

E-Book

Sincerity

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Introduction

All perfect praise is due to Allaah Who commanded us to be sincere and promised those who adhere to His commands and refrain from His prohibitions to be saved (in the Hereafter). May Allaah exalt the mention of the one who commanded his Companions and followers to always safeguard their hearts and fulfill sincerity in intentions, perhaps by doing so they would save themselves from the terrifying events on the Day of Resurrection.

To proceed :

Muslim scholars have paid great attention to the deeds of the heart, authored many books on this topic, explained the importance of this issue to people and encouraged them to be mindful of it and develop themselves in this field. This is because the salvation of humankind (after the mercy of Allaah) is achieved through having a sound and sincere heart.

The deeds of the heart require greater care and struggle than the deeds of the limbs and the tongue, and if the heart is reformed, rectified and is treated for its illnesses and defects, then the actions and deeds of the limbs will be done purely for the sake of Allaah. Therefore, the main and most essential matter is to reform and remedy the actions of the heart, because without a sound heart there would be no benefit from the actions of the limbs.



Sincerity is the most essential action of the heart and the foundation of all deeds. It is the essence of the religion and the main element to which the Messengers of Allaah, may Allaah exalt their mention, called.

Allaah The Almighty Says (what means):

- *"And they were not commanded except to worship Allaah, [being] sincere to Him in religion, inclining to truth, and to establish prayer and to give Zakaah. And that is the correct religion."* [QUR'AAN 98:5]
- *"Unquestionably, for Allaah is the pure religion [i.e. worship is done sincerely to Allaah]."* [QUR'AAN 39:3]

Sincerity is the spirit and essence of all acts of worship and based on it deeds are accepted or rejected. For all these reasons, we decided to present this book on the definition of sincerity and other matters related to it. We ask Allaah to accept our efforts and reward us for it and make our intentions sincere for his sake.

The definition of sincerity

Linguistically: It is extracted from the verb (Akhlas) whose source is (Ikhlaas), which means to make pure and not mixed with anything else.



This is why Chapter Al-Ikhlaas was given this name, because it emphasizes the Oneness of Allaah and that He should be worshipped alone. Ibn Al-Atheer, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said: "It was given this name because the one who recites it purifies his monotheism to Allaah." The word Ikhlaas is the word of Tawheed (monotheism).

Al-Fayrooz Abaadi, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said: "Akhlasa means to give up Riyaa' (showing off) [i.e. offer worship purely for Allaah]." ¹

Al-Jurjaani, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said: "Ikhlaas is to give up Riyaa' when offering acts of worship." ²

Technically: In Islaamic terminology, the scholars defined it in different ways, and the following are the most important of these definitions:

Ibn Al-Qayyim, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said: "Ikhlaas is to purify one's intention when worshipping Allaah and devote the act purely for Him." ³

Al-Jurjaani, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said: "Ikhlaas means to cleanse the heart from any defect or impurity that affects its purity."

1 Al-Qaamoos Al-Muheet (797).

2 At-Ta'reefaat (28).

3 Madaarij As-Saalikeen (91/2).



It was also said that Ikhlāas is to scrub away anything that affects its clarity. ¹

Huthayfah Al-Mar'ashi, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said: "Ikhlāas is when the slave feels that performing a deed is the same for him whether he performs it in public or in seclusion." ²

Others said: "Ikhlāas is not to expect any reward from anyone for the deed you perform and to want anyone to see the deed except Allaah." ³

In addition to this, there are many other definitions, which were stated by the righteous Salaf, may Allaah have mercy upon them, such as:

- 1. To perform the deed for Allaah and not to join anyone with Him in the intention**
- 2. To perform the deed without people noticing⁴**

A sincere person is the one who does not care if people stop caring or respecting him in return for reforming and purifying his heart and making it sound in the scale of Allaah. Also, he does not like that people know about anything he does, even if

1 At-Ta'reefaat (28).

2 Al-Bayaan Fi Aadaab Hamalat Al-Qur'aan (13).

3 Madaarij As-Saalikeen (92/2).

4 Madaarij As-Saalikeen (91-92/2).



it is as small and minor as the weight of an ant.

It is very common in Islaamic texts to use the word intention instead of the word sincerity. For jurists, intention in principle means to differentiate between acts of worship and habits when performing a deed, and it is to differentiate between acts of worship amongst themselves. ¹

Differentiating between acts of worship and habits when performing a deed, is like differentiating between taking a bath to clean one's body or as a ritual bath to cleanse himself from impurity due to sexual intercourse or a wet dream. Differentiating between acts of worship amongst themselves, is like differentiating between praying four Rak'ahs for Thuhr from those for 'Asr.

Based on these definitions, intention is not what we are addressing with this book. However, if the word intention is used as a means to find out who is meant by performing a deed: is it performed purely and sincerely for the sake of Allaah or not, then in this case intention is included and part of the definition of sincerity.

Truthfulness and sincerity when performing an act of worship have close meanings, but the difference is that sincerity takes place after one starts performing the deed, while truthfulness is usually before the deed starts. Therefore, sincerity branches out of truthfulness. ²

1 Jaami' Al-'Uloom Wal-Hikam (11/1).

2 At-Ta'reefaat (28).



Texts obliging sincerity

Texts from the Qur'aan:

Allaah The Almighty commanded His slaves to be sincere in many verses of the Qur'aan, as in His Saying (which means): *"And they were not commanded except to worship Allaah, [being] sincere to Him in religion, inclining to truth, and to establish prayer and to give Zakaah. And that is the correct religion."* [QUR'AAN 98:5]

Allaah The Almighty commanded His Messenger, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, to perform acts of worship sincerely for His sake alone, Saying (what means): *"Say [O Muhammad]: 'Allaah [alone] do I worship, sincere to Him in my religion.'" [QUR'AAN 39:14] and also (what means):* *"Say [O Muhammad]: 'Indeed, my prayer, my rites of sacrifice, my living and my dying are for Allaah, Lord of the worlds. No partner has He. And this I have been commanded and I am the first [among you] of the Muslims [i.e. those who submit to the will of Allaah].'" [QUR'AAN 6:162-163]*

Allaah The Almighty informed us that He created the Heavens and the earth in order to test people who would be the best in deeds; He Says (what means): *"[He] Who created death and life to test you [as to] which of you is best in deed, and He is the Exalted in Might, the Forgiving."* [QUR'AAN 67:2]



Commenting on this verse, Al-Fudhayl ibn 'Iyaadh, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said: "The term "best in deed" means, the deed that is performed most purely and correctly." People asked him: "What do you mean by 'performed most purely and correctly'?" He, may Allaah have mercy upon him, replied: "Purely means sincerely for the sake of Allaah, and correctly means performing the deed in accordance to the Sunnah. If the deed is sincere but not in accordance to the Sunnah, then it will not be accepted, and likewise, if the deed is in accordance to the Sunnah but not sincere, then it also will not be accepted. It will only be accepted if it fulfills both sincerity and correctness."

Commenting on the statement of, Al-Fudhayl ibn 'Iyaadh, Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said: "This is what is meant by the Saying of Allaah (which means): *"So whoever would hope for the meeting with his Lord, let him do righteous [sound] work and not associate in the worship of his Lord anyone."* [QUR'AAN 18:110]"¹

Not associating with Allaah refers to sincerity and righteous [sound] work refers to it being in accordance with the Sunnah.

Allaah The Almighty described the best of religion is to submit to Allaah and perform good deeds; Allaah The Exalted Says (what means): *"And who is better in religion than one who*

¹ Majmoo' Al-Fataawa (333/1).



submits himself to Allaah while being a doer of good."

[QUR'AAN 4:125] Submitting oneself to Allaah refers to sincerity and being a doer of good refers to performing deeds according to the Sunnah.

Allaah commanded His Messenger, sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam, and His nation to be with the people of sincerity, Saying (what means): *"And keep yourself patient [by being] with those who call upon their Lord in the morning and the evening, seeking His countenance."* **[QUR'AAN 18:28] Seeking His countenance means, to perform deeds sincerely for the sake of Allaah.**

Allaah described those who perform deeds seeking the countenance of Allaah as the successful ones; Allaah The Exalted Says (what means): *"So give the relative his right, as well as the needy and the traveler. That is best for those who desire the countenance of Allaah, and it is they who will be the successful."* **[QUR'AAN 30:38]**

Allaah promised those who perform deeds seeking His countenance to be saved from the fire of Hell and to be satisfied on the Day of Resurrection; Allaah The Exalted Says (what means): *"But the righteous one will avoid it. [He] who gives [from] his wealth to purify himself. And not [giving] for anyone who has [done him] a favor to be rewarded [without intending reciprocation for some benefit to*



himself]. But only seeking the countenance of his Lord, Most High. And he is going to be satisfied." [QUR'AAN 92:17-21]

Allaah mentioned that one of the qualities of the inhabitants of Paradise is that they were sincere in this worldly life and do good purely for the sake of Allaah; Allaah The Exalted Says (what means): *"We feed you only for the countenance [i.e. approval] of Allaah. We wish not from you reward or gratitude."* [QUR'AAN 76:9]

Allaah promised those who perform deeds sincerely for His sake that they would earn a great reward in the Hereafter; Allaah The Exalted Says (what means): *"No good is there in much of their private conversation, except for those who enjoin charity or that which is right or conciliation between people. And whoever does that [sincerely] seeking means to the approval of Allaah, then We are going to give him a great reward."* [QUR'AAN 4:114] **and also (what means):** *"Whoever desires the harvest of the Hereafter, We increase for him in his harvest [i.e. reward]. And whoever desires the harvest [i.e. benefits] of this world, We give him thereof, but there is not for him in the Hereafter any share."* [QUR'AAN 42:20]

Texts from the Sunnah:

The Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, clarified the importance of sincerity and truthfulness in intention, and



stated that deeds are dealt with according to the person's intention. 'Umar bin Al-Khattaab, may Allaah be pleased with him, narrated that the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said: *"Deeds are dealt with according to intentions, and a person will get the reward according to his intention."*¹

This is one of the most important Prophetic narrations because it includes a religious rule that is part of all acts of worship and nothing is excluded from it. Prayer, fasting, Jihaad, Hajj, spending charity and other acts of worship, all these acts must have a sincere intention for them to be considered as sound and thus are accepted.

The Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, did not only clarify this rule to people and that it is included in all acts of worship, rather he, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, mentioned some of the deeds and emphasized the importance of purifying the intention when performing them, such as:

Monotheism: The Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said: *"Never would a slave sincerely say: 'La Ilaaha Illallaah' [None is worthy of worship except Allaah], except that the doors of the Heavens open up for these words until they reach the Throne of Allaah, so long as the one who says*

¹ Reported by Al-Bukhaari (1) and Muslim (1907).



*it keeps away from the major grave sins."*¹

Fasting: The Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said: *"He who observes fasting during the month of Ramadhāan [sincerely] with faith while seeking its reward from Allaah, will have his past sins forgiven."*² **The Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, also said:** *"Whoever fasts one day sincerely for the sake of Allaah, Allaah will keep his face from Hellfire at a distance of seventy years."*³

Optional night prayers: The Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said: *"He who prays the optional night prayers during the month of Ramadhāan [sincerely] with faith while seeking its reward from Allaah, will have his past sins forgiven."*⁴

Charity and mentioning Allaah: Abu Hurayrah, may Allaah be pleased with him, narrated that the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said: *"Seven are [the persons] whom Allaah will give shade of His Throne on the Day when there would be no shade other than the shade of His Throne."* Then he, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, mentioned one of them being: "A

1 Reported by At-Tirmithi (3590) and Al-Albaani ruled it as sound (Hasan).

2 Reported by Al-Bukhaari (38) and Muslim (760).

3 Reported by Al-Bukhaari (2685) and Muslim (1153).

4 Reported by Al-Bukhaari (37) and Muslim (759).



*man who [sincerely] gives in charity and conceals it [to such an extent] that the left hand does not know what the right has given."*¹

Going to the mosque: The Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said: *"A man's prayer with the congregation is twenty-five times more rewarding than his prayer at home or in his shop, and that is because when he performs his Wudhoo' properly and proceeds towards the mosque with no other purpose but to perform the prayer with congregation, he does not take a step without being raised a degree [in rank] for it and having a sin remitted for it, till he enters the mosque. When he is performing the prayer, the angels continue to invoke Blessings of Allaah on him as long as he is in his place of worship in a state of Wudhoo'. They say: 'O Allaah! Have mercy on him! O Allaah! Forgive him.'* He is deemed to be engaged in prayer as long as he waits for it."² **This person went out to the mosque with no other intention but a sincere one to perform the prayer with the congregation.**

Jihaad: The Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said: *"He who goes out to fight only intending [to gain as a result of his fighting] an 'lqaal [a small rope used to tie the*

1 Reported by Al-Bukhaari (1357) and Muslim (1031).

2 Reported by Al-Bukhaari (620).



*animal to prevent it from running away] then he will only get that."*¹ In this case, the person was not sincere and went out to gain a worldly matter and thus he only gets what he intended.

Funerals: The Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said: *"Whosoever attends the funeral of a Muslim sincerely for the sake of Allaah and hoping for His reward and remains with it until the prayer is offered over it and the burial is completed, he will return with a reward of two Qiraat; each Qiraat is equivalent [in magnitude] to Mount Uhud; and whosoever offers his prayer over it and returns before its burial, he will come back with one Qiraat."*²

Statements of the Salaf

The righteous Salaf were aware of the importance of sincerity and how the texts from the Qur'aan and Sunnah attached great importance to the issue, and thus they considered it as a serious and very important matter, and they realized the danger of not fulfilling it. They used to start the books they authored stating the narration of intention, like in the case of Al-Bukhaari, may Allaah have mercy upon him, who started his

1 Reported by An-Nasaa'i (3138) and Ahmad (22744), and Al-Albaani ruled it as authentic.

2 Reported by Al-Bukhaari (47).



book with the narration: *"Deeds are dealt with according to intentions, and a person will get the reward according to his intention."*¹

'Abdur-Rahmaan ibn Mahdi, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said: "If I were to author a book, I would mention the narration of 'Umar ibn Al-Khattaab on intentions in every chapter of the book."²

They stated that the intention is more important than the deed itself. Yahya ibn Abu Katheer, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said: "Learn how to have sincere intention, for it is more important than performing the deed itself."³

The scholars emphasized the importance of teaching people sincerity when performing a deed. Ibn Abu Hamzah, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said: "I wished that some of the jurists did nothing but teach people how to obtain sincerity when performing deeds."⁴ This is because many people lose their deeds because of not establishing sincerity.

1 Reported by Al-Bukhaari (1) and Muslim (1907).

2 Jaami' Al-'Uloom Wal-Hikam (8/1).

3 Hilyat Al-Awliyaa' (70/3) and Jaami' Al-'Uloom Wal-Hikam (13).

4 Al-Madkhal (1/1).



Allaah dispraised showing off

Allaah dispraised those who show off when performing their deeds and those who perform deeds for the sake of earning a worldly gain. Allaah informed us of the evil consequence of such people Saying (what means):

- *"Whoever desires the life of this world and its adornments, We fully repay them for their deeds therein [during worldly life], and they therein will not be deprived. Those are the ones for whom there is not in the Hereafter but the Fire. And lost is what they did therein [during worldly life], and worthless is what they used to do." [QUR'AAN 11:15-16]*
- *"Whoever should desire the immediate [worldly gratifications] We hasten for him from it what We will to whom We intend. Then We have made for him Hell, which he will [enter to] burn, censured and banished." [QUR'AAN 17:18]*
- *"Whoever desires the harvest of the Hereafter, We increase for him in his harvest [i.e. reward]. And whoever desires the harvest [i.e. benefits] of this world, We give him thereof, but there is not for him in the Hereafter any share." [QUR'AAN 42:20]*



The Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said: *"The thing which I fear the most is that you fall into minor Shirk."* People asked: **"O Messenger of Allaah, what is minor Shirk?"** He, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, replied: *"Showing off. Allaah will tell such people [who perform their deeds to show off] on the Day of Judgement when people are waiting to get their reward for the deeds they performed: "Go to those in front of whom you showed off your deeds in the worldly life and see if you can find your reward there." ¹*

Dear Muslim, chose one of the two paths: either the path of sincerity for the sake of Allaah when performing acts of obedience, or the path of showing off and seeking the pleasure of this worldly life. Know that people will be resurrected according to their intentions, as the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said: *"People will be resurrected according to their intentions."* ² You will have no one else to blame except yourself if you face destruction on that severe Day with those who will be destroyed due to their showing off and not maintaining sincerity when performing their deeds.

1 Reported by Ahmad (23681) and Shu'ayb Al-Arna'oot ruled it as sound (Hasan).

2 Reported by Ibn Maajah (4229) and Al-Albaani ruled it as authentic.



The fruits of sincerity

There are many benefits and abundant fruits one gains as a result of sincerity. When sincerity is firmly established in the heart of the slave, he gains plentifully. The following are some of the fruits one gains due to sincerity:

The acceptance of deeds:

Abu Umaamah Al-Baahili, may Allaah be pleased with him, narrated that the Prophet of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said: *"Allaah does not accept a deed unless it is performed sincerely for His sake and only His face is sought with it."*¹

Gaining reward:

Sa'd ibn Abu Waqqaas, may Allaah be pleased with him, narrated that the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said: *"You will not expend a thing in charity for the sake of Allaah, but you will be rewarded for it."*²

Magnifying the reward of the deed: Ibn Al-Mubaarak, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said: "A small deed is magnified thanks to the person's (sincere) intention, and at times an

1 Reported by An-Nasaa'i (3140) and Al-Albaani classed it as authentic.

2 Reported by Al-Bukhaari (56) and Muslim (1628).



abundant deed is reduced (in reward) due to (a bad) intention."

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Forgiving sins:

Sincerity is one of the greatest reasons of gaining forgiveness for one's sins. Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said:

"A person performs a deed while perfecting sincerity and servitude to Allaah, and thus Allaah forgives his major grave sins, just like in the narration of 'Abdullaah ibn 'Amr ibn Al-'Aas, may Allaah be pleased with him, who narrated that the Prophet of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said: *"A man from my nation would called upon on the Day of Resurrection in front of all people, and ninety nine records would be spread out for him, the length of each record is as far as his sight could reach; Allaah then Says [to the man]: "Do you deny any of these [records of deeds]?" The man would say: 'No O my Lord.' Then Allaah would Say to him: "You will not be wronged." A card, the size of the palm, would be brought out which has written on it: 'La Ilaaha Illallaah.'* So the man would say: 'What benefit would this card be in comparison with these records?' then this card would be placed on one side of the scale and

1 Jaami' Al-'Uloom Wal-Hikam (13/1).



the records on the other side, and the card would outweigh the records and cause them to scatter." ¹

This is the case of the one who says it (the two testimonies of faith). However, there are other people who commit major grave sins and enter the Hellfire and say these same words, but it will not outweigh the scale like it did for this man (because they were not sincere).

In another narration: "*Once a prostitute saw a dog on a hot day going around a water well, with his tongue sticking out from thirst. She took one of her leather socks and filled it with water and gave the dog to drink, so Allaah forgave her sins.*" ² **This woman gave the dog a drink of water and was sincere when she did, so Allaah forgave her. Not every prostitute who gives a dog a drink will have her sins forgiven."** ³

Getting the reward of the deed even if he was unable to perform it:

Sincerity enables the person to attain the reward of a deed even if one never actually performed it. In fact, one can reach the high rank of martyrs and those who fight for the sake of Allaah while actually dying on his bed. Allaah Says, regarding those whom the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, was unable to

1 Reported by At-Tirmithi (2639) and Ibn Maajah (4300) and Al-Haakim classed it as authentic, and Ath-Thahabi said that it is authentic according to the rules of Muslim.

2 Reported by Muslim (2245).

3 Fataawa Ibn Taymiyyah (218-221/6).



take along to the battle for Jihaad (what means): *"Nor [is there blame] upon those who, when they came to you that you might give them mounts, you said, "I can find nothing for you to ride upon." They turned back while their eyes overflowed with tears out of grief that they could not find something to spend [for the cause of Allaah]."* [QUR'AAN 9:92]

Anas ibn Maalik, may Allaah be pleased with him, narrated: *"We were coming back from the battle of Tabook with the Prophet of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, when he remarked: 'There are people whom we left behind in Madeenah who accompanied us in spirit in every mountain pass and valley we crossed. They remained behind for a valid excuse.'* ¹ **In another version he, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said:** *"They share the reward with you."* ²

Anas ibn Maalik, may Allaah be pleased with him, narrated that the Prophet of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said: *"He who supplicates Allaah sincerely for martyrdom, Allaah will elevate him to the rank of the martyrs, even if he dies on his bed."* ³

1 Reported by Al-Bukhaari (2684).

2 Reported by Muslim (1911).

3 Reported by Muslim (1909).



A poor man could also get the same reward of a rich man who generously spends in charity, if the poor man has a pure and good intention. Abu Kabshah, `Amr ibn Sa`d, may Allaah be pleased with him, narrated that the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said: *"The world is for four kinds of people. (1) One upon whom Allaah has bestowed wealth and knowledge and so he fears his Lord in respect to them, joins the ties of kinship and acknowledges the Rights of Allaah on him [and fulfills them]; this type will have the best position [in Jannah]. (2) One upon whom Allaah has conferred knowledge but no wealth, and he is sincere in his intention and says: 'Had I possessed wealth, I would have acted like so-and-so [rich person].'* If that is his intention, his reward is the same as that of the other ..."¹

There is an important point that must be clarified here: a person may be unable to perform a deed and wishes to perform it, and he would think that this is a good intention and that he would be rewarded for it, while in reality it is nothing but false wishful thinking. For example, a man would be sitting in his house lying on his bed and does not go to pray in the mosque, and then says: "I like to pray in the mosque." He falsely believes that just by saying this he will attain the reward of praying with the congregation. There are many other examples to which this

¹ Reported by Ibn Maajah (4228) and Ahmad (18053) and Al-Albaani ruled it as authentic.



applies, and thus one must be careful not to deceive himself and allow Satan to deceive him by making him believe this.

Turning permissible habits into acts of worship:

Sa`d ibn Abu Waqqaas, may Allaah be pleased with him, narrated that the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said: *"You will not spend a thing in charity for the sake of Allaah, but you will be rewarded for it; even the morsel of food which you feed your wife."* ¹

This is one of the greatest ways to earn reward, if a Muslim embarks this path. If we only intend while performing our permissible habits to do them as a means to get closer to Allaah, we would earn great rewards.

Zubayd Al-Yamaani, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said: "I like to have a good intention in everything I do even when I eat and drink." ²

The following are practical examples for things in our daily lives, which one can have a good intention when doing and be rewarded for them:

1 Reported by Al-Bukhaari (56) and Muslim (1628).

2 Al-Ikhlaas Wan-Niyyah (62).



- Many people like to perfume themselves, but if one intends to perfume himself before going to the mosque to show respect to the house of Allaah and to avoid harming the other Muslims, as well as the angels, then he would be rewarded for wearing perfume.
- We all need to eat and drink, but one the one who intends while eating or drinking to do it so that he would become strong and perform good deeds, then he would be rewarded for eating and drinking.
- Most people need to marry; one can intend that by getting married he would protect his chastity and that of his wife and to get children who would worship Allaah, then his marriage becomes a source of reward for him.
- University students must work on their intentions while studying. A person studying medicine should intend that by studying medicine, he would treat ill and wounded Muslims, then he would be rewarded for his studies. This applies to engineers and all other fields of study; one should intend to benefit the Muslims by it.

One should not slight having a good intention before performing any act; with a good intention anything can turn into a source of reward, and one never knows, one of these deeds could be the reason to rescue him on the Day of Judgement.

Protecting oneself from the devil:

The devil took a pledge upon himself to misguide humankind



and make disobedience attractive to them. However, Allaah excluded from them those who are sincere, and he would have no means to misguide them. Allaah The Exalted Said (what means): *"Except. among them. Your chosen [sincere] servants."* [QUR'AAN 15:40] The devil has no way to misguide those who protected themselves and fortified themselves with the weapon of sincerity.

Ma'roof Al-Karkhi, may Allaah have mercy upon him, used to say addressing himself: "O my soul, be sincere and you will then be rescued." ¹

Staying away from showing off and defeating whispers:

Abu Sulaymaan Ad-Daaraani, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said: "Sincerity results in staying away from showing off and defeating evil whispers." ²

Protecting oneself from trials:

A person can protect himself from trials by being sincere. Sincerity protects the person from fulfilling lusts and desires, and keeps him away from immoral people and sinners. Look how sincerity entitled Prophet Yoosuf, may Allaah exalt his mention, to be rescued by Allaah from the temptations and seduction of the minister's wife. Due to his sincerity, he was

1 Ihyaa' 'Uloom Ad-Deen (465/3).

2 Madaarij As-Saalikeen (92/2).



protected from committing immorality. Allaah The Exalted Says (what means): *"And she certainly determined [to seduce] him, and he would have inclined to her had he not seen the proof [i.e. sign] of his Lord. And thus [it was] that We should avert from him evil and immorality. Indeed, he was of Our chosen [sincere] servants."* [QUR'AAN 12:24]

Ridding oneself of anguish and earning abundant provisions :

Anas ibn Maalik, may Allaah be pleased with him, narrated that the Prophet of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said: *"For those whose ultimate concern is this worldly life, Allaah will scatter his affairs and will place poverty between his eyes, and he would not attain anything except what he is destined. And whosoever keeps the thought of the Hereafter in their mind, Allaah will unite his affairs for him, and would make his richness in his heart and this worldly life will unwillingly come to him."*¹

Relieving distress:

`Abdullah ibn `Umar ibn Al-Khattaab, may Allaah be pleased with him, narrated that he heard the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, saying:

¹ Reported by At-Tirmithi (2465) and Al-Albaani classed it as authentic.



"Three men, amongst those who came before you, set out until night came and they reached a cave, so they entered it. A rock fell down from the mountain and blocked the entrance of the cave. They said: 'Nothing will save you from this unless you supplicate to Allaah by virtue of a righteous deed you have done.'

Thereupon, one of them said: 'O Allaah! I had parents who were old, and I used to offer them milk before any of my children or slaves. One day, I went far away in search of pasture and could not come back until they had slept. When I milked as usual and brought the drink, I found them both asleep. I hated to disturb them and also disliked to give milk to my children before them. My children were crying out of hunger at my feet but I waited with the bowl in my hand for them to wake up. When they awoke at dawn, they drank the milk. O Allaah! If I did so sincerely seeking Your Pleasure, then deliver us from the distress caused by the rock'.

The rock moved slightly but they were unable to escape. The next man said: 'O Allaah! I had a cousin whom I loved more than anyone else (in another narration he said: as any man can love a woman). I wanted to have sexual intercourse with her but she refused. Hard pressed in a year of famine, she approached me. I gave her one hundred



and twenty dinars on condition that she would yield herself to me. She agreed and when we got together [for sexual intercourse], she said: 'Fear Allaah and do not break the seal unlawfully [i.e. her virginity]'. I moved away from her in spite of the fact that I loved her most passionately; and I let her keep the money I had given her. O Allaah! If I did that sincerely seeking Your Pleasure, then, remove the distress in which we are.'

The rock moved aside a bit further but they were still unable to get out.

The third one said: 'O Allaah! I hired some laborers and paid them their wages except one of them departed without taking his due. I invested his money in business and the business prospered greatly. After a long time, he came to me and said: 'O slave of Allaah! Pay me my dues'. I said: 'All that you see is yours – camels, cattle, goats and slaves'. He said: 'O slave of Allaah! Do not mock at me'. I assured him that I was not joking. So he took all the things and went away. He spared nothing. O Allaah! If I did so sincerely seeking Your Pleasure, then relieve us of our distress.'

The rock slipped aside and they got out walking freely." ¹

¹ Reported by Al-Bukhaari (2102) and Muslim (2743).



Becoming wise:

Makhool, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said: "No slave maintains sincerity for forty consecutive days except that wisdom will appear on his tongue (i.e. what he says)." ¹

Getting rewarded even if one makes a mistake:

This is like the case of a scholar or a jurist who exerts all efforts to give the ruling that coincides with the truth sincerely for the sake of Allaah, but then fails to do so; this man is rewarded for his effort due to his sincerity despite not coinciding the truth.

Achieving goodness in all affairs:

Daawood At-Taa'i, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said: "I noticed that all goodness is achieved through maintaining a sincere intention. It is enough for one to have sincerity even if he does not actually perform the deed (i.e. he will still be rewarded due to his sincere intention)." ²

Sufficing him from his need for people:

`Umar ibn Al-Khattaab, may Allaah be pleased with him, said: "The one who sincerely seeks the truth, even if it is against

1 Madaarij As-Saalikeen (92/2).

2 Ikhlâas An-Niyyah (64) and Jaami' Al-'Uloom Wal-Hikam (13).



himself (can harm him), then Allaah will suffice him from needing people and protects him against them." ¹

We should try and exert all efforts to become among the sincere people to obtain these benefits and enjoy these fruits.

The harmful effect of not being sincere

Just like being sincere yields good fruits for the Muslim, not being sincere has evil effects which harm the person. The following are examples of some of the harmful effects of not being sincere:

Not entering Paradise:

Abu Hurayrah, may Allaah be pleased with him, narrated that the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said: **"He who does not acquire knowledge with the sole intention of seeking the Pleasure of Allaah but for worldly gain, will not smell the fragrance of Paradise on the Day of Resurrection."** ²

Being thrown in the fire of Hell:

Abu Hurayrah, may Allaah be pleased with him, narrated:

"I heard the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, say: *"The first to be judged on the Day of Resurrection will be a man who had died as a martyr. He*

1 Reported by Al-Bayhaqi (250/10).

2 Reported by Ibn Maajah (252) and Abu Daawood (3664) and Al-Albaani ruled it as authentic.



will be brought forward. Allaah will remind him of the favors He had bestowed upon him and the man will acknowledge them. Then He will ask him: **`What did you do to express gratitude for it?'** The man will reply: 'I fought for Your cause until I was martyred.' Allaah will Say: **`You have lied. You fought so that people might call you courageous; and they have done so.'** A command will then be issued about him and he will be dragged on his face and thrown into Hell.

Next, a man who had acquired and imparted knowledge and read the Qur'aan will be brought forward. Allaah will remind him of the favors He had bestowed upon him and the man will acknowledge them. Then He will ask him: **`What did you do to express gratitude for it?'** The man will reply: 'I acquired knowledge and taught it, and read the Qur'aan for Your sake.' Allaah will say to him: **`You have lied. You acquired knowledge so that people might call you a learned [man], and you read the Qur'aan so that they might call you a reciter, and they have done so.'** A command will then be issued about him, and he will be dragged on his face and thrown into Hell.

Next a man whom Allaah had made affluent and to whom Allaah had given plenty of wealth, will be brought forward. Allaah will remind him of the favors He had bestowed upon him and the man will acknowledge them. He will ask him:



*'What did you do to express gratitude for it?' The man will reply: 'I did not neglect any of the ways You like wealth to be spent liberally for Your sake'. Allaah will say to him: 'You have lied. You did it so that people might call you generous, and they have done so.' A command will then be issued about him and he will be dragged on his face and thrown into Hell.'*¹

Whenever Abu Hurayrah, may Allaah be pleased with him, attempted to narrate this narration, he would faint out of fear. Sahfiyy Al-Asbahi, may Allaah have mercy upon him, entered Madeenah and found that people had gathered around a man, so he asked: "Who is this man?" People said: "It is Abu Hurayrah." Sahfiyy, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said: "I moved close to him until I stood right next to him and he was talking to people. When he (i.e. Abu Hurayrah) stopped talking and people left and he remained alone, I said to him: 'I ask you by Allaah that you tell me a narration which you have heard from the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, which you memorized and understood its meaning.' Abu Hurayrah said: 'I shall do. I will tell you a narration which I heard from the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, which I memorized and understood its meaning.'

Then Abu Hurayrah made a loud crying sound and fainted. He remained like this for a short while and then he woke up and

¹ Reported by Muslim (1905).



said: 'I will tell you a narration which the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, told me in this mosque and there was no one with us; it was only me and him.'

Then Abu Hurayrah made a loud crying sound one more time and fainted. He was like this for a short while and then he woke up, wiped his face with his hand and said: 'I will tell you a narration which the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, told me in this mosque and there was no one with us; it was only me and him.'

Then Abu Hurayrah made a very loud crying sound and fell on his face. I supported him and made him sit up and he was leaning on me for a long while; then he woke up and said: 'The Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, told me: ...' and then he told him the abovementioned narration. At the end of the narration the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said: *"O Abu Hurayrah, these three types of people will be the first of the creation of Allaah to be thrown in the fire of Hell on the Day of Resurrection."*¹

Notice that the first people to be thrown into the fire of Hell are not those who killed, stole or committed adultery and so on. Rather, the first people will be those who used to recite the Qur'aan, spend in charity and fight in the path of Allaah but

¹Reported by At-Tirmithi (2382) and Al-Haakim classed it as authentic.



lacked sincerity and were doing these acts of worship to show off.

Ka'b ibn Maalik, may Allaah be pleased with him, narrated that the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said: *"Whoever seeks knowledge to argue with the scholars, or to show off with the ignorant people, or to attract people's attention towards him, Allaah will throw him into the Hellfire."*¹

Rejection of the deeds:

Abu Hurayrah, may Allaah be pleased with him, narrated that the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said: *"Allaah The Almighty Said: 'I am The One Who is most free from want of partners. He who does a thing for the sake of someone else beside Me, I discard him and his polytheism.'"*²

Abu Umaamah Al-Baahili, may Allaah be pleased with him, narrated that a man came to the Prophet of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, and asked: "What do you say about a man who fights for obtaining reward and become famous [among the people]; what would he get in return?" The Prophet of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said: *"Nothing."* The man repeated his question three times and every time the Prophet of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, would say: *"Nothing."*

1 Reported by At-Tirmithi (2654) and Al-Albaani classed it as Hasan (sound).

2 Reported by Muslim (2985).



Then he, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said: *"Indeed, Allaah does not accept any action except that which is sincere and seeking His Face"* ¹

Abu Hurayrah, may Allaah be pleased with him, narrated that a man said: "O Messenger of Allaah, a man intends to fight for the sake of Allaah and he is seeking worldly gains." The Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said: *"There is no reward for him."* The people found that very difficult and they said [to the man]: "Return to the Messenger of Allaah, for perhaps he did not understand you." The man returned and he said: "O Messenger of Allaah, a man intends to fight for the sake of Allaah and he is seeking worldly gain." The Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said: *"There is no reward for him."* Then he returned a third time and the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said: *"There is no reward for him."*²

Losing the reward of the deeds:

Allaah The Exalted Says (what means): *"And We will approach [On the Day of Judgement] regard what they have done of deeds and make them as dust dispersed."* [QUR'AAN 25:23]

1 Reported by An-Nasaa'i (3140) and Al-Albaani classed it as authentic.

2 Reported by Abu Daawood (2516) and Al-Haakim ruled it as authentic and Ath-Thahabi confirmed this ruling.



In a Qudsi narration, Allaah will Say to those who used to show off with their deeds in this worldly life: **"Go to those to whom you used to show off your deeds in the worldly life and see if you can get your reward from them."** ¹

The Salaf and sincerity

Our Salaf did not deal with sincerity as merely verses from the Qur'aan which they recited or Prophetic narrations they conveyed to others; rather, they dealt with the issue in a manner the like of which did not exist with others. The stories of their sincerity were like a beacon that lit the way of guidance to others; they were leading examples because they knew the importance of sincerity.

Al-Fudhayl, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said: "Allaah only wants your intention (i.e. make it sincere) and determination." ²

Our Salaf, may Allaah have mercy upon them, realized how difficult it is to be sincere, so they conveyed this to people. Sahl ibn 'Abdullaah At-Tustari, may Allaah have mercy upon him, was asked once: "What is the most difficult thing on the soul?" He replied: "Sincerity, because one does not benefit from it." ³ This is because it is a hidden matter and thus it would not

1 Reported by Ahmad (23681) and Al-Albaani ruled it as authentic.

2 Jaami' Al-'Uloom Wal-Hikam (13).

3 Jaami' Al-'Uloom Wal-Hikam (17) and Madaarij As-Saalikeen (92/2).



be recognized by people and one would not gain anything as a result of establishing it in this worldly life.

Yoosuf ibn Asbaat, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said: "Purifying the intention from becoming corrupted is harder for devout worshippers to do than performing acts of worship for long periods."¹

The following are some examples pertaining to the issue of sincerity and how our Salaf were in this respect:

Not describing themselves as sincere:

When the Salaf realized that sincerity is the most difficult issue a person can struggle to achieve in this life, and that it needs serious efforts and sacrifice, they did not attribute this quality for themselves and negated it.

Hishaam Ad-Dastuwaa'i, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said: "I swear by Allaah, I can never claim that I (even for one time) attended the classes of Hadeeth to learn knowledge purely for the sake of Allaah."²

Do we know who this Hishaam is, who is accusing himself of not being sincere? Let the scholars of his time tell us:

1 Jaami' Al-'Uloom Wal-Hikam (13).

2 Siyar A'laam An-Nubalaa' (152/7) and Taareekh Al-Islaam (175/3).



Shu'bah ibn Al-Hajjaaj, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said: "I do not know of any person who ever attended the classes of Hadeeth to learn this knowledge purely for the sake of Allaah except for Hishaam Ad-Dastuwaai'."

Shaath ibn Fayyaadh, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said: "Hishaam cried so hard until he lost his eyesight."

Hishaam used to say about himself: "When the light of the lantern goes off, I remember the darkness of the grave." He also used to say: "I am amazed; how can a scholar laugh?"¹

Sufyaan Ath-Thawri, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said: "I never struggled to do something more than my efforts attempting to make my intention sincere."²

Yoosuf ibn Husyan, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said: "The most difficult thing to find in this life is sincerity. I try very hard to purify my heart not to do something for show, but it is like boasting appears in a different form every time."³

Mutarrif ibn 'Abdullaah, may Allaah have mercy upon him, used to supplicate saying: "O Allaah, I ask Your forgiveness from the sins which I had repented from but then committed them again; I ask Your forgiveness from what I had pledged to

1 Taareekh Al-Islam (176/3).

2 Ikhlâas An-Niyyah (65).

3 Madaarij As-Saalikeen (92/2).



do for Your sake but did not fulfill; I ask Your forgiveness from things I claimed to be doing for Your sake but joint others with You in my heart." ¹

These people were leading scholars in whose footsteps people follow, yet they accused themselves of not being sincere more than any other person.

Hiding their deeds:

Al-Hasan Al-Basri, may Allaah have mercy upon him, described how hard the Salaf used to strive in order to hide their deeds. He said: "A man would memorize the entire Qur'aan while the person next to him did not know; a man would become very knowledgeable and he would not let people realize that; A man would pray long hours at night in his house while having guests and they would never feel that. I have seen people who would not leave any chance of concealing any deed they can hide from people. The Muslims used to exert great efforts in supplication, but no one would hear their voice; they used to whisper to their Lord in compliance with the Saying of Allaah (which means): *"Call upon your Lord in humility and secretly."* [QUR'AAN 7:55]." ²

Hiding their deeds from their wives and household members:

1 Shu'ab Al-Eemaan (7167-7168) and Hilyat Al-Awliyaa' (207/2).

2 Reported by Ibn Al-Mubaarak in his book Az-Zuhd (pg. 45-46).



The wife of Hassaan ibn Abu Sinaan, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said: "He used to come to bed at night, and then trick me like a mother tricks her child (pretending that he is asleep), and then whenever he felt that I fell asleep, he would sneak out of bed and leave the room and go pray the optional night prayer. One day I said to him: 'O Abu 'Abdullaah, why do you torture yourself (by praying too much at night) take it easy on yourself.' He replied: 'Woe to you, be quiet! It is almost time for me to lie down and never get up after it (i.e. die).'"¹

Daawood ibn Abu Hind, may Allaah have mercy upon him, fasted forty years without telling his family. He used to take his food when he left in the morning and then give it away as charity, and then when he went back home at night he would break his fast with them acting as if it was his dinner.²

Hiding themselves during Jihaad:

Jihaad is one of the fields during which showing off can take place, because not everyone who carries a weapon and fights with the Muslims is sincere. We have already mentioned the Prophetic narration of those who would be thrown in Hell first, and one of whom was a person who fought Jihaad but was not sincere. Our Salaf used to hide themselves in Jihaad because they recognized the importance of sincerity in it; one of them

1 Hilyat Al-Awliyaa' (117/3) and Sifat As-Safwah (339/3).

2 Hilyat Al-Awliyaa' (94/3)



would hide himself and no one would recognize him. The following are two stories to exemplify this:

First story (The masked man): 'Abdah ibn Sulaymaan, may Allaah have mercy upon him, was with a brigade which included 'Abdullaah ibn Al-Mubaarak, may Allaah have mercy upon him, fighting against the Romans.

'Abdah said: "When the battle started and the Muslims faced the enemy, a man came out of the rows of the Romans and challenged the Muslims to send someone out to fight him alone. A man from the Muslim brigade came out, chased him and killed him. Another Roman came out challenging this Muslim fighter, and this Muslim killed him as well, and then a third came out, and the Muslim chased him and killed him. People went to this brave Muslim fighter wanting to know who he was but found him masked."

'Abdah said: "I was among those who went to know who he was, and so I took hold of the mask and pulled it off and uncovered his face, and discovered that it was 'Abdullaah ibn Al-Mubaarak." 'Abdullaah ibn Al-Mubaarak, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said in a censuring tone: "O Abu 'Amr, even you take part in this and expose me!"¹

Second story (The man of the tunnel): The Muslim army surrounded one of the fortresses of the enemy, and the enemy

¹ Taareekh Baghdaad (167/10).



army started showering the Muslims with arrows and things became difficult for the Muslim army. Suddenly, one of the Muslims got up and dug a tunnel and was able to enter through it to the enemy fortress. He killed the man guarding the gate of the fortress and opened the gate for the Muslims to enter. The Muslims entered the fortress and won the battle, but they did not know who the man was (who dug the tunnel).

Maslamah, may Allaah have mercy upon him, who was the leader of the Muslim army, wanted to know who the man was so that he could reward him. He was unable to discover his identity, so he made an announcement, adjuring this man in the Name of Allaah to come to him. The man went to him at night and placed a condition on the leader that he would not look for him after that. Maslamah, may Allaah have mercy upon him, agreed to the condition, and so the man uncovered his face and allowed him to recognize him.

Maslamah, may Allaah have mercy upon him, always used to say after that: "O Allaah, join me with the man of the tunnel in the Hereafter." ¹

Hiding themselves during Jihaad:

The Bedouin and war booty:

¹ Bustaan Al-Khateeb (24)



Shaddaad ibn Al-Haad, may Allaah be pleased with him, narrated:

“A Bedouin came to the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, accepted Islaam and said: ‘I wish to migrate (to Madeenah)’. So the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, asked some of his Companions to take care of him.

Then after a battle, the Muslims had gained some booty so the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, divided it and gave the Bedouin’s share to some of his Companions to look after, as the Bedouin was still at the rearguard.

When the Bedouin returned, they gave him his share, so he asked them: ‘What is this?’ They replied: ‘It is your share from the booty which the Prophet sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam gave us to hold on to for you.’ So the Bedouin took the booty and went to the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, and asked: ‘What is this?’ The Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, replied: *“Your share of the booty.”* The Bedouin said: ‘This is not why I believe in you and follow you; rather, I follow you so that I can get shot by an arrow right here, (and then he pointed to his throat) then die and enter Paradise.’ The Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, said: *“If you are sincere then Allaah will grant you your wish.”* After a short while, fighting resumed and the Bedouin’s body was brought to the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa



sallam, with an arrow in his throat at exactly the spot where he had pointed to the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam. Thereupon The Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, said: *“He was sincere so Allaah granted him his wish.”* Then using his own garment, the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, washed the Bedouin, prayed the funeral prayer over him and was heard by his Companions to say during the prayer: *“O Allaah! This is Your slave who migrated for Your sake and was killed as a martyr – and I testify to this.”*¹

Which testimony could ever be more honorable, sincere and truthful than this great one given by the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam?

Fear of compliments:

'Ali ibn Bakkaar Al-Basri, may Allaah have mercy upon him, was a famous ascetic scholar; he said: "I would rather meet Satan than meeting a person and start acting in front of him (to be ascetic and pious) and then Allaah forsakes me."² Our Salaf were very fearful of compliments and praise.

Not showing their knowledge:

1 Reported by An-Nasaa'i (1953) and Al-Haakim ruled it as authentic, and Ath-Thahabi said that it is authentic according to the rules of Muslim.

2 Hilyat Al-Awliyaa' (270/8).



Ibn Faaris, may Allaah have mercy upon him, reported that Abu Hasan Al-Qattaan, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said: "I lost my eyesight once and I think it was a punishment for me because I spoke too much (which reflected his knowledge) during one of my journeys." Look how he attributed his illness to talking in matters of the religion and because people discovered how much knowledge he had.

Ath-Thahabi, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said: "I swear by Allaah he was truthful. The Salaf were sincere and yet they were afraid to speak and expose how knowledgeable and virtuous they were. On the other hand, nowadays, people talk too much though they have limited knowledge and in general they are not as sincere. However, Allaah exposes their reality and exposes their ignorance and that they follow their desires and that they are not as knowledgeable as they pretend to be."

1

Concealing their tears:

Hammaad ibn Zayd, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said: "Ayyoob would be talking in a lecture and his heart would soften and his eyes would shed tears. At this, he would blow his nose and say: 'What a bad flu!.' pretending to have a cold or a flu in order to conceal his crying and tears." ²

1 Siyar A'laam An-Nubalaa' (464-465/15).

2 Siyar A'laam An-Nubalaa' (20/6) and Musnad ibn Al-Ja'd (1246).



Al-Hasan Al-Basri, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said: "A man would be sitting in a gathering and feel the urge to cry and would try to prevent himself, and when he felt that he could not control himself, then he would stand up and leave." ¹

Muhammad ibn Waasi', may Allaah have mercy upon him, said: "A man would cry for twenty years (out of fear of Allaah) while his wife who was next to him would not be aware of that." ² He also said: "I know some people, their head would be right next to his wife's head on the pillow, and his tears would wet the pillow and his wife would be unaware of that. I met some people who would stand in the row during prayer and would cry severely while the person next to him would not feel anything."

³

Books authored by Al-Maawardi:

Al-Maawardi, may Allaah have mercy upon him, has a strange story regarding sincerity in authoring books. He authored books in the fields of Tafseer (Qur'aan exegesis), Fiqh (Islaamic jurisprudence) and other fields. However, not a single book was published during his lifetime. He authored these books and hid them in a place which no one knew about, and at the time of his death he said to a person he trusted: "The books that are in such and such place were all authored by me, and the reason I

1 Reported by Ahmad in his book Az-Zuhd (262).

2 Hilyat Al-Awliyaa' (347/2).

3 Hilyat Al-Awliyaa' (347/2).



did not make them public during my lifetime is because I was not able to make my intention sincere for the sake of Allaah. When you see that I am dying, put your hand in mine; if I squeeze your hand, then know that nothing was accepted from my deeds, so take these books and throw them into the River Tigris. However, if my hand relaxes, then know that I was accepted and got what I was hoping to get."

That man said: "When his death approached, I put my hand in his hand and his hand was relaxed and he did not squeeze my hand, so I knew that it was a sign of acceptance and I made his books known publically." ¹

He, may Allaah have mercy upon him, did not do what many authors do nowadays, which is to go around seeking to get someone famous to introduce their books, say words of praise about them and are very keen on protecting copyrights. Contrary to this, Al-Maawardi, may Allaah have mercy upon him, was keen on monitoring his intention and did not publicize this books because he feared he did not have a sincere intention and thus he refrained from making them known.

Night charity by 'Ali ibn Al-Husayn:

'Ali ibn Al-Husayn, may Allaah have mercy upon him, used to carry bread at night on his back and distribute it among the needy people at night. He, may Allaah have mercy upon him,

¹ Siyar A'laam An-Nubalaa' (66/18) and Taareekh Al-Islaaam (169/7).



used to say: "Spending charity in the darkness of the night puts out the anger of the Lord."

Some of the residents of Madeenah had their provisions placed in front of their homes at night, but did not know the source and who was providing for them. When 'Ali ibn Al-Husayn, may Allaah have mercy upon him, died and people missed their provisions, they realized that it was he who used to provide for them, especially when they were washing his body and saw marks resulting from him carrying the sacks of wheat on his back. He, may Allaah have mercy upon him, used to support one hundred households. ¹

These were some stories reflecting the sincerity of such pious people. Even though they kept their affairs secret during their lifetime, yet Allaah made them known after their death so that these people become an example to follow and thus get the reward of all who follow in their footsteps. Allaah The Almighty Says (what means): *"And make us a leader [i.e. example] for the righteous."* [QUR'AAN 25:74] and (what means): *"And We made them leaders guiding by Our command."* [QUR'AAN 21:74]

Signs of sincerity

The scholars mentioned some signs, which reflect that the

¹ Taareekh Dimashq (383-384/41) and Tahtheeb Al-Kamaal (392/20).



person has sincerity, such as:

Not longing to become known:

Ibraaheem ibn Al-Ad-ham, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said: "A slave who seeks to become famous and known is not a sincere slave of Allaah." ¹

Not longing to be praised:

Some scholars said: "A scholar should address the people while having a sincere intention. As soon as he starts liking what he is saying, then he should stop and remain silent, and if being silent becomes appealing to him, then he should start to talk. He should never stop holding himself to account because people naturally like to be recognized and praised."

In addition to the above point, the following are more signs reflecting sincerity:

- Being energetic in working for the sake of Islaam.
- Rushing to work for the sake of Islaam for the sake of Allaah and not only when there is an expected return.
- Persevering and not complaining.
- Being keen on hiding one's deeds.
- Perfecting the work even if it is done in secret.
- Being keen on performing deeds in secret.
- Making the work done in secret more than that done in public.

¹ Hilyat Al-Awliyaa' (31/2).



These are signs reflecting sincerity on the part of the slave, but one should be careful not to feel sincere, because the moment one starts to feel that he is sincere, then he needs to purify his intention as this feeling (of being sincere) reflects that he lost sincerity. We ask Allaah to make us among His sincere slaves and to purify our hearts and deeds from showing off and hypocrisy.

Matters related to sincerity

When is it permissible to make a deed public?

We mentioned how keen our righteous Salaf were to hide their deeds, and we also mentioned that one of the signs reflecting sincerity is to perform deeds in secret. However, there are times when performing the deed in public is recommended and would be better than performing it in secret.

Ibn Qudaamah, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said in one of his books under the title (Chapter on the permissibility of intentionally making an act of obedience public): "There is a benefit gained from making the deeds public, which is to encourage others to follow suit and perform similar deeds. There are deeds which a person cannot perform in secret, such as Hajj and Jihaad for example. The one who performs his deeds publically should monitor his heart to avoid hidden showing off. He should intend by making his deed public that



people imitate him and perform similar deeds."

He, may Allaah have mercy upon him, also said: "A weak-hearted person who would not be able to control himself from harboring the feelings of showing off, such a person should not deceive himself. The example of a weak-hearted person who makes his deeds public is like that of a person who hardly knows how to swim, and then he saw some people drowning and he pitied them and rushed towards them for rescue, and when he reached them, they held on to him, and they all drowned." ¹

To explain the matter more, we say: Hiding the deed and making it public is done in certain situations:

First situation: It is confirmed in the Sunnah that one should hide the deed he wants to perform; in this case one should hide it. An example of this is the intimate relations one has with his wife.

Second situation: It is confirmed in the Sunnah that one should make the deed he wants to perform public; in this case one should publicize it. An example of this is performing the daily prayers with the congregation for men.

Third situation: The deed he wants to perform can be done secretly or in public; in this case one should hide it if he fears

¹ Mukhtasar Minhaaj Al-Qaasideen (223-224).



showing off. However, if does not fear this, then one should perform it publically so that people would imitate him. An example of this is spending charity; if one believes that by spending in public, the feeling of showing off will sneak up to his heart, then he should hide his charity. However, if he believes that people will take him as an example and do like he does, and he believes he can fight the feeling of showing off, then he should perform it publically.

Another example to which this applies is when a scholar prays an optional prayer in front of people in order to show them how to perform it. It was reported that some of the Salaf used to perform some of their deeds in public so that people would imitate them. One of them said to his wife at the time of death: "Do not cry for my departure, for I never said a bad word since I became Muslim." Abu Bakr ibn 'Ayyaash, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said to his son: "O son, beware of disobeying Allaah in this room, for I have recited the entire Qur'aan in it twelve thousand times in my life." ¹

There is an important matter which we must bring to the attention of the reader:

Some people spread the opinion of concealing all deeds and that no deed should be done in public. This is an evil opinion which aims at killing Islaam. When the hypocrites see a Muslim spending a large amount of money in charity, they accuse him

¹ Minhaaj Al-Qaasideen (224).



of showing off, and if it is little, they claim that Allaah does not need such a little amount. Their main aim is to prevent people from performing any deed in public so that people would not find anyone to imitate and follow in their footsteps. Therefore, if a righteous person performs a deed in public and is harmed by these hypocrites, then let him persevere and endure their harm patiently, and let him not pay attention to them and be assured that he is upon great virtue.

Abandoning work to avoid show off

Al-Fudhayl ibn 'Iyaadh, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said: "Abandoning the performance of deeds for people is a form of showing off just like performing it for them (to see that one did something) is also a form of showing off. Sincerity is when Allaah protects you from the two cases." ¹

An-Nawawi, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said: "He who firmly decides to perform an act of worship but then abandons it out of fear that people see him do it, then he has showed off."

This is the case if the person who abandons the deed in totality. However, if he only abandons it in front of people but he performs it in secret, then this is fine.

¹ Shu'ab Al-Eemaan (6879).



One matter to which this applies is when some ignorant people shorten or shave their beards to avoid showing off. They claim that the beard is a way of claiming that the person has piety and faith. This contradicts a large number of Prophetic texts that command men to grow their beards, and thus this is ignorance and is not included in the issue we are addressing.

Showing off vs. associating partners

There is a difference between showing off and associating partners. Showing off is when one performs a legislated deed but intends it for other than Allaah. On the other hand, associating partners is when one performs a legislated deed and intends to do it for Allaah and for another reason at the same time.

Legislated deeds can be divided into two categories:

First: To perform the deed purely for the sake of Allaah and not to pay attention to anything else. This is absolutely the best rank.

Second: To perform the deed for the sake of Allaah and couple it with another intention which is permissible for a person to have. The following are some examples to clarify the matter:

- Fasting for the sake of Allaah and intending to watch his weight.



- **Intending to go for Hajj for the sake of Allaah and intending to trade while he is in Hajj as well.**
- **Going to fight Jihaad for the sake of Allaah but intending to gain some of the war booty as provision for his family.**
- **Walking to the mosque to perform the congregational prayer and intending to exercise as well.**

These additional intentions which one couples with the original one for the sake of Allaah do not nullify the deed, but may reduce the reward. It is best for one to intend the deed purely for the sake of Allaah.

Third: To perform a legislated deed for the sake of Allaah and join with it something else. This can be divided into two conditions:

- **If this occurred to him before he started performing the deed, and was the reason behind performing the deed, then the deed is corrupted by it and nullified. This is like when a man gets up to offer an optional prayer hoping that people see him worship Allaah.**
- **If this occurred to him while performing the deed and he tries to stop his feelings. This is like when someone starts a prayer for the sake of Allaah, and then realizes that someone is watching him, and he likes that they are doing so, and starts hoping they would praise him for his prayer. However, he starts fighting these feelings and thoughts until he finishes his prayer; his deed is sound**



and he will be rewarded for his struggle against these thoughts and feelings.

- If this occurred to him while performing the deed and he does not try to stop his feelings. The deed in this case is corrupted and nullified.

Fourth: To perform a legislated deed for something permissible without intending to be rewarded. This like when someone fasts as a way of watching his weight and not to earn reward, or if someone fights Jihaad just to earn war booty; these and similar cases nullify the deed. Allaah The Almighty Says (what means): *"Whoever should desire the immediate [worldly gratifications], We hasten for him from it what We will to whom We intend. Then We have made for him Hell, which he will [enter to] burn, censured and banished"* [QUR'AAN 17:18].

Fifth: To perform a legislated deed for something impermissible without intending to please Allaah. This like when one prays only to show off in front of people. This is the worst type and the person incurs a sin in addition to the deed being nullified.

Lying to avoid showing off

Some Muslims may think that it is permissible to lie in order to avoid showing off, or so they claim. This is a vital mistake and a hideous deed, because lying is not a characteristic that a Muslim has. This is like someone who builds a mosque or a



school for the sake of Allaah, and when he is asked who built it, he would claim it was so and so person (naming someone else) claiming that he lied in order to avoid showing off.

What is not considered showing off?

- If people praise you for something good you did or possess without you longing for it, then this is the glad tidings, which a believer receives in this life.
- Becoming famous without working to earn fame, like a scholar who teaches people matters of the religion and becomes famous. He should not refrain from teaching people under the pretext of fear of showing off. Rather, he should fight himself not to allow this feeling to reach his heart and should continue to teach.
- A person may see another worshipping Allaah The Almighty and exerting great effort in this, and thus he becomes energetic and starts worshipping Allaah The Almighty like that devout worshipper. This is not showing off, and if he intends the deeds to be pure for the sake of Allaah, then he will be rewarded.
- Neither wearing nice clothes and shoes nor applying good perfume are included in showing off.
- Concealing one's sins and not talking to others about them. Not only is this not included in showing off, we as Muslims are instructed to conceal our faults. Some people wrongfully believe that in order to achieve sincerity, they must inform others of their sins. This is a



clear error and a deception of Satan.

Conclusion

Dear Muslim brother, the current situation of the Ummah (Muslim Nation) is bad and we as Muslims need to purify our hearts and be sincere in order to be able to reform and rectify our situation.

Many Islaamic projects were started but did not continue due to the lack of sincerity on the part of those running them. As individuals, we need to work hard to achieve sincerity, but the problem is that many people look for ways to become sincere while they do not know the correct definition of sincerity.

We ask Allaah to grant us sincerity and to make our hearts steadfast on His religion; we ask Him to bless this Nation with sincere men who would work for the sake of reforming and rectifying its condition.

Test your understanding

Here are two levels of questions about the topic; there are direct questions (i.e., the first level questions) and questions



that need some research and reflection, which are the second level questions.

Level one questions:

1. What is the difference between intention and sincerity?
2. Mention one difference between sincerity and truthfulness when performing a deed.
3. Why is the following narration one of the most important narrations? *"The deeds are dealt with according to intentions, and a person will get the reward according to his intention."*
4. Some people who do not attend the congregational prayer say the following when asked about the reason they do not attend the prayer in the mosque: "I like to go and pray in the mosque" What do you think of this statement? Is he truthful in what he is claiming?
5. Mention three benefits of sincerity and three harmful effects of not being sincere.
6. Mention four signs of sincerity.
7. Mention two deeds the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, encouraged people to be sincere when performing them, and mention the narration supporting that.
8. What is minor Shirk?
9. The best deed is that which is sincere and correct. Explain this statement.



10. Explain the following statement: "A small deed is magnified thanks to the person's (sincere) intention, and at times a great deed is reduced (in reward) due to (a bad) intention."

Level two questions:

1. Why was the word of Tawheed (Islaamic monotheism) called the word of Ikhlaas?
2. Some scholars considered the following narration: *"The deeds are dealt with according to intentions, and a person will get the reward according to his intention"* one of four narrations which sum the entire religion Explain why.
3. Mention the names of some scholars who paid close attention to the issue of reforming hearts.
4. Mention some deeds which you find happening in our time and which people do to show off. Mention the cure for this.
5. Give examples – other than those mentioned in this book – of how one can change a habit into an act of worship with his intention.
6. Explain the following statement: "Purifying the intention from becoming corrupted is harder for devout worshippers to do than performing acts of worship for long periods."
7. A man wanted to conceal his deeds from people to avoid showing off so he stopped going to the mosque so that people would not say that he prays all his



prayers with the congregation. What do you think of his behavior?

- 8. Mention a story on sincerity (not from this book) which had an impact on you.**
- 9. What helps the slave become sincere?**
- 10. Why was Chapter Al-Ikhlaas given this name?**

