

The Twenty Seventh Talk

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

قَالَ فَبِعِزَّتِكَ لَأُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ إِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمُ الْمُخْلَصِينَ

He said: Then by Thy Might I will surely make them live an evil life, all, Except Thy servants from among them, the purified ones. (Sura Sad, 38:82-83)

Sincerity and Good Deeds

Pure and good is the thing that is free of impurities. For example: pure gold that is only gold and nothing other than that. It has not been alloyed with copper or any other metal. Or pure milk that has been described in the Holy Qur'an thus,

مِمَّا فِي بُطُونِهِ مِنْ بَيْنِ فَرْثٍ وَدَمٍ لَبَنًا خَالِصًا سَائِغًا لِلشَّارِبِينَ

.. We gave you to drink of that which is in their bellies, from betwixt the refuse and the blood, pure milk, palatable to the drinkers. (Sura an-Nahl, 16:66)

Similarly, action too, despite the environment of the carnal desires around, should be pure and in the way of Allah (S.w.T.). This means that when one seeks nearness to Allah (S.w.T.), there should not be any worldly desire in the heart of the person. We have already said that this is a spiritual act that doesn't depend on expressing in words and coming in the heart.

Worldly Honor Too Is In Allah (S.W.T.)'s Hand

One should ascertain whether the motive for any action is with Allah (S.w.T.)'s love and nearness in mind or is it a worldly motive. For example: If you are going to make an address from the pulpit, whether it is to please Allah (S.w.T.) or to earn money and fame. If you are doing this for all the three, then remember, it is not possible to bring them together. It is not possible that an act is done to please Allah (S.w.T.) and to please a human being at the same time. If the act is not performed with sincerity towards Allah (S.w.T.), neither will the act be acceptable by Him, nor will the worldly purpose be accomplished. But if an act is performed solely for the pleasure of Allah (S.w.T.), He might give to the person worldly gain too.

About Malik Dinar

In his early days Malik Dinar was a bullion merchant. He had made good progress in the profession. Then avarice got better of him and he thought ways of becoming the trustee of the *Jami'i al-Umawwi Masjid* (Umayyad Mosque) in Damascus. He was desirous of this position because lots of funds would be at his disposal as the trustee. In this greed Malik disposed all his assets and distributed the money in charity. Since the trustee is expected to be extremely pious and simple, he went and stayed in the mosque. Whenever he found any person entering the mosque, he would stand up and start praying.

The purpose was to attract the attention of the people to his piety so that his candidature for the trusteeship could be clinched. But in course of time people understood his insincere plan. They were covertly, and sometimes overtly, making fun of him. They would ask him, "O Malik! What is your intention?" A lot of time passed in this manner. Then he realized that in his avarice he had reduced himself to the condition that he was in. Now that all the people have gauged his plan, there was no chance of him getting the trusteeship. He thought that his fate was neither to get the worldly benefit nor of the Hereafter.

That night, with a broken heart, Malik expressed penitence (*istighfar*) to Allah (S.w.T.) and sought His forgiveness for his sins throughout the night. He was surprised the next morning to see the same persons who were insulting him earlier, met him with due respect and asked him to pray for them. In due course of time it was well known in Syria that Malik was a man of great piety. Now the important persons came to him and offered to him the trusteeship of the mosque. He declined the offer politely and said that he had acquired the Good will of Allah (S.w.T.) with difficulty and that he was not in the need of anything else.

The unlucky person who is devoid of sincerity will definitely be one who loses the world as well as the Hereafter (*Khasira ad-duniya wal aakhirah*).

Futile Prayer

We have already mentioned that the acceptance of prayers is dependent on the sincerity of the person. The prayer that is devoid of sincerity is an exercise in futility and is useless. The lowest is the prayer through which one seeks the pleasure of both the Creator and the creatures. In such acts those elements of hypocrisy are present that are counted among major sins. The prayer of a lower category than this is that which is not even for the mental pleasure (*Hiz an-Nafsani*).

Sometimes the nature of a person plays its part in his intent. For example: It is Friday and a warm day. The person wishes to go to the swimming pool to cool himself and, at the same time, perform his obligatory bath. Now, who could say that whether his intent is to swim or to have his mandatory Friday bath. Or, for example: It is a cold day and the person wishes to have his obligatory Friday bath and use a public bath to warm his body as well. These acts are devoid of sincerity. If you wish that your actions are absolutely sincere, then there should not be any element of mental pleasure in them.

Supplement of any act is permissible (*Mubah*), if it assumes the status of collateral act in perpetuity; otherwise it voids the spirit of the act. By sincerity (*Ikhlas*) we mean that there is no supplementary or subsidiary purpose. For example: if one has to perform his obligatory bath and he combines it with a swim or a visit to the public bath, then the person has, in reality, two intents, and the obligatory bath in this case goes void!

Praise and Appreciation of People

It is a very delicate situation. One should seek Allah (S.w.T.) protection. Sometimes man remains insensitive and with one word of worldly praise he forgets Allah (S.w.T.) and spoils his Hereafter. He doesn't strike a deal with Allah (S.w.T.) for perpetual welfare, but for some worldly praise he dedicates himself to the mundane ends.

Worse than this is the ambitious person who is not satisfied if he gets the *Du'a al-Maghfirat* (prayer for Deliverance) after his death but wants people to remember him thereafter and sing his praises. He will be so much engrossed in the love for fame that even after his death people will praise him.

A good name after the death of a person is useful. But the purpose in his lifetime must have been only getting the pleasure of Allah (S.w.T.) with his good deeds and not for the search of name and fame. If the person had ulterior designs while doing good deeds, however much the world praised him, his Hereafter will not be good.

Is Praise Beneficial?

If a person is amoral and because of some misapprehension people admire and praise him, will it in anyway benefit him to the extent of the point of a needle or reduce his retribution to the extent?

Of what use is the popularity a person enjoyed in this world when he is in purgatory (*Barzakh*). When a person is in the angelic plane of existence (*Aalam al-Malkut*) what relationship will he have with the physical plane of existence (*Aalam al-Mulk*) that have different traits of character? If the person has departed from here with the felicity of *Iman*, and was virtuous and sincere in his life, then his actions were for Allah (S.w.T.) rather than for worldly fame. You must pray for the deliverance of the Muslims after their death and not sing poems in their praise. For his good deeds every individual will receive rewards. But otherwise, whether lights are put on his tomb or there is dust flying around there, it will not make any difference.

Ahmad Bin Tawlan & the Reciter of Qur'an

If someone has departed from this world with good deeds behind him, and he had staunch faith in the Book of Allah (S.w.T.), then recitation of the Qur'an over his grave will be beneficial to him. Otherwise, you must have heard the story of Ahmad Bin Tawlan that has been related by Allama Damiri in *Hayat al-Haywaan*. That person was a king in Egypt. When he died the Egyptian Government appointed a *Qari* to recite the Qur'an near his grave. Suitable compensation was to be paid to him for this work. He got busy reciting the Book at the grave.

One day news came that the *Qari* had absconded. After much search the policemen located him and asked the reason why he ran away. He couldn't gather enough courage to spell out the reason but was asking to be relieved from his work. The authorities said that if he considered the compensation low, it can as well be raised. He said that however much they pay him, he was unwilling to do the job. They were confused and said that until he said the true reason, they would not release him.

The man said, "Some days ago, the person in the grave complained to me. He caught hold of my collar and said, 'Why are you reciting the Qur'an at my grave?' I replied, 'I have been appointed by the authorities to do it to earn Reward for you.' The dead man said, 'Rather than giving any benefit to me, every verse you recited was giving wind to the fire of Retribution for me. It was being said to me that why I neglected hearing the recitation during my worldly life? Why didn't I follow the precepts laid down by the Holy Book?' "Now I request you to kindly absolve me of this duty."

In the court of Allah (S.w.T.) nothing is more beneficial than truth and sincerity. With your tongue you might say a hundred thousand times, "*Qurbatan il-Allah*" but if there is no truth and sincerity of intent, then mere utterance of the words will not be of any use.

The human psyche is either in search of recognition amongst the fellow humans or to derive pleasure for itself. He thinks that he is a person of much virtue. But when he sees the roster of his deeds on the Day of Judgement, he will be surprised to know that his life had been one of selfishness and for satisfaction of baser instincts.

But if action is accompanied with sincerity then even a bit of it could be sufficient to elevate his status

and become the cause of the person's deliverance. Even two genuflections of prayer, offered with sincerity and dedication of the heart, can qualify one for the Heaven. A lifetime of prayer for the insincere purpose of show will be of no use at all.

Sayyid Ibn Tawoos says that the prayers that are motivated by the fear of the Hell and the craving for the Heaven has an element of selfishness, although correct according to the norms of Faith. It will be better than the other acts of the person. Hadrat Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) has said, "O Allah! I pray to You not with the fear of the Hell and for getting admittance to the Heaven. I pray to You only because You are befitting for my prayer."

In the light of this saying the prayer of a person with personal motives of rewards will be of lower felicity.

The Prayer of an Erudite Scholar

You must have heard that the two *Rakat* of the prayer of an *Aalim* is rated more than the prayers of an ignorant (*Jahil*) person offered over a period of a full year. The reason for this is that an erudite scholar knows the facts and comprehends them. He understands all the dangers of sensual pleasure. As against this, an ignorant person doesn't know what will be the consequence of which act. He worships himself and others, thinking all the time that he was praying to Allah (S.w.T.)!

Similarly you must have heard that praying in congregation behind an *Aalim Imam* is a thousand times more felicitous than praying alone. The reason is that the *Imam* has superior knowledge. And is never away from *Ikhlas* or sincerity in prayer.

The Father & the Son

During his journey to Karbala, Imam Husayn (a.s.) felt sleepy at one stage. Then he told to his companions that he had heard a herald who was telling aloud from the skies, "This group moves and death travels behind them!"

'Ali Akbar asked, "O father! Are we not on the side of the right and will our death not be in Allah's cause?" The Imam replied, "Yes!" 'Ali Akbar said, "Then, we needn't worry about death!" What felicity will be bigger than getting martyred in the way of Truth!" These words are the reflections of the heart of a person who has sincerity of purpose (*Ikhlas*). Allah (S.w.T.) has made the words the mirror of the heart. There is neither any worldly desire in these words nor is the craving for name and fame. They knew it fully well that Martyrdom was fated for them!

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