct path and traversing the stages of perfection of his own volition. Man's most outstanding quality is that he is free and at liberty as regards his movements and spiritual wayfaring. Allah created existents like angels which only have an inclination towards right and even if their actions are volitional, their disposition is still only directed towards right and adoration of Allah and they have no tendency towards falsehood. Worship of Allah is sweet and pleasurable for them.

Therefore, the order of nature is not devoid of existents which only have a tendency towards right and are exclusively preoccupied with servitude of Allah. For this reason, the will of Allah is dependent upon His creating an existent whose position is higher and loftier than that of the angels; that is why He made a human being who in spite of having an inclination to falsehood and the carnal soul, will trudge the path of his perfection of his own volition. Man ought to forsake the pleasure of sin in order to attain eternal prosperity.

If this existent tramples the appetitive soul underfoot and seeks the path of bliss, he will, without the least doubt, ascend higher than the angels for the reason that in spite of being faced with two conflicting dispositions, he of his own choice and volition abstains from his pleasures and procures the spirit of worship and adoration of Allah.

What has been gathered is that man in the world has two paths in front of him: one is the way of right and the other is the course of falsehood. Of course, it ought to be borne in mind that it is not true that once man selects any one of those two courses, he is compelled to keep trudging that path.

With regard to what has previously been mentioned—that man is a free-willed and unrestrained existent—it must be admitted that as this free-will and volition is existent in the initial selection of the way and path, so too is it existent in its constancy. For this reason, man always has the capacity to

change his direction and course and he is endlessly free and at liberty when confronted by the two paths of right and falsehood. One of those two ways is the course of Allah and the other is the path of the Devil; one is the course of spiritual ascension and perfection and the other is the path of decadence and condemnation.

The other point which ought to be taken into consideration is that the world is a place of tests and trials and naturally it denotes a time when man is confronted by bitterness and hardships and comes out of the test triumphant by bearing with patience those hardships.

If spiritual ascendancy and perfection were sweet at first sight for man and falsehood and decadence were bitter, tests would be devoid of purport because trials call for man to forsake his desires and wishes and perform deeds for Allah and in the case that right were to appear sweet at first sight, man would discline himself from the bitter falsehood and incline towards the sweet right for his own sake and for the good pleasure of Allah.

In the same way, if all falsehood were sweet and the course of right were devoid of any sweetness and pleasure, a person who abstained from falsehood and selected the correct path would be deprived of all pleasures; therefore, it is not true at all that there is absolutely no gratification along the course of right.

In any case, right is heavy and falsehood is bitter and it is natural for a person who has chosen the right course of his own volition to patiently bear all the bitterness and hardships of the path of right. Of course, Allah's divine decree is not the same for all people, because the capacity of all individuals is not of the same manner and not all human beings have the capability to endure every kind of affliction and hardship; it is for this reason that Allah has a special divine decree for every human being; He decrees tribulations and problems for some people in their youth and for others in their old age. He afflicts one man with illness and another with poverty. He tries one man by means of his spouse and the other through his friend. It is not true that a believer will be guaranteed safety from any hardships and adversities because in this case he would not attain perfection.

For the reason that the world is a place of trials, a believer ought to strengthen his faith by means of enduring hard times and prove his loyalty to divine laws and his contentment with the divine will of Allah. With all certainty, this is a very hard undertaking, but he ought to patiently go through all these tribulations because he professes to be believer. But the infidel has no such affirmation; on the contrary he has no familiarity with Allah and the truth. He wishes to be at ease in this transient world and whatever happens later is not a matter of his concern. If he performs good works in this world at all, Allah grants him his reward right in this world:

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَزِينَتَهَا نُوَفِّ إِلَيْهِمْ أَعْمَالَهُمْ فِيهَا وَهُمْ فِيهَا لَا يُبْخَسُونَ * أُولَئِكَ لَيْسَ لَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ إِلَّا النَّارُ وَحَبِطَ مَا صَنَعُوا فِيهَا وَبَاطِلٌ مَا كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ

“Whoever desires this world’s life and its finery, We will pay them in full their deeds therein, and they shall not be made to suffer loss in respect of them. These are they for whom there is nothing in the hereafter, and what they wrought in it shall go for nothing, and vain is what they do.”⁴

For this reason, people who seek the truth ought to be ready to endure tribulations and adversities and be content with whatever occurs because this is the exigency of selecting the right path. If an individual does not have the capacity to endure hardships, he must select a course other than the path of right. Advancement, perfection and the super human spiritual stations are not attainable save by means of perseverance in the face of tribulations.

The secret truth is that right is bitter and falsehood is sweet and that the seeker of right ought to choose the right path of his own volition and be tried for his choice. If it were not like this, no human being would be tried and without the least doubt this trial is for the purpose of measuring the standard of faith and piety of individuals and their disposition to right and the other purpose is also to make clear the extent to which they prefer the will of Allah over their carnal souls?

Therefore, there ought to be hard and tiresome duties so that man may by exercising piety and contentment with the will of Allah and patience in the face of tribulations traverse the course of perfection. If all duties were easy and simple, all the people of the world would become Muslims and the prominence and distinction of any person would not become clear.

It is in the battlefield of adversities, hardships, overlooking the carnal desires and putting the will and pleasure of Allah first that a prominent person like Salman Farsi shows himself and in arriving at the zenith and pinnacle of human perfection, leaves the rest of the people behind and attains the highest levels of completion and human ascendancy.

There is room here to relate the story of one of the *‘ulama’* (Islamic scholars) and great mystics, the late Illahi Qumshe’i, may Allah be pleased with him. He was a great and emancipated man. This prominent and earnest man translated the Gracious Qur’an and did not receive any payment for doing that invaluable job despite that if he had got the right of publication, he and his family would have lived in ease and leisure. He sometimes used to drive himself to the university on a tripod wheeled machine despite being a university lecturer.

On one of his journeys to the holy city of Mashhad, once he had entered the holy shrine of Imam al-Rida (‘a), it occurred to him that he ought to ask for the station of contentment [*rida*] from the Imam (‘a). This is what impelled him to say, “Your Holiness! Your name is al-Rida (lit. pleasure), and I have come into your house.

Ask Allah to grant me the station of *rida*’ (being well-pleased and content with whatever pleases Allah or is decreed by Him).” When he was coming out of the holy mausoleum and was heading towards home, he was accidentally hit by a car as a result of which he got injured and his bone got broken. The people

gathered and arrested the driver, but the late Qumshe'ri addressed them thus, "Leave him alone and let him go free. This is a gift from Imam al-Rida. I asked him for the station of contentment and submission to Allah's decree and I have attained it. If this accident did not occur, it would not become clear whether I have attained the station of contentment or not. I have to prove beyond the shadow of doubt that I am pleased with whatever pleases Allah and am not sad at all!"

Man and the Two Inclinations towards Right and Falsehood

Man has two different attractions in two directions; circumstances have to be provided in order to clarify to what man is more inclined when faced with two antagonistic inner attractions towards right and falsehood. Sometimes, the right deed which he carries out is not opposed and is not at conflict with his desire and wish; in this case discharging that work is not difficult.

The problem lies where there is antagonism and disagreement between these two pulls; the devil commands one thing and Allah orders other than that, the carnal soul demands one thing and Allah enjoins the opposite of it. It is in these circumstances that man becomes an object of trials and the value of deeds becomes apparent.

In this case, the more the allurements towards sin and the more an individual tramples his carnal soul underfoot and opposes it, the more he will earn reward and that resistance against the appetitive soul has more considerable fruits in the perfection of man's heart and soul.

The value of a youth who in spite of having feelings and strong instinctive inclinations towards pleasures of the flesh but abstains from sin which is suitable with his youth is more than the worth of an old man who forsakes that sin. It is not difficult for an old man to abstain from that sin because he is not very inclined to that sin. In this case, the reward of that youth is more and in contrast if that old man commits that sin, his guilt is more because he was not under any pressure and was not so inclined to that evil deed. (It is very ugly for an old man to commit adultery.)

If, Allah forbid, a youth finds himself on the verge of committing sin such as adultery or fornication and succeeds at prevailing over his animal instincts and passion, he ascends high spiritual stations and forsaking that sin brings to hand immense perfection because he has succeeded at overlooking sin as a result of a lot of inner effort and intense love for Allah and high faith. It is therefore natural for sin to be sweet in this world and for right to be bitter so that man may be tried and thus it will become clear who preferred Allah over everything else and who preferred right over the carnal soul and who chose to pursue falsehood instead of right.

Of course, it is self-evident that the nobility and eminence of man is dependent upon perfection being volitional and a fruit of free-will. He ought to be absolutely free and at liberty when combating the carnal soul and perform good works and forsake evil deeds of his own volition and for the sake of love of Allah and His pleasure.

It has been said that right is bitter and falsehood is sweet; but the sweetness of sin and the bitterness of sin is meant for ordinary people, not everyone. Ordinary people, on the basis of their natural disposition, pursue the desires and wishes of their hearts and duties which impose restrictions on them are hard and unbearable. In contrast, falsehood is for them light and easy, because they do not see any hardships and restrictions in doing it.

It is very easy for man to utter vain and futile words, but once he decides to say meaningful things, he ought to reflect upon every word of his speech lest he utters void words and it is misconstrued as gossip, false accusation or slander and lest he makes fun of and torments someone. In that case, he meditates about the effects and fruits of his words. But if he wants to utter futile and vain words, he opens his mouth and utters whatever empty words he wishes.

The reason why it has been stated that the bridge over hell is thinner than a hair is because man ought to take the destination and the provisions of this journey into consideration whatever step he intends to take and whatever course he sets foot on along that path. He ought to ask himself whether Allah is pleased with his course or not. He ought to take the motive and incentive of every work into consideration and guard over his tongue lest he utters whatever crosses his mind and he must watch over his eyes to avoid looking everywhere and at everything or everyone.

Without doubt, observance of all its aspects is very hard and equal to performing toilsome duties. In contrast, if man intends to do everything according the futile whims and desires of his heart, he lives easily and with pleasure and sweetness. Beyond the shadow of doubt, all adversities of the believer are confined to this world and he will not have any pains and hardships in the eternal Garden of bliss:

الَّذِي أَحَلَّنَا دَارَ الْمُقَامَةِ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ لَا يَمَسُّنَا فِيهَا نَصَبٌ وَلَا يَمَسُّنَا فِيهَا لُغُوبٌ

“Who has made us alight in a house abiding forever out of His grace; toil shall not touch us therein, nor shall fatigue therein afflict us.”⁵

Not only is the eternal Garden of bliss devoid of hardships and tribulations, and nothing similar to what is in the world exists there but also even the dwellers of paradise do not feel hunger too but, on the contrary, feel appetite for food and derive pleasure from it. In contrast, the nature of this world's life is intertwined with pain and hardships and everyone is confronted with adversities and encumbrances whether he is a believer or unbeliever:

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي كَبَدٍ

“Certainly we have created man to be in distress.”⁶

This same world is different for the believers and the infidels, the lovers and companions of right and the

lovers of falsehood. Those obsessed with falsehood enjoy relative ease and comfort and have a sweet experience from life but in contrast life is bitter for a believer and lovers of the truth.

Of course, it is not true that the entire course of the lives of believers and the friends of right are encompassed by bitterness; on the contrary, the bitterness of the world is for them relative. There are special pleasures too reserved for the saints [*awliya*] of Allah. They too derive pleasure from eating and sleeping, but their tribulations and encumbrances in the world are more than the adversities of the people of falsehood.

For the reason that man grows and is nurtured on the laps of nature, he naturally initially feels the sweetness and pleasures of the natural cosmos. His sense of taste is more prepared for the perception of worldly, material and sensual pleasures; it takes long for him to attain a spiritual experience and disposition. By means of volitional spiritual journeying along the right course and habituating himself with good deeds and enduring the tribulations of life and forsaking material gratifications, man gradually tastes the spiritual pleasures and sweetness of right. This is a truth which the Gracious Qur'an hints at too:

وَأَسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ وَإِنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلَّا عَلَى الْخَاشِعِينَ

“And seek assistance through patience and prayer, and most surely it is a hard thing except for the humble ones.”⁷

Allah states that prayer is a hard and heavy burden for all the people except the humble ones. Some people wake up early in the morning and get busy with exercise and work-out and perform heavy duties but feel lazy when they want to perform two *rak'ats* (cycles) of prayer. They do not wake up from sleep in order to pray but arise from sleep to do exercise often times take up to one hour exercising, running and/or mountain climbing!

They do so because their sense of taste does not perceive the feel of prayer. He feels the pleasure and benefit of exercise and he derives gratification because it has been said that exercise is beneficial and invigorating for the body. In contrast, his faith is not so strong and he does not believe nor has faith in the words of Allah, the Noble Prophet (S) and Infallible Imams ('a).

For humble people and men who have known Allah and have believed in Him, not only is prayer not a heavy and expensive burden, but is easy and pleasure-giving. Because they have attained spiritual maturity, they find affection and fondness with Allah during prayer and feel so much satisfaction from prayer that they do not desire to bring their prayers to an end.

For them, there is no pleasure higher than prayer and invocation of Allah; it is for this reason that some of the great scholars have stated, “If the emperors of the world knew what pleasure lies in prayer, they would forsake the empires and pursue nothing else but prayer.” For the prophets ('a), the saints [*awliya*]

of Allah and those who have been trained on their school, right is so sweet and gratifying that they feel as though they have lost their most beloved person once they go beyond the bounds of right. They have become so fond of the right path and doing good deeds and have fallen so much in love with it that once they quit doing a good work, they feel as though they have lost an item from which it is not feasible to detach one's heart. People who have a habit of keeping vigil at night feel very distressed once they fail to wake at night to engage in prayer and invocation of Allah.

The General Inclination to Sensual and Worldly Pleasures

Taking into consideration the fact that most of the people have an inclination to sensual and worldly pleasures, the point of discourse is that what ought man to do in order to remain on the course of perfection and to have the capacity to fight against materialistic leanings and set foot on the path of right in spite of feeling the animal instincts and pleasures of the flesh in himself?

In response to this query, it ought to be said that pleasure-seeking has been embedded in man's natural disposition and man's motivation for doing deeds is the gratification which he brings to hand. We do deeds which please us and keep aloof from what is displeasing to us. We conceive pleasure for ourselves even in the vanity and sin which we do but the way to forsake it is to reflect upon the fruits, consequences and encumbrances which result from sin, or meditate upon the pleasures that are a result of good works.

Even if enduring the hardships of good and right deeds is exhaustive, but still if the pleasing benefits and fruits of good deeds are taken into consideration, bearing those tribulations becomes easy for us. In reality, people have this kind of comparison when performing the hard and difficult chores of life:

The laborer who embarks upon hard work early in the morning with motivation and works up to night time in sweat derives pleasure from enduring all hardships because he is engrossed in thinking about the fruits of his work. The baker who sometimes bakes bread at fifty degrees of heat bears all hardships because he earns a wage with which he procures the needs of his life. When he ponders about the results of his work and conceives that some of his problems in life will be solved, he derives benefit from life and he easily bears the pains of his work.

In reality, enduring these hardships is reasonable and all people are such that once they have compared hardships with pleasures, they do that which will grant them more gratification. If they earn more profit and wages from their occupation, in the end they attain more satisfaction. In truth, they do not directly derive pleasure from the profit and benefit of their labor, but it is a means by which to derive pleasure; he procures a house and the amenities of his life with the money which he earns from his work. For this reason, an intelligent man endures the hardships of work in order to bring to hand higher pleasure in the end.

An intelligent man keeps aloof from using drugs and his transient pleasure because he ponders about

his long term ill effects. He knows that he will derive pleasure for a few seconds and feels high, but he will be miserable for the rest of his life. If we admit that no matter how sweet and pleasurable sin might be, what consequences and encumbrances it gives birth to—if in the world we are not with bad consequences, beyond the shadow of doubt we will be encountered by them in the hereafter—it is for this reason that we keep aloof from using drugs. We also forsake sin because we fear lest we are entangled in eternal divine retribution because of it.

Transient pleasure which results in protracted regrets and entanglements appears in various forms nowadays. In the past, there used to be only alcohol which used to intoxicate man and thereafter the ill and undesirable consequences would become visible; but nowadays different kinds of drugs have been added to them. A bad friend deceives man by explaining the pleasure and high which lies in a substance like heroin and impels him to use it.

Man feels pleasure the first time he uses it, uses it once more and finally becomes an addict and miserable for the rest of his life. Other sins too are like this. If we were to reflect upon the entanglements which the sin we are about to commit gives rise to, we would certainly keep aloof from it. In addition to the hereafter, a lot of sins have ill consequences right in this world. Sometimes, one licentious look at a strange person makes the entire life of a person miserable and a household crumbles as a result of that licentious look. This is one of the consequences of sin in this world; the divine retribution and requital of the next world have not yet been inflicted:

فَأَذَاقَهُمُ اللَّهُ الْخِزْيَ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَلَعَذَابُ الْآخِرَةِ أَكْبَرُ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ

“So Allah made them taste the disgrace in this world’s life, and certainly the punishment of the hereafter is great; did they but know.”⁸

Elsewhere, it states:

لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَلَعَذَابُ الْآخِرَةِ أَشَقُّ

“They shall have chastisement in this world’s life, and the punishment of the hereafter is certainly more grievous...”⁹

Therefore, by comparing the pleasure of sin with its consequences, we ought to try not to be contaminated by sin; especially before the attraction of sin affects us and we are not on the verge of sin, keeping aloof from sin is very easy because once the allurements of sin has had an effect in us and we have arrived on the verge of sin, it is very difficult to abstain from it. There was a great man, may Allah have mercy on him, who used to say that the youths ought to request Allah to tranquilize the carnal desires because in other than that case extinguishing them is difficult.

Until man has not gone under the influence of carnal desires and/or anger, he is peaceful and he is capable of reflecting and making decisions and self-inspection so that he may have the ability to resist the temptation to sin. But if he does not pre-decide and pre-meditate, he does not find the opportunity to think at the time of enticement by carnal desires or when overtaken by anger because the intellect is put out once man is enticed by carnal desires.

Besides the carnal desires and anger, the Devil has other means and forces too for misleading man, some of which are social causes: in the society, everyone naturally wants to be like the others. This is a psychological and spiritual cause which appears in man in his early days of life. Of course, this cause, like the rest of the causes, has both negative and positive results. What is necessary is to know the bounds of good and evil and derive benefit from this cause to the correct extent so that man does not blindly follow and imitate.

Conformity with the others in most cases is a cause of man's deliverance from destruction; a lot of youths who had the inclination of being like their good friend have been pulled to the mosque. So many youths went to the battlefield under the auspices of this very cause. In the beginning, they were not so interested in going to the battleground, when they noticed their friends and the boys in the neighborhood going to the battlefield; they too got attracted to fighting.

These are the good effects that this cause has. In contrast, in an environment which is corrupt and depraved, this very cause becomes a means of getting disposed to sin, especially among adolescents and youths because adolescents and youths quickly acquire the characteristics of those around them and do not resist an indecent environment that much. But the factor of seeking to be like the others is weaker in those older and they seldom copy the characteristics of other people.

The role models for youths are either the majority of the community and/or prominent individuals and/or advanced nations. Once there exists in most of the people an inclination, a person is after imitating a role model tells himself that most of the people are normal and not mad; therefore, their actions are correct. Thereafter, he goes under the influence of that cause which we have mentioned and follows the majority of the people. It is for this reason that we see some of the people under the influence of this cause and they are allured to corruption; especially if the majority of the community is depraved.

[1.](#) Surat al-Hajj 22:62.

[2.](#) Surat al-Anbiya' 21:18.

[3.](#) Surat al-Ra'd 13:17.

[4.](#) Surat Hud 11:15-16.

[5.](#) Surat Fatir 35:35.

[6.](#) Surat al-Balad 90:4.

[7.](#) Surat al-Baqarah 2:45.

[8.](#) Surat al-Zumar 39:26.

[9.](#) Surat al-Ra'd 13:34.

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