



IN THE NAME OF ALLAH THE MOST GRACIOUS, THE MOST MERCIFUL

INTENTION - THE KEY TO ACCEPTANCE OF OUR DEEDS

The most important element of doing good deeds is to ensure that Allah Accepts the good deeds. There is no point that we amass good deeds on the basis of our prayers, fasting, charity, dhikr, only to discover of the day of Judgment Allah does NOT Accept them. We have to be very conscious that our efforts will not only be rewarded by Allah, but they will lead us to Jannah with Allah's Mercy. This self-awareness of the good deeds that we do is absolutely important, because if one is careless, then he/she will find not only would the deeds be void and nullified, but they will lead one to hellfire.

A person killed 99 men and then killed another man, but because of his intention to seek Allah's Forgiveness was so sincere - even though he was a murderer, Allah would admit him to Paradise, due to Allah's immense Mercy and the murderer's sincere intention to seek Allah's Forgiveness.

Intention is one of the key elements of the acceptance of our deeds. With the outpouring of social media, such as Facebook, tik tok, snapchat, WhatsApp, many people are keen to share with others on the things that they do on a daily basis. Many are looking forward every morning when they wake up to count the number of "likes" that they receive after each posting. Comments which complemented their actions such as "SubhanAllah" or "MashaAllah" spurred them more to do more good deeds to earn more "likes" and earn good comments and complements. So, instead of trying to sincerely to do things for the sake of Allah, the intention of doing good deeds have been consciously or unconsciously been altered as to show to the whole world what a wonderful person you are. The result of this carelessness of diverting the intention to please the people and gain praise and complements would nullify all the efforts and hard work and may even be punished with hellfire in the Hereafter.

Therefore, firstly, in order to protect ourselves from the above is to learn and understand one of the most important hadiths that Imam Shafie (Rahimullah) stated: "This Hadith is one third of the knowledge of Islam; related to about 70 topics of Fiqh."

رَقَالَ قَالَ قَالَ الْخَطَّابِ بْنِ عُمَرَ عَنْ
 إِنَّ وَسَلَّمَ عَلَيْهِ اللَّهُ صَلَّى اللَّهُ سُولُ
 لِكُ وَإِنَّمَا بِالنِّيَّاتِ الْأَعْمَالُ مَا
 هَجَرَ كَانَتْ فَمَنْ نَوَى مَا امْرِي لِي
 إِلَ فَهَجَرْتُهُ وَرَسُولِهِ اللَّهُ إِلَى تُهُ
 هَجَرْتُهُ كَانَتْ وَمَنْ وَرَسُولِهِ اللَّهُ ي
 يَنْكَ امْرَأَةً أَوْ يُصِيبُهَا لِدُنْيَا
 إِلَيَّ هَاجَرَ مَا ي إِلَ فَهَجَرْتُهُ حَهَا
 ه

Umar ibn al-Khattab reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "Verily, deeds are only with intentions and every person will have only what they intended. Whoever emigrated to Allah and His Messenger, his emigration is for Allah and His Messenger. Whoever emigrated to get something in the world or to marry a woman, his emigration is for that to which he emigrated."

Source: Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 54, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 1907

The hadith above is considered as one of the greatest hadiths in Islam.

Background

This hadith was said by the Prophet (sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam), at the time when a man emigrated from Makkah to Madinah during the Hijrah for the sake of marrying someone and not for the sake of Islam.

The reward of Hijrah is forgiveness of all sins, major and minor. However if the intention to do Hijrah is NOT done for the sake of Allah and in order for some worldly gains, then the person who performed Hijrah will NOT get the reward of forgiveness of sins.

Imam Ahmad said:

"The foundations of Islam are upon three *ahadith*:

1. The *hadith* of 'Umar, 'Verily actions are by intention';
2. The *hadith* of A'ishah, 'Whosoever introduces into this affair of ours that which is not part of it, then it is rejected'; and
3. The *hadith* of Nu'man ibn Bashir, 'The halal is clear and the haram is clear'."

Ishaq ibn Rahawayah said:

"The foundations of the religion are upon four *hadith*:

1. The *hadith* of 'Umar, 'Verily actions are by intention';
2. The *hadith*, 'The halal is clear, and the haram is clear';
3. The *hadith*, 'Verily the creation of one of you comes together in the stomach of his mother for 40 days'; and
4. The *hadith*, 'Whosoever invents into this affair of ours anything which is not part of it, then it is rejected'."

In a verse in the Qur'an in surah 23 verse 60:

آتُوا مَا يُؤْتُونَ وَالَّذِينَ
رَبِّهِمْ إِلَىٰ أَنَّهُمْ وَجِلَةٌ
وَقُلُوبُهُمْ رَاجِعُونَ

"And those who give that (their charity) which they give (and also do other good deeds) with their hearts full of fear (whether their alms and charities, etc., have been accepted or not), because they are sure to return to their Lord (for reckoning)."

This has to do with fear and taking precautions, as Imam Ahmad recorded from `A'ishah: I said: "O Messenger of Allah, (And those who give that which they give with their hearts full of fear...) Are these the ones who steal and commit Zina and drink alcohol while fearing Allah"

The Messenger of Allah replied: (No, O daughter of Abu Bakr. O daughter of As-Siddiq, the one who prays, fast and gives in charity, fearing Allah.)

This was recorded by At-Tirmidhi, and Ibn Abi Hatim recorded something similar in which the Prophet said: (No, O daughter of As-Siddiq, they are the ones who pray and fast and give in charity while fearing that it will not be accepted from them, (It is these who hasten in the good deeds.))

The root cause for insincerity (or shirk) is self-desire (al-hawa). Therefore no action should be done because of self-desire. (and of course SHAYTAN!)

Imam al-Harawi states that there are 7 types of self-desires:-

- 1) To make oneself appear good in the hearts of others
- 2) To seek the praises of others
- 3) To avoid being blamed by others
- 4) To seek the glorification of others
- 5) To seek the wealth/money of others
- 6) To seek the services or love of others
- 7) To seek the help of others for oneself

Ibnu al-Qayyim says: Any action we do is subject to three defects:

1. Being conscious that others are observing our actions.
2. Seeking a return (benefit/reward) for the action
3. Being satisfied with the action

Examples:

If we go to the masjid for the salah and we are early, arriving before the Imam and finding a place in the first saff (first row), we should not be proud of ourselves and think of ourselves being better than others. We should praise Allah for enabling us to go to the masjid and for being able to perform the salah without any difficulties. After every salah, we should tell ourselves that we could have performed it better and try to improve in our next salah.

What happens if we were to change our niyyah while performing an action? Ibn Rajab says according to the ulama' if the niyyah at the end of the action matches the beginning (i.e. doing the action for the sake of Allah), then any changes in the middle of the action will be forgiven or does not matter, insha Allah. However, if the niyyah at the end does not match the beginning, i.e. we do the action for other than the sake of Allah, then we must repent (taubah).

There are four things that contradict ikhlas:

Ma'siat - committing sins - this will weaken our ikhlas

Shirk - associating others with Allah

Riya' - performing an ibadah with the intention of showing off to others

Nifaq - hypocrisy

فَوَيْلٌ لِّلْمُصَلِّينَ
 نَ الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَن صَلَاتِهِمْ سَاهُونَ
 الَّذِينَ هُمْ يُرَاءُونَ

4. So woe unto those performers of *Salat* (prayers) (hypocrites),
5. Who delay their *Salat* (prayer) from their stated fixed times,
6. Those who do good deeds only to be seen (of men)

(107: 4-6)

اللَّهُ يُخَادِعُونَ الْمُنَافِقِينَ إِنَّ
 إِلَى قَامُوا وَإِذَا خَادِعُهُمْ وَهُوَ
 يُرَاءُونَ كُسَالَى قَامُوا الصَّلَاةِ
 قَلِيلًا إِلَّا اللَّهُ يَذْكُرُونَ وَلَا النَّاسَ

“Verily, the hypocrites seek to deceive Allah, but it is He Who deceives them. And when they stand up for *As-Salat* (the prayer), they stand with laziness and to be seen of men, and they do not remember Allah but little.” 4: 142

Hadiths and sayings

The prophet (Peace be upon him) pointed to the importance of the intention in several ahaadeeth. In the hadith of Abu Hurraira, the Prophet (Peace be upon him) said: “*people will be resurrected (on the day of judgment) according to their intentions*”(Ibn Majah). It was reported about some of the salaf; “*whoever would like his deeds to be complete, then let him make good his intention*” (with sincerity) (Jaami’ Uloom wal Hikam) Ibn Aj’laan said: “*A deed is not sound except by three things; taqwa, good intention, and correctness*”, and Abdullah Ibn al-Mubaarik said: “*perhaps a small deed is magnified by the intention, and perhaps a great deed is minimized by the intention*”. The meaning here is that a person may do what seems on the surface to be an insignificant deen, but because of his sincere intention to please Allah, the deed is magnified in Allah’s sight, and similarly, a person may do what on the surface seems to be a monumental deed, but because his intention was not sincere, that deed has little or no significance in the sight of Allah.

Mawlana Jalal al-Din al-Rumi's words:

You should be sincere in all your deeds,
So that the Majestic Lord may accept them.
Sincerity is the wing of the bird of the acts of obedience.
Without a wing, how can you fly to the abode of prosperity?

The following words of Bayazid al-Bistami are also very apt:

I worshipped my Lord for thirty years with all my strength. Then I heard a voice saying: O Bayazid! The treasures of God Almighty are full of acts of worship. If you intend to reach Him, see yourself as small at the door of God and be sincere in your deeds.

For some, sincerity involves hiding from others when performing supererogatory deeds and avoiding all show and ostentation. For others, it means that whether one is or is not seen while performing religious deeds is not important. Still for others, it means being so involved in worship or religious deeds in consideration of God's pleasure that one does not even remember whether one should be sincere or not.

Self-supervision is an essential dimension of sincerity, and a truly sincere person does not consider any possible spiritual pleasure that may be derived, or speculate upon whether it will ensure entrance to Paradise. Sincerity is a mystery between God and a servant, and God puts it in the hearts of those He loves. One whose heart is awakened to sincerity does not worry about being praised or accused, exalted or debased, aware or unaware of deeds, or being rewarded. Such a person does not change, and behaves in the same way in public and in private.

Important hadith:

From Abu Hurayrah, who said, "I heard the Messenger of Allah say, ' Verily, the first to be judged on the Day of Resurrection will be a man who had died as a martyr. He will be brought forward. Allah will remind him of the favours 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 till I was martyred.' Allah will say: 'You have lied. You fought so that people might call you courageous; and they have done so.' 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'an will be brought forward, Allah will remind him of the favours 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'an for Your sake.' Allah will say to him: 'You have lied. You acquired

knowledge so that people might call you a learned (man), and you read the Qur'an so that they might call you a reciter, and they have done so.' Command will then be issued about him, and he will be dragged on his face and thrown into Hell. Next a man whom Allah had made affluent and to whom Allah had given plenty of wealth, will be brought forward, Allah will remind him of the favours 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 liked wealth to be spend liberally for Your sake'. Allah will say to him: 'You have lied. You did it so that people might call you generous, and they have done so.' Command will then be issued about him and he will be dragged on his face and thrown into Hell."

And the wording, "So these are the first of Allaah's creation the Fire will be kindled with on the Day of Resurrection"

Saheeh Muslim, 13/45/1905

This hadith clearly shows that before we engage in various acts of worship, the main requirements on how these deeds are accepted by Allah MUST be met. It is horrifying that even though in this hadeeth, the acts of worship seem to be very noble, the intention of why acts of worship are done is of utmost priority.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said, "The thing that I fear most for you is minor shirk." He was asked what that was, and he said, "Showing off." "When a man stands up to pray and he makes his prayer beautiful because he thinks that the people are looking at him." On the Day of Resurrection, Allaah will say to those who show off, "Go to those for whom you used to show off in the world, and see whether you find any reward with them." Showing off means that you do something with the aim of people seeing you and praising you; reputation is a part of that. For example, if you read Qur'aan so that people will praise you and say, "He is a good reader" or "He reads well"; or you do a lot of dhikr so that they will praise you and say, "He does a lot of dhikr"; or you enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil so that people will praise you. This is showing off, and this is minor shirk. It is essential to beware of that and to do what you do for the sake of Allaah alone, not for the sake of showing off to people and earning their praise. But you should learn in order to act upon that knowledge and to teach your brothers and lead them in prayer, and hope for the reward that is with Allaah. You should do that with the aim of helping them, not for the purposes of showing off or enhancing your reputation.

It was narrated that Abu Hurayrah said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "Whoever seeks knowledge in order to show off before the scholars or to argue with the foolish or to attract people's attention, Allah will admit him to Hell." Narrated by Ibn Maajah (260).

Another perfect example was given by one of the prominent companion – Khalid bin Walid (RA). In the time of prophet Muhammad SallAllahu alayhi wa sallam, and the first caliph, Abu Bakr (RA), Khalid bin Walid (RA) has always been a commander of the army, and with the Help of Allah, when Khalid bin Walid was leading the army of Muslims against the disbelievers, the Muslims would always be granted victory by Allah. During the reign of caliph Ummar ibn Khattab (RA), Khalid bin Walid was removed from his post as commander of the army by Caliph Umar. Rather than being offended and refusing to fight, Khalid fought even harder. When he was asked why, he said: "I fight for Allah not for Umar."

Allah Commanded us:

وَمَحْيَايَ وَنُفْسِي صَلَاتِي إِنَّ قُلَّ
 الْعَالَمِينَ رَبِّ لِلَّهِ وَمَمَاتِي
 لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ وَبِذَلِكَ أُمِرْتُ وَأَنَا
 أَوَّلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

Say (O Muhammad SallAllahu 'alayhi wa sallam): "Verily, my *Salat* (prayer), my sacrifice, my living, and my dying are for Allah, the Lord of the 'Alamin (mankind, jinns and all that exists). He has no partner. And of this I have been commanded, and I am the first of the Muslims." 6: 162-163

Allah, the Exalted said:

اللَّهُ أَعْبُدَ أَنْ أُمِرْتُ إِنِّي قُلَّ
 الدِّينَ لَهُ مُخْلِصًا

"Say: Indeed I have been commanded to worship Allah making the *Din* sincerely for Him alone." [Al-Qur'an 39:11]

And there is also the *Qudsi Hadith* reported by Muslim: "I am so self-sufficient that I am in no need of having partners. Thus, whoever does an action for someone else's sake as well as

Mine, will have that action rejected by Me to him whom he associated with Me." [Reported by Muslim]

THE MEANING OF IKHLAS

Sincerity, purity or isolation. Islamically it denotes purifying our motives and intentions to seek the pleasure of Allah.

An Arabic to English dictionary tells us that the word *ikhlas* means sincerity, purity or isolation. The word *ikhlas* comes from the Arabic word *akh-la-sa* and it means to render a deed free of *riyaa* so that there is no consideration other than Allah. Bearing this in mind, an Islamic glossary will often describes the word *ikhlas* as the act of purifying motives or intentions so that actions are done primarily to seek the pleasure of Allah. When we combine these definitions with the English dictionary definition of sincerity - being free from pretence, deceit or hypocrisy - we begin to understand what *ikhlas* is.

Ikhlas is purifying one's deeds from all contamination by *shirk*, in order to worship Allah in the correct way. For a person to cultivate and maintain real *ikhlas* he must avoid anything that calls into question Allah's right to be worshipped as the One. *Surah* number 112 is called *Al-Ikhlas* and it explains very clearly the Oneness of Allah.

There are some other useful definitions of *ikhlas*:

1. It is the freedom of the desire for nearness to Allah from every blemish or impurity;
2. It is singling out Allah with one's intention in all acts of worship;
3. It is forgetting the sight of the creation by continual observance of the Creator; and
4. It is to hide your good deeds just like you would hide your evil deeds.

[Taken from the book *Al-Ikhlas* by Abu Muhammad ibn Sa'id al- Baylawi]

Abu Sa'id al-Khudri related that the Prophet (Peace be upon him) said in his khutba during the farewell pilgrimage, "Allah will bless whoever hears these words and whoever understands them, for it may be that those who pass on this knowledge are not those who will understand it the best. There are three things concerning which the heart of a believer should feel no enmity or malice: devoting one's actions to Allah, giving counsel to the Imams of the Muslims, and being loyal to the majority." (Sahih, Ibn Ma'jah; also Ibn Hibban, Marwarid adh-Dham'an, p.47, on the authority of Zaid ibn Thabit.)

What is meant here is that these three things strengthen the heart, and whoever distinguishes himself in them will have a heart purified from all manner of deceit, corruption and evil.

A servant can only free himself from shaytan through sincere devotion, for Allah tells us in the Quran that Iblis said to Him:

الْمُخْلِصِينَ مِنْهُمْ عِبَادَكَ إِلَّا

"Except those of Your servants who are sincere. (38:83)"

It has been related that a righteous man used to say, "O self, be devout and you will be pure." When any worldly fortune, in which the self finds comfort and towards which the heart inclines, intrudes upon our worship, then it impairs the purity of our efforts and ruins our sincerity. Man is preoccupied with his good fortune and immersed in his desires and appetites; rarely are his actions or acts of worship free of temporary objectives and desires of this kind. For this reason it has been said that whoever secures a single moment of pure devotion to Allah in his life will survive, for devotion is rare and precious, and cleansing the heart of its impurities is an exacting undertaking.

In fact, devotion is the purifying of the heart from all impurities, whether few or many, so that the intention of drawing nearer to Allah is freed from all other motives, except that of seeking His pleasure. This can only come from a lover of Allah, who is so absorbed in contemplation of the next world that there remains in his heart no place for the love of this world. Such a person must be pure in all his actions, even in eating, drinking and answering the calls of nature. With rare exceptions, anyone who is not like this will find the door of devotion closed in his face.

The everyday actions of a person who is overwhelmed by his or her love for Allah and the akhira are characterised by his love and they are, in fact, pure devotion. In the same way, anyone whose soul is overwhelmed by love for and preoccupation with this world, or status and authority, will be so overwhelmed by these things that no act of worship, be it prayer or fasting, will be acceptable, except in very rare cases.

The remedy for love of this world is to break the worldly desires of the self, ending its greed for this world and purifying it in preparation for the next world. This will then become the state of the heart and sincere devotion will become easier to attain. There are a great many actions where a man acts, thinking they are purely intended for Allah's pleasure, but he is deluded, for he fails to see the defects in them.

It has been related that a man was used to praying in the first row in the mosque. One day he was late for the prayer, so he prayed in the second row. Feeling embarrassment when people saw him in the second row, he realised that the pleasure and satisfaction of the heart that he used to gain from praying in the first row were due to his seeing people seeing him there and admiring him for it. This is a subtle and intangible condition and actions are rarely safe from it. Apart from those

whom Allah has assisted, few are aware of such delicate matters. Those who do not realise it only come to see their good deeds appearing as bad ones on the Day of Resurrection.

Du'a to protect from minor shirk (riya')

أَعْلَمُ لَا لِمَا وَأَسْتَغْفِرُكَ أَعْلَمُ، وَأَنَا بِكَ أَشْرِكُ أَنْ أَعُوذُ بِكَ إِلَّاهُ اللَّهُمَّ

O Allah, I take refuge in You lest I should commit shirk with You knowingly and I seek Your forgiveness for what I do unknowingly.