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## **RIGHTEOUSNESS AND EVIL**

### **By Shaykh Zulfiqar Ahmed (db)**

#### A Temporary Abode

Man is merely a temporary guest in this world. He neither came into this world of his own free will nor will he leave this world of his free own will. Therefore he has no right whatsoever that he should live the life he has been given according to his own selfish will and desires. He came into this world by the order of the Creator, and he will leave this world by order of the same Creator. He will be successful only if he lives his life according to the commands of this Creator. The purpose of our existence is the worship and obedience of Allah ﷻ, and the purpose of life is the remembrance of Allah ﷻ.

If someone is summoned by a high ranking official of great importance and stature, he will make sure that he is well-dressed and presentable for such a meeting with this undoubtedly noted personality. We will also be summoned for a meeting; it is called the Day of Judgment. The time that we have been given in this life is the time to prepare for such a meeting with an undoubtedly noted personality, the personality that overshadows all. The Holy Quran says:

*Those among you desirous of the meeting with your Lord, let him be righteous and not associate others in worship with Allah.*

Do not put other loves and desires in front of your love for Allah ﷻ, but love others only for the sake of Allah ﷻ. Since this kind of love will be love for the specific sake of Allah ﷻ, it will be included within the love for Allah ﷻ.

#### The Eternal Abode

This world is for the preparation of the Hereafter, and not for falling in love to its attractions. This world is made of clay and is temporary whereas the Hereafter is made of gold and silver and is eternal. This world is the home of turmoil while the Hereafter is the home of peace. This world is an ever-receding shadow, so why place any faith in it?

The heart of the believer has to be connected to his Lord. Certainly a person has to make effort for his necessities which are livelihood and his worldly responsibilities, but his daily activity is but for his Lord. Passing through this life is a necessity, but the ultimate goal is to meet with our Creator, and we must take care never to sacrifice the purpose for the necessity. Such are real people who are not forgetful of their Lord for an instant. The Holy Quran says of such people:

*Those whom buying and selling does not deter from the remembrance of Allah*

So if we are working we should make sure that we remember Allah in our hearts and do everything according to His Commandments. This is called servitude.

#### Two Paths

Allah ﷻ created man with both good and evil within, but also issued the command that the successful will be he who is pure. The person who chooses righteousness as his path in life will be successful, and he who chooses evil will be destroyed. Hence there is a constant struggle of good and evil within the believer: that of Shaitan and his forces and the forces of righteousness. One is a Shaitan that we cannot see, but his forces come in the form of people who spread rumors, lies, and gossip; in the form of women when they leave their houses uncovered. Such people hence become helpers of Shaitan whether they know it or not, for they are inviting others toward wrong.

The other forces are the forces of *Ar-Rahman*, those who do righteous deeds and invite others toward righteousness as well. Whoever chooses this road becomes successful, and whoever chooses the path of evil is lost. These paths have been clearly laid out for man. Allah ﷻ says:

*Was there not a time when man was once an unspeakable thing? We created him from a droplet so that We may test him....We have shown him the paths...it is up to him whether he wants to be one of those who give thanks or those who disbelieve*

Allah ﷻ has clearly laid out the choices for us and no one can claim on the Day of Judgment that he was unaware. Allah ﷻ has enclosed the truth within us. Close your eyes and look within and your heart will testify as to what you are. The heart is that witness that can never be bribed or defrauded. We can pretend to be whatever we want to in front of others, but the heart is the mirror that will show us the reality. Allah ﷻ cannot be fooled because He knows what is inside the hearts.

The person who chooses the path of right will be successful and he who chooses the path of wrong will be destroyed. One's lower self (*nafs*) wants the immediate fulfillment of unlimited desires, whereas Allah ﷻ wants us to be patient and obedient so that He can fulfill our desires in Paradise.

For example, a father and son are buying groceries in the market on a hot day, and the son wants to drink immediately because he is thirsty. The father however points out that the house is not far and they can both enjoy their drinks in their air-conditioned house. The market on the other hand is bustling with people and there is no place to sit and enjoy one's drinks. The son wants immediate gratification while the father points out that the dirty and humid market is no place to eat and drink.

Likewise, we seek instant gratification here but Allah ﷻ is pointing out to us that this limited existence is no place to fulfill our desires, something that Allah ﷻ has reserved Paradise for. Allah ﷻ says that there are such treasures in Paradise that no eyes have seen, nor ears heard, nor hearts and minds imagined. Hence Allah ﷻ cautions us to be patient because this life may seem long to us but is an instant for Allah ﷻ. On the Day of Judgment

He will say to us that He will fulfill our desires since we were patient in this world and obeyed Him.

#### Reward

Allah ﷻ rewards us a little in this world and saves the majority for the Hereafter. This world is limited and cannot possibly contain the rewards that Allah ﷻ has promised, which is just one reason why we cannot get everything here. We know this because we are told that the reward of the very last person to be admitted into Paradise will be ten times the size of this world.

Another reason is that this limited world cannot contain the *quality* of things in Paradise. If a lady of Paradise were to mix her saliva into the earth's water, all of it would turn sweet; if she were to lower her veil then spring would come in, and if she were to talk to the dead they would rise up. Hence such creation cannot enter such a decadent world. It is so established that this temporary world falls short in both quality and quantity.

A final reason is that of course this world is finite and if Allah ﷻ were to reward us totally in this life then His rewards would also finish when this world has to finish. Allah ﷻ has meant for His rewards to his servants to be eternal and hence they are meant for the Hereafter. For eternal rewards Allah ﷻ asks us to be patient and obedient, but the *nafs* of man is stubborn and impatient and wants total satisfaction in this life also. Hence for limited worship Allah ﷻ wants to give us everlasting reward, something for which He has reserved Paradise.

#### Two Opposing Forces

The difference between a believer and a sinner is this: a believer struggles against his *nafs*, controls his desires and fulfills them in accordance with what Allah ﷻ wants, whereas a sinner gives in to his negative desires for hasty fulfillment. However, just like there is no pleasure in eating at the side of the road, there is never total fulfillment in indulging in the pleasures of the flesh and *nafs*. A sinner can never live a peaceful and satisfied life. Remember that a person may be the most successful in the world, and may commit sins that no one could possibly know about, but this will always trouble his heart and therefore he can never be at peace. Sin takes away the peace of the heart.

A venerable sage was inspired by Allah ﷻ to tell his people this: "O people, when you commit sin you close all the doors through which creation can see you, but you do not make any effort to close the door through which Allah ﷻ sees you. Do you consider Allah ﷻ the lowest among those who can see you?"

On the contrary, righteous deeds bring peace to a person's heart and soul. This is why a person on the path of truth and righteousness lives a happy and peaceful life because he is acting in accordance with Allah's ﷻ commands. Like good deeds benefit such a person both here and in the Hereafter, sin not only earns a person Hellfire in the Hereafter but his life here is turned into Hell as well. The world itself punishes wrongdoers as well: people who stubbornly refuse Allah ﷻ are always in turmoil.

The people who are immersed in love of creation rather than the Creator are always agitated and worried because of one thing or another – be it family, or business, or something else. Their faces are darkened and sad as if in great difficulty and robbed of peace. On the other hand, the faces of the devout people of Allah ﷻ are bright and joyous like fresh morning breeze. Allah ﷻ illuminates their faces with the light of their righteous deeds. So Allah ﷻ gives us some reward for good deeds here but we will receive the full reward in the Hereafter.

Therefore there is a constant struggle between good and evil within a person: Shaitan and the forces of evil pull a person towards evil deeds and wrongdoing, while a person's conscience and the forces of good and righteousness beckon him towards obedience to Allah ﷻ.

Our conscience is an incredible gift to us from Allah ﷻ, and will always trigger an uncomfortable feeling when a person decides on something wrong or makes a mistake. However, if a person stops listening to the voice of his conscience and dedicates himself to fulfilling his base desires, then there comes a time when that voice stops because the inner self goes to sleep and dies.

We should dedicate ourselves to the path of righteousness before our inner self goes to sleep and eventually dies. We should become people of one heart instead of two. It is ironic and tragic that we wash and clean the face that the whole world sees everyday, but we neglect to clean the heart that Allah ﷻ looks into. Hence the righteous are the people who come nearer to Allah ﷻ and those involved in sin get further and further away from Allah ﷻ. Allah ﷻ tells us to run towards Him, and when we commit sin He asks us, “Where are you going?” because sin only takes a person away from Allah ﷻ. The mercy of Allah ﷻ constantly beckons us, but by choosing sin we are shunning this mercy and going somewhere else.

When we commit sin Allah ﷻ says to us:

*O Children of Adam, did We not take an oath from you that you would not follow Shaitan? Truly he is an open and avowed enemy...worship Me for that is the Straight Path*

However, man is stubborn and refuses to listen, to the extent that he ridicules those righteous people who do follow Allah ﷻ.

#### Our Ingratitude and Struggle

Truly we are to be pitied because we have not understood the great value of our Creator and Caretaker. Likewise we have not worshipped Him as He deserves to be worshipped. The reality should have been that we should have lived obedient lives in gratitude for His mercies upon us. If we spent the rest of our lives in obedience and prostration we could not give enough thanks even for one of His mercies, so what about the thousands that we enjoy and take for granted?

However, we remain blind to this because we are so involved in fulfilling our *nafs*'s desires. We remain entrenched in hardship and turmoil to the extent that one difficulty does not pass that another one comes upon us. We think of ways that we can free ourselves from these

troubles, ignoring the simple fact that all we have to do is renounce sin and submit fully to Allah ﷻ.

Why are such people constantly burdened with such hardship? To awaken to the reality that they must return to their Lord. Remember that hardship awakens while happiness and luxury puts one to sleep. This is why Allah ﷻ keeps sending difficulty across a person's path so that he awakens if he is sleeping and stays alert if he is awake. Someone in need or in trouble will start paying close attention to his prayers and will attend the masjid regularly. Why? Because he is asking for a way out of his hardship. Hence Allah ﷻ sends this hardship so that such a person might return to the path of righteousness. All praise is for Allah ﷻ who pulls his servants towards Him in chains whether they want to come or not. However, only the fortunate are wise enough to wake up and stay awake. Some are so stubborn that they remain asleep no matter how hard they are hit, and others go into a deeper sleep than before.

#### Three Major Categories

All sin can be summarized into three major categories: arrogance, greed, and hatred. Arrogance was the first sin that Shaitan committed in the heavens. He refused to bow down to Hadrat Adam ﷺ when ordered because he arrogantly maintained that he was made of fire whereas Hadrat Adam ﷺ was made of clay, and therefore he claimed superiority. His name was Azazeel and it is written that he had worshipped Allah ﷻ so much that the entire earth was marked with his prostrations. Although he was a jinn he was allowed the company of the angels because of his tremendous worship and referred to as their best.

Hence arrogance was the first sin that was committed in the heavens and made Shaitan an outcast. Allah ﷻ dislikes arrogance so much that hadith tells us that the person who has even a grain's worth of arrogance in his heart will not enter Paradise. It has been further written that Allah ﷻ, while punishing for most sins in the Hereafter, punishes for some sins in this world also. Of these are rebelliousness towards parents and arrogance. Allah ﷻ will certainly disgrace an arrogant man in this world before his death.

Remember that whoever angers Allah ﷻ will be lost in a whirlwind of turmoil. The world can turn upside down when the Master becomes angry: a man may go to bed a minister but wake up a pauper. Everything is spring when He is satisfied, but all can turn to a bitter winter if He becomes angry.

I once was in Multan where I came across a lawyer who used to challenge Allah ﷻ by claiming that others were afraid of Allah ﷻ but he was not, and he would conduct himself arrogantly according to his statements. When I heard of this I thought to myself that his time is near, because Allah ﷻ disgraces such a person in front of the whole world. I received a letter after leaving that said that he had fallen ill and he would convulse as if about to vomit but feces would come out of his mouth instead of vomit. When Allah ﷻ becomes angry then he reduces a person to the lowest of the low. He snatches back His mercies and makes a laughing stock of the person.

If a boy sits on a mountain and blows on it thinking that it will fall, nothing will happen to the mountain. Likewise if someone challenges and rebels against the greatness of Allah ﷻ,

he will only harm himself and not Allah ﷻ. Allah ﷻ is pure and above such things. Therefore when such people mock His greatness all of creation becomes their enemy.

Arrogance will certainly be punished in the Hereafter but Allah ﷻ will also disgrace such a person in this world, both to disgrace him and make him an example to others. Moreover, before they are thrown in Hell on the Day of Judgment Allah ﷻ will reduce such people to the size of ants, so that all mankind steps on them as they take their places on that Day.

Hence man should not be arrogant nor should he make lofty claims while in this world. Be fearful of Allah ﷻ, who always punishes and reduces those who claim superiority. Man always becomes arrogant and makes proud claims when he succeeds and his needs are met. Thus he sometimes challenges the greatness of Allah ﷻ. “Don’t you know who I am? Don’t you know that I can have you ruined with one phone call?” he says proudly. A little success and man forgets his humble beginnings and that greatness is only for Allah ﷻ. Greatness is a cloak belonging only to Allah ﷻ, and He becomes angry when someone tries to snatch this for himself.

An extremely rich man had so much wealth that his land had a total of seven railway stations. Sitting in a gathering he said arrogantly that he was so wealthy that his next seven generations had nothing to worry about. Allah ﷻ did not like this, and when this man died it so happened that his eldest son got so intoxicated with all this wealth that he fell into the common traps of youth. With more money than he knew what to do with, he fell into drinking, gambling, and everything else associated with the blindness that comes with having too much money at one’s disposal.

With the lifestyle of drinking, gambling, and women that he had fallen into, money naturally flowed like water. He fell deeper and deeper into this pit until he lost all the land and all the houses. Tragically he could be found begging in the same neighborhood in which his father had proudly said that his seven generations would have nothing to worry about because he was so rich. Day can turn into night very fast when a person becomes arrogant and makes lofty claims against Allah ﷻ. What we should be doing is thanking Allah ﷻ for what He has given us and saying that what He has given is much more than what we deserve. Allah ﷻ showers us with mercies and means but we do not deserve any of it.

The second sin that scholars have written about is greed. The first sin was arrogance in the heavens, and greed first revealed itself in Paradise when Eve fell to the false promises of Shaitan. Shaitan swore oaths that Hadrat Adam ﷺ and Eve would stay in Paradise forever and become knowledgeable if they ate from the tree that Allah ﷻ had forbidden access to. As usual Shaitan’s promises proved false and Hadrat Adam ﷺ and Eve were cast out of Paradise.

Allah ﷻ has put more greed in women than in men. The man works hard to provide for her and give her nice things but she is never satisfied. You can spread loads of clothes in front of her but get she will say, “What have you ever given me but old clothes?” The woman is ungrateful and will not be satisfied with whatever is done for her or what is bought for her. She says that she cannot wear a certain dress a second time because she has already worn it once. This is a sign of greed, and this greed traps a person into hardship. Why aren’t we

grateful for whatever Allah ﷻ has provided for us? Why don't we praise Allah ﷻ for giving us much more than what we deserve? Only such a grateful person is acceptable to Allah ﷻ.

The first sin was arrogance in the heavens; the second sin was greed in Paradise, and the third sin was envy and revealed itself on Earth. The story of Kane and Abel is famous: Kane was envious of Abel because he had a beautiful wife who Kane wanted to marry. This envy grew to the point that Kane killed his brother so that he would be able to marry his wife.

#### Jealousy and Envy

Since the first crime in the world was committed because of envy, the most prevalent sin on Earth is envy. A woman may be envious of another because she is more beautiful; someone may be envious of another because he has a bigger house. People may be family but they may be burning inside because of envy towards each other for one reason for another. The Messenger ﷺ of Allah said that envy devours good deeds like fire devours wood. We indeed burn like wood when we hate people.

There is a difference between jealousy and envy. A jealous person merely wants what the other has and prays that Allah ﷻ grant him the same. However, an envious person cruelly wishes for the other to be stripped of what he has so that he himself may get it and enjoy it.

There is a famous story of a man who would regularly go into the jungle to meditate and worship. Allah ﷻ was pleased and so He told the man to ask anything and it would be granted. The man asked to be freed from the worry of his sustenance so that he could devote himself to worship. Hence this was granted and his family enjoyed a peaceful livelihood, which allowed him to devote his time to worshipping Allah ﷻ.

All of a sudden the other village people started noticing a healthy change in this man, in that he was not as worried about anything as he was before. One man would not leave him alone and insisted on knowing what was different, and so this man heard the whole story. Hence this person tried the same thing and soon Allah ﷻ offered him the same thing, for any wish that Allah ﷻ would grant. However, what did this man ask for? He said, "O Allah ﷻ, take that man's livelihood away and return him to his original worries."

This is our exact state today: we are not happy if someone else achieves success nor do we pray that Allah ﷻ give us what that person has, but instead we become envious and wish for something negative to happen to that particular individual. What kind of a life is this that we are ruining ourselves with our own hands? The foundation of all this is envy, something so dangerous that a verse in the Holy Quran asks for protection from envy.

There are three sins that are the body and soul of all combination of sins, and these are: arrogance, greed, and envy. Whoever can stay away from these sins has saved himself and can live a peaceful life, and hence this is what we all have to try and accomplish. The cures for these sins and diseases are simple.

If we feel envious towards someone we should pray for that person that Allah ﷻ should give in more abundance to that individual. *Inshallah* we will notice that the envy will recede the more we pray. Instead of burning ourselves with envy at why a certain person has more we should realize that all is for Allah ﷻ to give and He gives in whatever quantity and to whom He will at whatever time He chooses. Allah ﷻ may provide enormously for one and

not so much for another, but this is His right. We should be grateful for what He has given us instead of wasting our time complaining.

#### Sincerity

It is written in hadith that there are some people who leave worship at the first disturbance or decrease in their means, as is the case for many of us. A little hardship comes our way and we forget the masjid. Hence Allah ﷻ keeps giving to such people so that they remain obedient. On the other hand are those who become arrogant when they notice themselves comfortable and successful and so their worship decreases or dies because of this pride. Allah ﷻ gives to such people in less quantity so that they remain dutiful and on the path. Hence increasing and decreasing our sustenance are both mercies from Allah ﷻ and it is beyond our understanding so we should be patient and grateful. Allah ﷻ always intends the best for us but we remain suspicious.

The foundation of all our mishaps and troubles is that our intentions are insincere. We always think badly of people and we are always suspicious, because we become blinded by our base desires and therefore our thinking becomes corrupt.

On the other hand, the intentions and thoughts of the Friends of Allah (*auliya*) are clean and pure: they always intend the best and always think the best of people. Hence they become a mercy for Allah's ﷻ creation because they have trained their *nafs* to obey Allah ﷻ and now work to bring mankind back to Allah ﷻ. Their sole goal and direction in this life becomes to lead the troubled and worried people back to their Lord, and therefore they are very special to Allah ﷻ.

Hadrat Dhunnun Misri (may the mercy of Allah ﷻ be upon him) was walking and came upon a drunkard on the side of the street who had blacked out in a drunken stupor. Flies were sitting on his face and his mouth was open. Hadrat Dhunnun raised him up and cleaned his face with water from a nearby well. The man woke up and immediately repented to Allah ﷻ for his misdeeds and swore to lead a pious life from that day forward. Hadrat Dhunnun Misri was very surprised and asked Allah ﷻ how could someone like this turn around and repent so quickly and readily? Allah ﷻ inspired a reply that He had washed the man's heart because Hadrat Dhunnun Misri had washed his face.

This is just one example from thousands that the *auliya* are always sincere and their thoughts and intentions are always positive. This pure attitude of course comes down to us from the Messenger ﷺ of Allah who was given the authority to order the destruction of the town of Taif but he refused, citing the probability that someone from Taif's progeny might accept Islam. These people are never negative but positive.

Hadrat Ali Hujwairi (may the mercy of Allah ﷻ be upon him) sat in a boat and had just had his head shaved. Throughout the boat trip young children and older boys, and then even the parents made fun of him because of his baldness. Allah ﷻ was bearing this with patience but became angry because of this blatant disrespect of one of His beloved *auliya*. Allah ﷻ said to Hadrat Ali Hujwairi that upon a single prayer from him He would capsize the boat and drown all these disrespectful people. As soon as Hadrat Ali Hujwairi heard this inspiration in his heart he raised his hands and said, "O Allah ﷻ, if You wish to overturn a

boat, then overturn the boat of their hearts.” It is written that none of the people on that boat died without having achieved the status of *auliya*. This is what is called sincerity and positive thinking.

We have to change our attitude and thinking towards the positive; want what is best our people and we will notice that our troubles reduce to less than half. Stop being envious and your quarrels will reduce to less than half. Take out arrogance and greed from your lives and your life will become peaceful. Our troubles are the cause of our own wrongdoing and sin.

#### Hypocrisy

Allah ﷻ has put before us two clear paths: one of righteousness and one of evil. Today despite having testified that there is only one God, despite offering all our prayers and observing all our fasts we still have no honor in this world. The unbelievers laugh at us and mock us, and we have become a sideshow for the whole world. Why is this? There are a few reasons for this that you need to pay close attention to.

We say with our tongues that we are subjects of Allah ﷻ but constantly lower ourselves at other people’s feet. We say that we bow only to the Creator but here we are bowing to creation. Whether we bow to the will of our *nafs* or our bosses, it is still submission to other than Allah ﷻ, and so how can we expect any respect or status from Allah ﷻ? What is the definition of hypocrisy if not this?

On the outside we claim to be followers and lovers of the Messenger ﷺ of Allah but we prefer and acquire all the attributes and actions of others. We claim to be followers of the Messenger ﷺ of Allah but prefer the lifestyle of unbelievers to that of the beloved of Allah ﷻ. Wine, women and song were not the ways of the Messenger ﷺ of Allah, but we like that today. Looking at strange women was not the way of the Messenger ﷺ of Allah; going out in public bareheaded was not the way of his wives but today we like all of that. Our dress is like the unbeliever; our gatherings are mixed and like the unbeliever; we like everything of the unbeliever. A child is born and not even taught the Testament of Faith (*Kalimah*) but he is being taught “Twinkle twinkle little star how I wonder what you are...” In other words, we are teaching our children the ways of the unbelievers with the same diligence and dedication that our *auliya* and forefathers taught their children Islam. We beam with pride if our child speaks a few words of English: if only these children were taught the glory of the Holy Quran and the ways of our Prophet ﷺ and the Noble Companions (*Sahabah*).

The believer has to identify with the believers and stay away from imitating the unbelievers. Why? It is written in hadith that people will be raised with those they identified themselves with. About a decade ago there was a severe earthquake in central India that claimed hundreds of lives. Bodies that were recovered in the aftermath had to be buried, and since the area was heavily populated with both Muslims and Hindus, officials needed to know who to bury and who to cremate. They hence told their workers to undress the bodies and see who was circumcised and who was not. These workers were quick to refuse such an unseemly task and so the officials decided to dispose of the bodies based on their best visual assessment of who looked like a Muslim and Hindu. That sad day many Hindus and Sikhs

were buried because they had beards and traditional clothes whereas many Muslims were cremated because they were clean-shaven and in three piece suits.

#### The Clear Path

The cause of our disgrace and dishonor in this world is that we are insincere when we say that we are subjects of Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ. A third reason is that we all unanimously claim that the Holy Quran is undisputedly the clearest evidence and guidance for man. If we claim this then why is it that the vast majority of Muslims neglect to read it regularly, much less understand its words and meanings? If this is guidance then how can we benefit from it if we do not even understand its meaning? There is no other goal in life but to rectify our lives and conform to what Allah ﷻ wants, and because this is the Book that tells us how to do that our primary goal in life should be to make efforts to learn its language so that we may understand it. We take great pains to complete whole curricula in order to graduate from college – we read and understand thick books on medicine and engineering, but we fail to take a second look at the most important Book in our lives.

We unanimously claim with our tongues that this world is not worth the wing of a mosquito, but we spend all of our lives chasing its wealth and attractions. We say with our tongues that this world is temporary and will end, but spend our lives as if we are going to live here forever. We say with our tongues that the Hereafter is eternal but fail to make any preparation for it. We say with our tongues that we belong to Allah ﷻ and that we want to meet Him but spend our lives like we do not wish to die.

Allah ﷻ has defined clear paths for us, and also told us which path to take. The ultimate destination is the Hereafter and we need to stop our rebellion against Allah ﷻ and submit to Him, because only then will we succeed. If we want His mercy and blessings then we need to return to Him and stop idolizing and imitating those who only mock us and can do us no benefit. May Allah ﷻ give us the wisdom to realize this and return to Him in humility and repentance. *Amin.*

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