

Allah's Control Over People's Hearts

In the Name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful

We have assigned to the unbelievers companions who made their past and present seem goodly to them, but the sentence has fallen due upon them together with bygone generations of jinn and humans. They will indeed be lost. The unbelievers say: 'Do not listen to this Qur'an, but drown it in frivolous talk, so that you may gain the upper hand.' We shall most certainly give the unbelievers a taste of severe suffering; and We shall most certainly requite them according to the worst of their deeds. Such is the requital of the enemies of God: the fire will be their lasting home: a fit requital for their having knowingly rejected Our revelations. The unbelievers say: 'Our Lord! Show us those jinn and men who have led us astray. We shall trample them under our feet so that they shall be among the lowest of the low. As for those who say: 'Our Lord is God,' and then steadfastly pursue the right way, the angels will descend on them, saying: 'Have no fear, and do not grieve, but rejoice in the good news of Paradise which you have been promised. We are your guardians in the life of this world and in the life to come. There you shall have all that your souls desire, and all that you ask for, as a ready welcome from Him who is much-forgiving, ever-merciful.'
(Clearly Expounded: Surah Fussilat: 41: 25-32)

The surah shows the unbelievers how God's power extends over their hearts and minds, even when they are still on earth refusing to believe in Him. Since He is fully aware that their hearts have become corrupt, He lets some evil entities, from among both humans and jinn, befriend them and make what is evil seem fair and goodly. Thus, they lead them astray until they join those who ruin themselves and become liable to punishment: "We have assigned to the unbelievers companions who made their past and present seem goodly to them, but the sentence has fallen due upon them together with bygone generations of jinn and humans. They will indeed be lost."

They are too proud to worship God when they are subject to His power. Their own hearts lead them to ruin and ultimately to God's punishment. God allocates them wicked companions who whisper in their ears, assuring them that all the evil they see around them is good, and who present their own bad deeds to them in a fair appearance so that they do not see how foul these are.

Perhaps the worst thing that can happen to man is that he loses his balanced judgment and can no longer see how foul or deviant his actions are. In this way, he perceives everything he does as good and fair. Inevitably, though, this leads him to ruin. When the unbelievers reach this stage, they find themselves among the lost herd of past communities that suffered God's punishment: "They will indeed be lost."

One aspect of what such wicked companions persuaded them to do was to fight the Qur'an when they realized how powerful was its argument: "The unbelievers say: Do not listen to this Qur'an, but drown it in frivolous talk, so that you may gain the upper hand." The elders of the Quraysh in Makkah used to counsel each other to do just this, and they also persuaded the masses to do the same.

They realized that they were no match for the Qur'an, its beauty, power and eloquence: "Do not listen to this Qur'an." (Verse 26). They claimed that it cast a magical spell over their minds and ruined their lives, causing division between a man and his children or a man and his wife. The Qur'an wins people's hearts so that they no longer value any other bond as they do their bond of faith. Thus, it was known as Al-Furqan, meaning 'The Criterion'. "Do not listen to this Qur'an, but drown it in frivolous talk, so that you may gain the upper hand."

Such frivolity is totally unbecoming, yet it was the result of their knowing that they could not combat the Qur'an with logic or consistent argument. Those who persist in such disbelief can basically do nothing other than drown out the voice of the Qur'an with their own frivolities. They used to do this in a variety of ways: Malik ibn Al-Nadr, for example, used to sit and relate accounts of Rustum and other Persian kings in order to impress people so that they would not listen to the Qur'an, while others used to shout and make noises or recited poetry and rhymes. All this, however, came to nothing while the Qur'an retained its power because it is the word of the truth, and the truth is overpowering.

In response to their singular remark, they are given a stern warning: "We shall most certainly give the unbelievers a taste of severe suffering; and We shall most certainly requite them according to the worst of their deeds. Such is the requital of the enemies of God: the fire will be their lasting home: a fit requital for their having knowingly rejected Our revelations." We soon see them suffering in hell and see how the deluded are so angry with the ones who led them astray. They realize now that it was they who led them to their fate when they persuaded them that their foul deeds were fair and goodly. "The unbelievers say: Our Lord! Show us those jinn and men who have led us astray. We shall trample them under our feet so that they shall be among the lowest of the low." They are not merely angry with them; they want to exact revenge: "We shall trample them under our feet." What a contrast with their close friendly ties in this present world.

A different type of bond is that which the believers have. These are the ones who take the right path of endeavour to do only what is good. God assigns to them angels to give them reassurance, bring them the good news of their prospects in heaven and to be their guardians, both in the life of this world and the world to come: "As for those who say: 'Our Lord is God,' and then steadfastly pursue the right way, the angels will descend on them, saying: Have no fear, and do not grieve, but rejoice in the good news of Paradise which you have been promised. We are your guardians in the life of this world and in the life to come. There you shall have all that your souls desire, and all that you ask for, as a ready welcome from Him who is much-forgiving, ever-merciful."

To remain steadfast in pursuing what is entailed by the declaration, 'Our Lord is God,' means to keep it alive in one's conscience, to give proof to it in one's life and to discharge the responsibilities it imposes. This is serious, important and hard work. Therefore, it deserves the abundant grace God grants them: a friendly relation with angels who, as God tells us, reassure the believers with sweet words: "Have no fear, and do not grieve, but rejoice in the good news of Paradise which you have been promised. We are your guardians in the life of this world and in the life to come." They also describe heaven to them, knowing that they will have there all that they desire and is pleasing to them. They make it even more inviting and pleasing by saying that it is "a ready welcome from Him who is much-forgiving, ever-merciful." It is a gift from God and a place assigned to them through His forgiveness and endless mercy.

Worse Than Dajjal

Abu Saeed reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) came to us while we were discussing about Dajjal and said, "**Should I not inform you of that which I fear for you even more than the dangers of Dajjal? It is the hidden Shirk (Riya); A person stands to pray, and he beautifies his prayer because he sees the people looking at him.**" (Sunan Ibn Majah vol. 2, #3389)

The primary cause of riya is a weakness in Iman (Faith). When a person does not have strong faith in Allah, he will prefer the admiration of people over the pleasure of Allah.

There are three symptoms that are indicative of riya, and it is essential that a believer avoid all of them.

1. **The love of Praise** - As mentioned in a hadeeth of the first three people being thrown into the hellfire; the scholar (who taught for fame), the martyr (who fought for fame), and the person who gave his money in charity (so people would say he is generous). All three of these people desired the pleasure of people over the pleasure of Allah. The person who desires the praise of people must feel some pride in himself, for he feels himself worthy of being praised. There is a danger, therefore, of him becoming arrogant and boastful.

2. **Fear Of Criticism** - No one likes to be criticised. The dislike of criticism regarding religious practices may be divided into two categories:

a) The first category is that of a person who neglects a commandment of Allah in order to avoid the criticism of his peers.

b) The second category is that of a person who obeys certain commandments of Islam, not for the sake of Allah, but because he fears people will look down on him and criticise him if he does not do it. For example, a man may make his formal prayers in the mosque because he does not want people to criticise him for praying at home, or to think that he is not praying at all.

3. **Greed for people's possessions** - If a person covets what other people possess, whether it is rank, money or power, then he will wish them to envy him similarly.

For example, if he is jealous of a position of a certain person in society, he will try by every possible means to attain the same position. Such desires lead people to spend their lives putting on a show for other people so that they will admire their rank, money, or power.