

Chapter 2: Preference of Delving into the Science of Ethics and Spending Some Time of Ones Life Therein

Be informed that some righteous and kind brothers, who are free of impurities, those who struggle against the evil-insinuating self, have been confused. When Satan the accursed saw them thus struggling against their desires, something which is better than jihad, so much so that the Prophet (‘s) called it the ‘*supreme jihad*,’ he wanted to deceive them away from it, casting a great misconception into their hearts. It is the following:

The observing of admonitions and counsels and disseminating them, seeking them and struggling to achieve them, which is the basis of the science of Akhlaq, all lack preference. When we see ourselves doing the opposite of what we know, we notice that this is detrimental and more supportive of the argument against a servant of Allah. Indifference and negligence will in this case be more appropriate and a better course, for the sin of someone who knows is different from the sin of one who does not.

The least one knows and the more limited his scope of warning signs and norms of threats is, the less pretentious he becomes and the more worthy of being excused; one who knows is not like one who does not.

When I heard them expressing such a concept and came to know that it is one of the tricks of Satan the Accursed, I drew their attention to an incident narrated by Shaikh al-Hurr in his book titled *Al-Jawahir al-Saniyyah* in a chapter dealing with Qudsi ahadith. This incident rebuts this misconception, uprooting it and rendering it null and void.

The gist of the incident is that Allah, the most Glorified One, says, ‘**Do not say, `We fear, if we come to know, not to apply our knowledge.**’ Rather, you should say, `We learn, and we hope we will act upon

our knowledge,' for I did not enforce anything on you except to make it as means of mercy for you.' This text exists in *Al-Jawahir al-Saniyyah* with minor wording variation.

Such a Divine statement is the best rebuttal of this misconception. Had it not been for Satan's trickery, there would have been no room for confusion that requires dispelling, but this Divine rebuttal suffices for a refutation.

We would like to provide you with further explanations whereby you can come to know how clear the issue of knowledge and acting upon it is and the fruit of each, and you will find what makes up this chapter the preference of knowledge and its fruits; so, let us say that it is well known that knowledge is useless if not acted upon. It is just like doing something without knowledge. But a servant of Allah is ordered to adhere to both of them: each of them supports and strengthens the other.

One who seeks knowledge not to act upon it but to brag about it, to cover with the beauties of knowledge and its prevalent beauty and glitter among the people the ugliness of his own actions as well as his ugly dispositions, there is no doubt that he is a friend of Eblis the accursed. His knowledge is his own curse, and the curse of others, so much so that even the inmates of hell complain about his harm. He is one of those who bear their burdens and the burdens of others as well. He is a demon in a human form; we seek refuge with Allah against him. Such is the case also of one who uses knowledge as a habit on which he accustoms himself¹, thus turning it into a pretense and a reputation commended by people without knowledge or insight, such a person is a donkey tied to the first, though he is less harmful to the servants of Allah.

But if one is rational in his comprehension, seeking what reforms himself and brings him happiness in this world and in the next, he is the one who turns to Allah, seeking what is with Him, and he is the one to whom the addresses of this art are directed in order to cultivate him, raise his status with regard to what he seeks.

Let him know that whenever a gate to knowledge opens for him, acting upon it becomes easier, and it increases his agility and desire. Whenever he acts upon what Allah grants him of knowledge, this will let him inherit the knowledge of that which he did not know before, thus increasing his knowledge, as we are told by Ahl al-Bayt ('a) who have said that one who acts upon the knowledge which he acquires will inherit the knowledge of what he never knew before.

This, in reality, renders his action a norm of knowledge, for such knowledge shall succeed him and earn good things for him, so he becomes included among those who seek the type of knowledge which many narratives have praised and preferred.

Also, his knowledge, learning and teaching are all among the best branches of knowledge. It is then that such a servant earns perfect happiness through the knowledge which prompts one to act upon it, a deed

springing out of knowledge and the happiness which is perfected through the compounded accumulation of knowledge and action. Yet the best portion of both in the sight of Allah is knowledge itself; it is through it that one servant of Allah is distinguished from another.

Our master, the Commander of the Faithful (‘a), has said,

‘A touch of knowledge is better than a great deal of deeds, and they both are like intention and action: intention receives distinction. Or they may be compared with the soul and the body: the soul is distinctive.’

What we have stated here should suffice one who seeks guidance, and surely Allah is the Master of success.

1. This refers to a point which must not be overlooked by the elite. Knowledge is nothing but the manifestation of the reality of the intellect in its best condition; otherwise, the cases of incompatibility and compounded ignorance are prevalent in all branches of knowledge. Thereupon, making a profession of storing a portrait of the reality in one’s sub-conscience and deriving pleasure from so doing, such as one who collects books just to make a show, can never be regarded as something sacred which brings the servant closer to the supreme truth. Accumulated knowledge which is not implemented, therefore, may turn into an occupation to which one gets accustomed. He, hence, will not consider the Hereafter acting upon it because this will reveal intellectual discoveries regarded as worthless in the outside world.

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