

## Self-Judgment and Self-Control

Self-judgment is to call oneself to account every day regarding the good deeds and wrongdoings. If the scale of acts of obedience outweighs that of acts of disobedience, we must thank God, lest we must discipline ourselves.

Self-control stands for protecting oneself against breach of the obligatory religious rites and the commitment of the forbidden.

It is necessary for the rational to train himself on self-judgment and self-control, since all human souls are susceptible to evil. If they are neglected, they go away from the right, but if they are controlled by means of guidance, they shine with virtues:

***“And (I swear) by the soul and that (Power) which designed it and inspired it with knowledge of evil and piety, those who purify their souls will certainly have everlasting happiness and those who corrupt their souls will certainly be deprived of happiness. (91:7-10)”***

The Prophet (S) said “Before you do a matter that you intend, you should investigate its end result; if it is good, you then should keep on. If not, you should not do it<sup>1</sup>.”

Amirul-Mu'minin (a) related: “When he received the warriors that he had appointed for a campaign, the Prophet (S) said to them: “Welcome to the people who performed successfully the minor jihad. Their mission now is to perform completely the major jihad. The major jihad is self-control. The best form of jihad is to strive one's desires and whims<sup>2</sup>.”

Imam as-Sadiq (a) said: “If you want all your supplications to be answered, you should despair of people totally and hope for that which is in Allah's hands only. When Allah knows that a servant's intent is totally attached to Him, He will answer all his supplications. You therefore call yourselves to account before others call them. On the Day of Resurrection, there are fifty situations each of which takes one thousand years. This is the meaning of Allah's saying:

***“On that Day (of Judgment), long as fifty thousand years, the angels and the Spirit will ascend to***

### ***Him (70:4)***3.

“You have been appointed as the physician of yourself; the malady has been shown to you, the signs of recovery have been shown to you, and you have been guided to the remedy; hence, you should consider how you will treat yourself4.”

Imam al-Kadhim (a) said: “He who does not call himself to account every day is not one of us. When he does so, he must ask Allah for more if he notices that he has done a good deed, and if he notices that he has committed an evildoing, he must seek Allah’s forgiveness and must repent to Him5.”

## **Constitution of Self-Judgment**

Ethicists have referred to the constitution of self-judgment in such a detailed method that it might be difficult for some to implement. I, however, can brief the matter in two precise and simplified points:

- First of all, to practice self-judgment properly, one must perform all the obligatory rites, such as the prayer, fasting, hajj, zakat, and the like. If such rites are performed properly, one must then thank God for so and hope for winning the great rewarding that He set for the obedient. If one, on the other hand, neglects such rites, he must remember the painful punishment with which God threatens the disobedient. He must also exert all efforts for settling them.
- Self-judgment must then be practiced on the sins that one committed, by means of severe reproach and censure. Regret and true repentance must then be felt so that they will help in avoiding the commitment of such sins.

The Prophet (S) set the most excellent example of self-judgment:

The Prophet (S), once, resided in a desert during a journey. He asked his companions to fetch firewood. They apologized that they were in a desert, but the Prophet (S) asked them to search and fetch whatever they might find. Hence, they scattered in every direction. Afterwards, each one fetched a small quantity of wood and threw on each other. On that scene, the Prophet (S) commented: “In this very way, sins are gathered. Beware of the insignificant sins, for there is an interrogator for each sin. That interrogator records ‘the deeds of human beings and their consequences. We keep everything recorded in an illustrious Book.’6”7

Some disciples practiced appreciative styles in the field of self-judgment. For instance, it is related that Tawba Ibn as-Summah used to call himself to account in most times of his life. One day, he counted his past age, and it was sixty years. As he counted the days, they were about 21500. He then shouted: “Woe unto me! I will meet Malik8 with twenty-one thousand sins.” Suddenly after that, he departed life9.

## Seizure of Life's Opportunity

If man compares all desires and pleasures of this life to his age, he will find that the latter is more precious. He will also discover that nothing at all can come to the value of his age, since the pleasures of this world can be regained, while the lifetime cannot be elongated or extended to a single moment:

***“All people can only live for an appointed time. When their term ends, they will not remain (alive) even for a single hour, nor will they die before the appointed time. (7:34)”***

Likewise, it is impossible to regain the time that passes away in any way, including the possession of all the worldly pleasures. Because he is inattentive to his invaluable lifetime, man wastes his age uselessly, ignoring opportunities. For this reason, the Ahlul-Bayt (a) provided a great deal of instructions dealing with the importance of seizing the opportunities of life.

The Prophet (S) said: “Abu Dharr, You must be stingy with regard to your lifetime, not with your dirhams and dinars (i.e. money)[10](#).”

“Exploit four things before the falling of four: exploit your youth before the falling of your old age, exploit your health before the coming of your illness, exploit your richness before the falling of your poverty, and exploit your lifetime before the coming of your death[11](#).”

Amirul-Mu'minin (a) said: “This world is only three days: one passed away with all its insides, the second is that you are living in; therefore, you should seize its opportunities, and the third is a day that you do not know whether you will catch it or not. The day that passed must be regarded as wise educator. The day that you are living in must be regarded as a departing friend. Regarding tomorrow, you have nothing of it except hope.”

“Every new day that comes upon man says to him: I am a new day and I will witness you. Hence, you should say only good wording and do only good deeds so that I will testify for your good on the Day of Resurrection, for you will not see me ever again[12](#).”

Imam as-Sajjad (a) said: “How poor son of Adam is!

Every day, he is inflicted with three misfortunes. Nevertheless, he does learn lessons from any. Had he learnt a lesson, all the misfortunes of this worldly life would have been easy in his sight. The first misfortune is that the day which comes upon him decreases his age. If a decrease occurs to his wealth, he will become so depressed, while he can cover the decrease of wealth, but he cannot regain the decrease of his age. The second misfortune is that he takes the sustenance that is decided for him completely. If he gets it in a legal way, he will be interrogated about it, and if he gets it in an illegal way, he will be punished for it. The third misfortune, which is the most calamitous, is that each day that ends takes him a stage closer to the Hereafter, while he does not know whether his fate will be Paradise or Hell.”

“On the day of his birth, man is the oldest<sup>13</sup>.”

Imam al-Baqir (a) said: “Let not people deceive you in matters regarding yourself, because you exclusively will encounter your own matters. Do not spend your days with gossips and nonsense, for there are the angels who accompany you and record all your deeds. Do righteous deeds, because I have not seen anything better in result and remedying than a new good deed after an old sin<sup>14</sup>.”

Imam as-Sadiq (a) said: “Be tolerant in the acts of obedience to Allah and steadfast against the acts of disobedience to Him. This world is no more than an hour. You will not find the pleasures of what has passed away and you will not be able to recognize what is coming. Be patient in that hour and you will attain bliss<sup>15</sup>.”

A wise man said: “Man is like a traveler who has to pass by six stations. He, however, has already passed by three: the first is the transition from nonexistence to his father’s loins and mother’s ribs. The second is the transition to the mother’s womb. The third is the transition from the mother’s womb to the world. The three stations that man has not passed by yet are the grave, the field of the Resurrection, and Hell or Paradise.”

We are now living in the third station whose distance takes our lifetime. Hence, days of our ages are miles, hours are meters and breaths are steps. Some of us have only few miles, others have only few meters, and others have only few steps.

<sup>1</sup>. Quoted from al-Wafi; part 3 page 62 (as quoted from al- Kafi).

<sup>2</sup>. Quoted from Bihar ul-Anwar; 15/2/40, as quoted from al- Amali and Me’aani al-Akhbar.

<sup>3</sup>. Quoted from al-Wafi; part 3 page 62 (as quoted from al- Kafi).

<sup>4</sup>. Quoted from al-Wafi; part 3 page 62 (as quoted from al- Kafi).

<sup>5</sup>. Quoted from al-Wafi; part 3 page 62 (as quoted from al- Kafi).

<sup>6</sup>. This statement is quoted from the Holy Quran; (36:12).

<sup>7</sup>. Quoted from al-Wafi; part 3 page 168 (as quoted from al- Kafi).

<sup>8</sup>. Malik is the angel in charge of Hell.

<sup>9</sup>. Quoted from Safinat ul-Bihar; part 1 page 488.

<sup>10</sup>. Quoted from al-Wafi; Part: The Prophet’s commandment for Abu Dharr.

<sup>11</sup>. Quoted from Bihar ul-Anwar; 15/2/165 (as quoted from as- Saduq’s Kemal ud-Din).

<sup>12</sup>. Quoted from al-Wafi; part 3 page 63 (as quoted from al- Faqih).

<sup>13</sup>. This is because every single day that man lives in decreases his age. This nice maxim was not said by anyone before Imam as-Sajjad (a). Quoted from al-Mufid’s Alikhtissas.

<sup>14</sup>. Quoted from al-Wafi; part 3 page 168 (as quoted from al- Kafi).

<sup>15</sup>. Quoted from al-Wafi; part 3 page 168 (as quoted from al- Kafi).

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