

[Home](#) > [Isti'adha: Seeking Allah's Protection from Satan](#) > [The Twenty Eighth Talk](#) > Transacting with Allah (S.w.T.)

The Twenty Eighth Talk

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

قَالَ فَبِعِزَّتِكَ لأُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ 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)**

Hope for Getting the Heaven and Fear of the Hell

Whether an action is mandatory (*Wajib*) or optional (*Mustahab*), they must all be performed with sincerity, because they are of value only if they are done with sincerity of purpose.

The lowest state of *Ikhlas* or sincerity is that the motive of the act is not to make a show but the fear of retribution or the search for rewards from Allah (S.w.T.). For example: when one awakes for the morning prayer (*Fajr*) and does the ablutions, his motive for the act should be that the prayer is mandatory and if he didn't perform it, he would become liable for retribution. Or, for example: when a person fasts, the motivation for abstaining from intake of food and sensual acts for fourteen hours will be the expectation of Allah (S.w.T.)'s Reward for the act.

This is the minor or the first stage of *Ikhlas* in which a person's action is rated right. The Retribution that the person fears, Allah (S.w.T.) keeps him safe from that. The Reward that the person wishes to get, Allah (S.w.T.) gives him.

The motivation of a person should not be only achieve popularity in the eyes of the people of the world, or the fear of their taunts and criticism. For example, the purpose of his going for *Hajj* should be to seek

Allah (S.w.T.)'s pleasure than making a show of his status to the people. If the desire is to show-off to the people, then his act is void and sinful.

This is a very difficult situation. Sometimes a person gets entangled in his own personality and starts suspecting himself. For example: He expresses abhorrence of bad actions or does *Amr bil Ma'roof*, that is, he abides by the Commandments and thinks that he has accomplished one act mandated by Allah (S.w.T.). But the real motivation of his act might be to show off to others and to impress on them that he has great love for his religious duties. Such behavior is counted amongst major sins.

Thirty Years of Prayers and Supplications

This is the story of a pious person that has to be seriously considered and a lesson is drawn from it.

The person of piety always used to be the first to reach the mosque for the congregation. He invariably stood in the first row. He mostly used to be the last to leave the mosque after the congregational prayer was over. All of thirty years this was his regime. He never missed even one of the five daily obligatory prayers at the mosque during the period. One day he had some urgent task on hand and he couldn't make to the mosque for the prayer on time. When he reached there, the prayer was in progress. He had to join the congregation in the last row. After the prayer, when people were flocking out of the mosque looked at him with surprise. He was very sad that the people noticed him offering his prayer standing in the last row. He felt very ashamed.

Later on he realized that there was nothing to be ashamed of. He told to himself, "You unfortunate person! These last thirty years you strived to stand in the first row for the prayers seem not for the pleasure of Allah (S.w.T.) but to receive and attract the attention of the people. If your efforts were in the way of Allah (S.w.T.), it must have been His Will that you didn't reach the mosque in time to join the first row!" At last he repented for his insincere behavior during the last three decades and offered past thirty years of prayers as lapsed or *Qadha* prayers.

Treat the Psychic Ailments

This story should be a pointer for all of us. We don't say that one should not stand in the first row of the congregation, but it should be for the felicity of the act and not to make a show to the people. If on certain days one doesn't get a place in the first row, and he has to join the second or the third or the last row, there is nothing to be ashamed of. One should not feel that he is a man of learning and it is his privilege to always get a place in the first row at the prayer. But even if he has to stand with a child or an ignorant, uneducated person, he should not feel hesitant even for a while.

These are psychic ailments that are destructive for men. It is also the duty of the Imam of the congregation that he should not give undue importance to the numbers at a congregation. Even if only one person joins him for prayer, the congregation is complete. Whether there is one follower (*Muqtadi*)

or a thousand, the congregation is complete!

Penitence from Sanctimony and Related Acts

It is therefore necessary that the motivation of a person for the acts should be fear of retribution and hope for Allah (S.w.T.)'s rewards. A better motivation than this will be just seeking the pleasure of Allah (S.w.T.). If there is any other motivation, it is nothing else but being sanctimonious. If one has been offering prayer with such sanctimonious motives in the past, then he should offer *Qadha* prayer for that period with proper intent. This holds good for both *Wajib* and *Mustahab* prayers.

Similarly related matters too are in the category of sanctimonious acts. For example: If a person wants to go for a pilgrimage to *Mashad* but his main motive is to enjoy the good weather and abundance of fruits there, then his pilgrimage becomes secondary.

Therefore, if a man performs a felicitous act, he should not become proud of that. He should think over the motive for the performance of the act. He can say that the act was in the way of Allah (S.w.T.) only when he had, with full determination, true intent and from the depth of his heart, performed the act for the pleasure of Allah (S.w.T.).

It is narrated that during the days of the Prophet (S) on an expedition of *Jihad*, one infidel was mounted on a white mule during the battle. One person from the ranks of the believers was attracted to this mule. He told to himself, "I shall slay this infidel and become the owner of the mule." With this intent he went forward. But before he could do anything to the person, the infidel took preemptive action and slayed him. The person became well known as *qateel al-himaar* – the man who got slayed for a mule!

Just imagine, with what intent the man acted and what end he met with! In this market place there is transaction of only the truth and the right. Hypocrisy has no value here. Pity on the unfortunate person who enslaves himself to his own psyche and that even after giving up his life, he has destroyed his Hereafter. If a person, after laying down his life in *Jihad*, earns – *Khasr ad-duniya wal aakhirah* – loss in this world and the Hereafter, there is none more unfortunate than him.

Therefore, it is necessary to perform acts with firm intent of earning the pleasure of Allah (S.w.T.). This way not only the fulfilling of one's desires is assured but with Allah (S.w.T.)'s support results might be much more than expected. Allah (S.w.T.) says in the Holy Qur'an:

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ حَرْثَ الْآخِرَةِ نَزِدْ لَهُ فِي حَرْثِهِ وَمَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ حَرْثَ الدُّنْيَا نُؤْتِهِ مِنْهَا وَمَا لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنْ نَصِيبٍ

Whoever desires the gain of the hereafter, We will give him more of that gain; and whoever desires the gain of this world, We give him of it, and in the hereafter he has no portion. (Sura ash-Shura, 42:20)

Incidental Motives don't Negate Action

At this stage it is better to remind that incidental motives don't negate the actions. A person goes to the mausoleum of Imam Ridha (a.s.) with a wish to get felicity because the Imam (a.s.) has promised that on the Day of Judgement he will intercede on behalf of his friends. The person goes for the *Ziyarat* that with the Imam's intercession Allah (S.w.T.) will give him Reward equal to the performance of a *Hajj*. He thinks that, besides doing the *Ziyarat*, he would take the advantage of the season he would stay there for a week because plentiful high quality apricots will be available in Mashad. He will also enjoy the sweet melons available at that time. Since the person's main motive was to go for the *Ziyarat* and he thought of the availability of the fruits on the side, his act of pilgrimage is not negated in any way.

Ka'aba Situated in Hot Area

Hadrat Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.), in one of his sermons in *Nahj al-Balagha*, says about the *Hajj* and its philosophy that Allah (S.w.T.) has located *Ka'aba* in a place that is scorching hot and has no provision of bodily comfort. It has barren hills around it and the land is devoid of any greenery.

If it was Allah (S.w.T.)'s Wish, He would have made His Holy Home the most pleasant place in the world! But this way the dedication, patience and motives of the pilgrims would not be suitably put to test.

For example: If *Ka'aba* were in Lebanon, then people would go there to enjoy the good climate, the lovely gardens and deviate from their main motive of seeking nearness to Allah (S.w.T.). The worldly comforts and diversions would affect their main motivation of pilgrimage.

We cannot say if the prosperity that has come to Arabia in the recent years and the comforts of travel and stay that have been organized for the *Hajj* pilgrimage, have in any way affected the motivation of the pilgrims. The journey for the *Hajj* too has become the cause of the promotion of trade and recreation. May Allah (S.w.T.) protect this great pilgrimage becoming a place where people start indulging in sensual pleasures (*Hiz al-Nafs*).

The Travel Expense

No one should take any misunderstanding from our talk. We don't say that when you go to *Makkah al-Mukarrama* you should not eat good food and avoid the travel expenses, don't buy gifts for your friends and next of kin back home. In fact providing oneself better travel expenses is a legitimate act. Similarly buying good gifts for people too is desirable. Our purpose is only to remind people that these should not become the main motivation for their journey for *Hajj*. The main motive should be the fear of retribution and the search for rewards. We have already said that when a person offers prayers seeking protection from retribution and search for reward, Allah (S.w.T.) doesn't disappoint him. But if the intent and motivation is not pure, then the prayer is rendered futile.

It is narrated in *Ma'aani al-Akhbar* that *Hadrat Amir al-Mu'minin* (a.s.) went near the head of a sick Shi'a who was in the throes of death. When he (a.s.) inquired about his condition, the person said, "I am in fear because of my past sins! I am hoping for Allah's Kindness on me!" The Imam (a.s.) said, "A heart that has this feeling of hope and fear, Allah will give the person protection from the thing he is afraid of. Whatever the person hopes to get, Allah gives him!"

Transacting with Allah (S.w.T.)

This is a transaction in which there is no element of loss. In fact it has been guaranteed that good deeds have been termed *Sa'ee Mashkoo*r or felicitous acts. It is only the worldly transaction that is dictated by instinct of greed that will be shaky. The transaction with Allah (S.w.T.) is definite and firm. There is no fear of loss in this transaction. As Allah (S.w.T.) says:

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْعَاجِلَةَ عَجَّلْنَا لَهُ فِيهَا مَا نَشَاءُ لِمَنْ نُرِيدُ ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَا لَهُ جَهَنَّمَ يَصْلَاهَا مَذْمُومًا مَدْحُورًا

Whoever desires this present life, We hasten to him therein what We please for whomsoever We desire, then We assign to him the hell; he shall enter it despised, driven away. (Sura al-'Isra, 17: 18)

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