

Stinginess

Stinginess stands for the abstention from giving in situations of generosity. It is the opposite of generosity and among the mean features that cause humility, hatred, and disgrace. Islam has censured and warned the Muslims strongly against stinginess:

“It is you who are asked to spend for the cause of Allah, but some of you behave in a niggardly way. Whoever behaves miserly does so against his own soul. Allah is Self-sufficient and you are poor (47:38).”

“The stingy ones who try to make others stingy or those who hide the favors that Allah has bestowed on them. We have prepared a humiliating torment for the disbelievers (4:37).”

“Those who are avaricious of the favors that Allah has given them should not think that this is good for them. Avarice is evil and whatever they are avaricious about will be tied to their necks on the Day of Judgment (3: 180).”

Imam as-Sadiq narrated on the authority of his fathers that Amirul-Mu'minin (a) once heard a man saying that stinginess is less forgivable than wrongdoing. The Imam commented: “No, this is a lie. A wrong man may repent, seek Allah’s forgiveness, and correct his mistakes. But when one behaves in a stingy mood, he will not defray the zakat and almsgiving, will not regard his relatives, will not receive the guests hospitably, and will not spend his fortune in the cause of Allah and in the fields of charity. Paradise is forbidden for the stingy¹.”

“I wonder at the stingy who speeds towards the very destitution from which he wants to run away and misses the very ease of life which he covets. Consequently, he passes his life like the destitute, but will have to render an account in the next world like the rich².”

[Disadvantages of Stinginess](#)

Stinginess causes malice and hatred of the close as well as the foreigners. The closest individuals of the

stingy may hope were he dead, because he deprives them of his fortune and they expect greedily to inherit him. Besides, the stingy is the most tiring: he exerts all efforts for collecting fortunes, but he does not enjoy them, because he very soon leaves all the fortunes to the heirs. Hence, “he passes his life in this world like the destitute, but will have to render an account in the next world like the rich.”

Forms of Stinginess

All forms of stinginess are abominable; yet, there is a variance among them. The most sinful form of stinginess is the refusal to defray the financial obligations that God has imposed upon Muslims for organizing their economical lives. Thus, the defects of stinginess vary among persons and states. For example, the stinginess of the wealthy is worse than that of the poor, and to behave stingily with the dependents, relatives, friends, and guests is uglier than it is with the foreigners.

Treatment of Stinginess

The advantages and disadvantages of stinginess should be kept in mind, because this may decrease the vehemence of stinginess. If this is not useful, the stingy should prompt himself to openhandedness for the desire of gaining good reputation. If a man feels at ease with openhandedness, he will discipline himself with sincerity and will like for himself to spend in the cause of God.

There are definite motives of stinginess. The treatment, then, is related to such motives. To stop these motives is to remove the effects.

The strongest motive of stinginess is fear of poverty, which is one of the evil inspirations of the Devil so as to prevent generosity. By its wise and unparalleled style, the holy Quran decides that stinginess is useless, but it brings about bankruptcy and deprivation:

“It is you who are asked to spend for the cause of Allah, but some of you behave in a niggardly way. Whoever behaves miserly does so against his own soul. Allah is Self-sufficient and you are poor (47:38).”

The holy Quran also decides that everything that is given or spent out of generosity will not go in vain; yet, God the All-generous will compensate for it:

“Whatever thing you spend, He exceeds it with reward, and He is the best of Sustainers. (34:39)”

The holy Quran continues to enjoin openhandedness, confirming that he who spends for God’s sake is lending God who will repay him many folds out of His extensive kindness:

“Spending money for the cause of Allah is as the seed from which seven ears may grow, each bearing one hundred grains. Allah gives in multiples to those whom He wants. Allah is Munificent and All-knowing. (2:261)”

The holy Quran addresses a horrible threat against those whom are enslaved by stinginess:

“Those who horde gold and silver and do not spend (anything out of it) for the cause of Allah, should know that their recompense will be a painful torment on the Day of Judgment and that their treasures will be heated by the fire of hell and pressed against their foreheads, sides and back with this remark: “These are your own treasures which you hoarded for yourselves. See for yourselves what they feel like.” (9:34-5)”

Among the other incentives of stinginess is fathers’ excessive care for the future of their sons. Such fathers will not spend their fortunes so as to save them for their sons, believing that such fortunes will protect their sons from poverty. Such an emotion, which is deep-rooted in man’s mentality, cannot be harmful or excessive if it is moderate, reasonable, and away from negligence and exaggeration. Nevertheless, it is unfit for people of reason to feel such an emotion so exaggeratively. The holy Quran warns fathers against the prevalence of this emotion over them so that they will not be seduced by the love for their sons:

“Know that your possessions and children are a temptation for you and that Allah has the greatest reward for the righteous ones. (8:28)”

The best word in this regard is the following missive of Amirul-Mu’minin (a):

“So then, the worldly collection, which is between your hands, was possessed before you and will be possessed by others after you. You are only hording for one of two men: a man who will use that fortune in the acts of obedience to Allah, and this fortune that you suffered unhappiness until you collected it will be the source of happiness for such an individual. The other man is that who will use the fortune that you collected in the fields of disobedience to Allah, and your hording will cause him unhappiness. None of these two men is worthy of being preferred to yourself or being burdened on your back; therefore, you should hope Allah’s mercy for the past and hope Allah’s sustenance for the remaining³.”

Regarding God’s saying,

“That is how God will show them their regrettable deeds (2: 167),”

Imam as-Sadiq (a) said: “The intendeds in the previous Verse are those who do not spend their fortunes in the ways of Allah and then die to leave them to others who will use them either in fields of obedience or disobedience to Allah. If the heirs use these fortunes in fields of obedience to Allah, those who collected them stingily will see them accounted with the good deeds of those heirs and, therefore, they will feel regretful for them. If the heirs use such fortunes in the fields of disobedience to Allah, the collectors will be regarded as assistants of those disobedient heirs⁴.”

There are groups of people who love money maniacally for its being money, without considering it as the means to a pleasure in this world or the world to come. Such groups find their pleasures only in hording

money and, then, they behave towards it extremely stingily.

This sort of love is considered as mania that causes unhappiness and perdition. Money is not the purpose; yet, it is only the means used for livelihood and the Hereafter. Money that is used for any other means is useless:

“Since wealth does not necessarily guarantee everlasting happiness, then why do you not show kindness to the orphans, or urge one another to feed the destitute? Why do you take away the inheritance of others indiscriminately and why do you have an excessive love of riches?”

When the earth is crushed into small pieces and (when you find yourself) in the presence of your Lord and the rows and rows of angels, your greed for riches will certainly be of no avail to you. On that day, hell will be brought closer and the human being will come to his senses, but this will be of no avail to him. He will say, “Would that I had done some good deeds for this life.” On that day, the punishment of Allah and His detention will be unparalleled. And His bonds will be such as none other can bind. (89: 17-26)”

“In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent the Merciful: Woe to every slanderer and backbiter who collects and hoards wealth, thinking that his property will make him live forever. By no means! They will be thrown into hutamah. Would that you knew what hutamah is! It is a fierce fire created by Allah to penetrate into the hearts. It will engulf them in its long columns of flames. (104)”

Amirul-Mu'minin (a) said: “This world is only termination, suffering, raids, and lessons. As a form of its termination is that, you see that the bows of time are strung, its arrows are put to use, its spears are not missing the target, and its wounds are incurable. It hits the healthy with ailment and hits the alive with death.

As a form of the suffering of this world is, that man gathers while he will not have what he gathers and builds but he will not reside in what he builds. Then he leaves to Allah without being able to carry the wealth or use his building. As a form of the raids of this world is that, you imminently see the lucky change into unlucky and the unlucky change into lucky. Between the two, there is nothing more than the luxury that vanished and the misery that befell. As a form of the lessons of this world is that a man becomes very near to achieve his expectation but suddenly death captures him⁵.”

¹. Quoted from al-Wafi; part 6 page 69 (as quoted from al-Kafi).

². Quoted from Nahj ul-Balagha.

³. Quoted from Nahj ul-Balagha.

⁴. Quoted from al-Wafi; part 6 page 69 (as quoted from al-Kafi and al-Faqih).

⁵. Quoted from Safinat ul-Bihar; part 1 page 467.

<https://www.al-islam.org/ahlul-bayt-ethical-role-models-sayyid-mahdi-sadr/stinginess#comment-0>