

The Twenty Sixth 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)

The Enemy of Faith & Action

The topic of our discussion was sincerity of purpose (*Ikhlās*). We have said that *Ikhlās* is a formidable refuge to save oneself from sins. If someone wishes to save himself from the machinations of Satan, there is no other way for him than making access to *Ikhlās*. Without reaching this stage, the person will be in the hands of Satan as a ball is in the hands of a child.

It is Satan who destroys the faith and action of people. If sometimes, Satan is unable to destroy the faith of a person, he would certainly despoil it. He puts to waste the good deeds the person has done that could have been of help for him on the Day of Judgement. He is our veritable enemy, and therefore, we shall have to reciprocate equally fierce fully. *Fattakhi dhuhu aduwwa* (therefore take him (satan) for an enemy!). The enemy is very powerful and every moment he keeps trying to attack our hearts and our faiths. Therefore we should remain people of *Ikhlās* that we don't become the abode of Satan's wickedness.

Ikhlas is the Height of Tawhid

In the first Sermon of Nahj al-Balagha Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) says, "The foundation of faith is the understanding (*ma'rifat*) of Allah (S.w.T.). The height of this understanding is acknowledgement of His being the Absolute Creator (and complete faith on the Day of Judgement that has been the basis of the *Da'wa* (Invitation to the Faith) of all the prophets (a.s.). The height of acknowledgement is his firm belief in *Tawhid* and the height of *Tawhid* is the height of *Ikhlas* or the sincerity of purpose. "

If our creator, and the creator of all the creatures, is Allah (S.w.T.), then what relation do we have with anyone other than Him. Why do we consider others as our saviors? If truly our faith is that there is no god but Allah (S.w.T.) and every good is in His hands, then we don't have any right to stretch our hands for help in front of anyone else. It is by doing this that we give rise to hypocrisy. When man starts thinking that even the creatures are capable of solving problems for them and seeking recognition and respect in their eyes is a guarantee of wellbeing, then they veer away from *Tawhid*. The path of hypocrisy is laid for them now and satanic traits take root in their hearts.

If we are practitioners of *Tawhid*, then our prayers must be addressed towards Allah (S.w.T.).

When we think that He is Ever Present, then why should we look to anyone else. To the contrary, for the fulfillment of the purpose for which He has created us, why should we involve others. It is not proper that we make an exhibition of the performance of the obligatory acts in front of others that they praise us. If we have firm faith on "*Kamaal at-Tawhid al-Ikhlas* – The height of *Tawhid* is sincerity of purpose", then we truly consider Him our Creator and Sustainer and deem Him the guide in all our affairs and don't attach ourselves to others for help.

Many Claims of Being Sincere

Most of human actions are contrary to the dictates of sincerity of purpose. If Allah (S.w.T.) is the Only Sustainer, He is the One Who gives and takes, He is the one who sends and calls back, all the charity is in His control, then why do we give undue importance to circumstances and causes? Whenever there are ups and downs in life, then why do we bitterly complain about the Divine Decree of Allah (S.w.T.) (*Qada wa Qadar*)? Discussion on this topic will be time consuming. Many a time it happens that a person thinks all his life that he is sincere. But when he reaches the end of the life, his eyes open wide. He then realizes that his entire life was spent with insincerity to Allah (S.w.T.). Many are men who spend their lives bowing their heads to many gods; even then they consider themselves monotheists.

A person thought one night to go to the mosque and spend the whole night in prayer there in total dedication and sincerity. Leaving behind his comfortable bed, he reached the mosque and commenced the prayer on the rough prayer mat. After sometime, in the darkness, he heard a voice. He thought someone else was busy praying in the mosque. He also thought that it was good that someone else too was in the lonely mosque who will certainly mention to others that he was praying there the entire night.

The man continued his prayers with more dedication and interest. He modulated his voice to give to it a touch of pathos. He spent the whole night in that way. At dawn he noticed a dog cowering in a corner of the mosque. Perhaps it had come into to mosque to save itself from the extreme cold outside. This proves that he was praying the whole night to make a show to the dog.

Satan's Laments

If you are people of sincerity, then your concern will be only with Him and consider only Him as your Only Accomplisher (*Kaar Saaz*) of all your affairs. Pomp and pelf of the world should not overwhelm you. The causer of recognition or ignominy for you is only Him. It is He who sends ailments and also it is He who cures them. All the affairs in this world trace their origin to Him.

When a person who has reached the stage of Sincerity of Faith (*Ikhlas al-Iman*) enters the mosque, Satan becomes restless and starts lamenting.

But this situation is very difficult and requires intense effort. This is a task of great valor that man comes in conflict with Satan and does the Major Jihad with his own baser instinct (*Nafs al-Ammara*) till he attains the status of a person of sincerity (*Ahl al-Ikhlas*).

Three Types of Persons are Accountable

I would like to quote a tradition in this connection. It is recorded in *Mahajjat al-Baida* that on the Day of Judgement three groups will be the first to be called for giving the account of their deeds.

The first will be the group of '*Ulama* or scholars. Allah (S.w.T.) will inquire of them as to what they were doing in the world and how did they use the knowledge that was imparted to them? They will say, "O Sustainer! You are witness that we spread knowledge in the world, kept ourselves occupied with teaching and education, we authored books and guided the people in general."

Allah (S.w.T.) will say in reply, "You are lying because you did everything to be termed an '*Allama* (an erudite scholar) and a wise person. This was mere show and its compensation was the people's praises for you. What do you expect from Us now?"

The second group will be that of rich persons. They will be asked by Allah (S.w.T.), "How did you use the wealth given to you by Us?" They will say, "O Allah! You are witness that we spent the wealth in your way. We did good turns, helped the beggars and needy and didn't go to our graves with any regrets about the wealth that we left behind!"

Allah (S.w.T.) will reply to them, "You are liars! You spent on others because you wanted them to praise you and call you magnanimous and your name appeared on the newspapers and other media. You got the compensation for your good deeds in the world itself. What else do you expect from Us now?"

(It has come in a tradition that seven groups will be in the shadow of Allah (S.w.T.)'s Skies. One of this group will be of those who remain incognito while they do charity and spend in the way of Allah (S.w.T.) is such a manner that when their right hand does the charity, the left will remain unaware of the act. Other than Allah (S.w.T.) none knows about this good deed. When Hadrat Imam *Zayn al-'Abidin* (a.s.) used to give money in the way of Allah (S.w.T.), he used to cover his face with his shawl that he remained incognito while doing this good deed. Even this went to the extent that the persons whom the Imam (a.s.) personally helped, used to complain that he has not helped them! This was because of the fact that at the time of getting the help, the beneficiaries were unable to recognize the benefactor. A person might spend huge amounts in charity to get praises from others and for showing off. Their charity will then have no weight.)

The third group will be that of the persons who were martyred during Jihad. They will be asked, "What have you done in the world? They will reply, "O Allah! You know well that we laid our lives for Your cause. Got wounded and bore hardships." Allah (S.w.T.) then would rejoin, "In the field of battle, rather than truly fighting for our cause, you wanted to make a show of your valor to others and to gather booty. Truly, you have not given your life for Us!" Some persons recite the Holy Qur'an very much, but they intone it like a song to impress about the control of their voices on others. Such persons too may not get any reward in the Hereafter.

It is narrated that one person came to Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq and said, "O Master! I recite the Holy Qur'an in my house and the people in my house hear it. Sometimes my voice even travels outside of my house to the hearing of the commuters on the street. What do you say about this?" The Imam replied, "Keep the pitch of your voice in the middle that your recitation does not give the impression that you are making a show of it."

Perhaps there is a point in this that the person may not be making a show to the members of his family, therefore he was asked to recite at an average pitch that the inmates got the benefit of hearing and getting benefit from it. He also wanted the voice not to travel outside his premises that others hear it and think that he was making a hypocritical show of his prowess.

It is a strange thing that till a person takes refuge in the fortress of sincerity of purpose he is not safe from the machinations of Satan. This is the stage where a person prays from the depths of his heart:

أَمَّنْ يُجِيبُ الْمُضْطَرَّ إِذَا دَعَاهُ وَيَكْشِفُ السُّوءَ

Or, Who answers the distressed one when he calls upon Him and removes the evil... (Sura an-Naml, 27:62)

O Allah! The hardships are huge and we had been so complacent and careless that only Your benevolent attention can ameliorate our situation. We were in self-deception that we became the victims

of insincerity thinking that we were sincere to You. Once the curtain rises and the scene of death and the *Barzakh* (Purgatory) become evident to us, we would realize the misapprehension we were in that we thought ourselves to be the replicas of Salman!

Out through our lives we have been under the misapprehension that we had been on pilgrimage to *Karbala al-Mu'alla* and *Mashad al-Muqaddas*. There is no doubt that pilgrimage is highly felicitous, but the urge to go on the tour must be from the depth of the heart. When one goes to perform the *Hajj*, the title of '*Haji*' is prefixed with his name. That can be tantamount to making a show of his pilgrimage. In a nutshell, there will be need for sincerity in whatever we do and it should not be attended by an element of show.

The Highest Stages of Sincerity

The Martyrs of Karbala are not called the chiefs of the martyrs just for the sake of calling. Among these martyrs, the lowest according to the worldly rating, was a Nubian slave. He said, "O Maula! I am very lowly from the point of view of pedigree and descent! I am dark of visage. The smell of my body is unpleasant. It is true that I am not fit to sacrifice myself in your way! Be kind on me and accept me as a ransom (*Fidya*)!"

The Imam (a.s.) didn't give him permission to go and battle. He cries and says, "Master! In good times I had been the consumer of the leftovers of your table! How can I abandon in times of hardship?" The person pleaded with the Imam so much that he was given permission to go to the field of battle. He, at last, attained the felicity of Martyrdom. What act could be better than this!

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