

Chapter 8: On The Presence Of Heart

One of the important cordial disciplines, which many other disciplines may be its preliminaries, and worship without it would be lifeless, and it is the key to the lock of perfections and the door of the doors of felicities, and the noble *Hadiths* seldom attach so much importance to a discipline other than that, is the “presence of heart.” Although we have sufficiently explained this topic, together with its ranks and degrees in the thesis *The Secret of the Salat*¹ and in *Forty Hadiths*,² nevertheless, we shall allude to it once again, to complete the benefit, and to avoid reference.

It has already been explained that worships, ceremonies, invocations and benedictions can have their results only when they become the inner image of the heart, and the interior of the essence of man is mixed with them, and his heart takes the form of servitude, renouncing disobedience and obstinacy. It has also been noted that one of the secrets and advantages of worship is that one's will gets stronger, the soul overcomes (one's) nature, the forces of nature become subjugated by the soul's power and sovereignty, and the will of the invisible soul overrules the visible body, such that the forces turn like the angels with regard to Allah, the Exalted, i.e.

“...they do not disobey Allah in what He commands them, and do as they are commanded.”³

Now we add that one of the important secrets and advantages of worship, to which everything is a preliminary, is that the entire inside and outside kingdom becomes subservient to Allah's will and moves at Allah's command, and the soul's visible and invisible forces become Allah's soldiers, and all of them get the post of being Allah's angels. This is regarded as one of the low degrees of the annihilation of the forces and wills in Allah's will.

Then, gradually, big consequences appear, the physical man becomes divine, and the soul practices servitude to Allah. The soldiers of *iblis* will totally be defeated and abolished, and the heart and its powers surrender to Allah and in it appear some inner stages of Islam. The result of this submitting of the will to Allah in the Hereafter will be that Allah, the Exalted, will enforce (make effective) the will of such a servant in the invisible worlds and make him His “sublime similitude” [*mathal-i a'li*].

And, like His Sacred Self when at His mere Will everything He wants is created, He makes this servant's

will like His; as some of the people of knowledge, quoting the Messenger of Allah (s), concerning the people of Paradise, say that an angel comes to them, and, after asking permission from them, he enters and after conveying Allah's greeting to them he delivers a letter from Allah, the Exalted.

The letter says to whomsoever it is addressed:

“From the Ever-Living, the Everlasting, Who never dies, to the ever-living, everlasting, who never dies. Now then, I tell a thing: Be! And it is. I made you tell a thing: Be! And it is.” The Messenger of Allah (s) said: “Hence, no one of the people of Paradise says to something: “Be!” unless it will be.” 4

This is the divine sovereignty bestowed upon the servant, because of his forsaking his own will and his desires' sovereignty, and because of his disobeying *Iblis* and his soldiers. None of the said results may take place except with the complete “presence of heart.” If the heart were negligent and forgetful during the *Salat*, his worship would not be real, but more like a play and sporting. Such worship, as a matter of fact, will have no effect whatsoever on the soul and the worship will never sublime from its outer form to the inside and the invisible world [*malakut*].

This fact is referred to by many narratives. The powers of the soul would not surrender, through such worship, to the soul itself, nor can the sovereignty of the soul be seen on them. Similarly, the outward and inward powers will not surrender to Allah's will, and the kingdom will not be subdued to Allah's Majesty, as is quite clear. That is why you can see no effect from forty or fifty years of worship on us.

On the contrary, the darkness of the heart and the obstinacy of the powers increase day after day, since our longing for nature, our obedience to our desires and to the satanic whispers, increase, too. These mean nothing but that our worships are empty and their interior and exterior disciplines are not observed. Otherwise, the Qur'anic text denotes that:

“...the Salat forbids lewdness and vice.”⁵

Naturally, this forbidding is not something superficial. A torch should be lighted in the heart, and a light must shine in one's interior so as to guide him to the invisible world, and there appears a divine preventer, which prevents man from disobedience.

We do regard ourselves among the *musallin*, and we have been engaged in this great worship for decades, without seeing such a light, nor discerning such a preventer in our interior. So, woe to us on the day when the images of our deeds and the list of our acts are handed to us in that world and we are told to check our own accounts.⁶

See if such deeds can be accepted by His Majesty, and whether such a *Salat*, in such a deformed and darkened form, can bring one nearer to His Presence. Is it right to treat this great divine trust and the advice of the prophets and *awsiyat*' (executors of the prophets' wills) in such a way, and to let the treacherous hand of the accursed Satan, the enemy of Allah, meddle in it?

The *Salat*, which is the *mi'rāj* of the believer and the means of proximity of the pious 7, why should it keep you away from the sacred proximity to the Divine Presence? What would be our share on that day except regret, remorse, helplessness, wretchedness, shame and disgrace regret and a remorse which have no equal in this world, and a shame and disgrace which cannot be imagined? This world's regrets are, at any rate, mixed with a thousand kinds of hope, and the shamelessness here is transitory, while there is nothing there except regret and remorse day after day.

Allah, the Exalted, says:

“And warn them of the day of regret, when the matter shall have been decided.” 8

What has passed cannot be returned and the life which has been wasted cannot be restored.

“O woe to me! For what I fell short of my duty to Allah...” 9

My dear, this day is the day of opportunities and the grace period for actions. The prophets came and brought Books, and they proclaimed their calls, with a lot of celebrities, enduring pains and hardships, in order to wake us up from the sleep of negligence and to sober us from the nature's intoxication, and to take us to the world of light and the source of joy and pleasure, and to introduce us to the eternal life, the everlasting bliss and the unlimited delights, and to deliver us from annihilation, misery, fire, darkness, regret and remorse.

All these are for our own benefit, without there being any profit for them, as those sacred personalities are in no need of our faith and deeds. Despite all that, they had not the least effect on us, as Satan was so firmly closing the ears of our heart, and exerted such a strong control over our inside and outside that none of their admonitions could ever have an effect on us, nor could any of the *Qur'āns* and *Hadiths* pierce the ears of our hearts, going to no farther than our outer animal ears.

In short, O respected reader who read these papers; do not be, like the writer, void of all lights, and empty-handed of all good deeds, entangled in the sensual desires. Have mercy on yourself, and get a fruit from your life. Carefully look into the lives of the prophets and the perfect godly men [*awliyā*], and cast away the false desires and Satan's promises. Do not be deceived by Satan's fraud, nor by the deceptions of the commanding soul, as their trickery is very clever, and they are able to dress every wrong as right in the eyes of man in order to deceive him.

Sometimes they fool man by making him think that he will repent at the end of his life, and thus, drag him into wretchedness, despite the fact that repenting at the end of life, after the accumulation of the darkness of sins, and the numerous acts of injustice against the people and against Allah's right, is a very difficult task.

Now, when man is still strong and in the prime of life, and the tree of sin is still frail and the influence of Satan has not yet become widespread in the soul, and the soul is still new to the invisible world and very

near the God-given disposition, and the conditions for an acceptable repentance are easy, they do not let man repent and uproot this frail tree and overthrow the dependent kingdom.

They suggest old age, when, on the contrary, the will is weak, the powers have given way, the trees of different sins are strong and deep rooted, the kingdom of *iblis*, inwardly and outwardly, is independent and firm, the familiarity with nature is strong, the distance from the invisible world is great, the light of innate disposition is extinguished, and the situation for repentance is difficult and bitter. This is nothing but delusion.

In another instance the promise of the intercession of the intercessors (*'a*) drives man out of their sacred realm and deprives him of their intercession, because indulgence in disobedience gradually darkens and upsets the heart and drags man to a bad end. Satan's aim is to rob man's faith, and he makes committing sins a preliminary step to that aim so as to attain it.

If a man covetously thinks of intercession, he must try hard in this world to keep his connection with his intercessors, and think of the status of those who will intercede on the Day of Resurrection to see how their state of worship and devotion was. Suppose that you died a faithful man, but if the load of the sins and injustices was heavy, it is possible that concerning the different pains and tortures in the *barzakh* there would be no intercession for you, as Imam as-Sadiq was quoted to have said: "Your *barzakh* is with yourselves."¹⁰

The tortures of the *barzakh* cannot be compared with the tortures of this world, and the length of the period of the *barzakh* is unknown except to Allah. It will probably last for millions and millions of years. It is possible that in the Hereafter and after long periods of diverse and unbearable kinds of torture, we get the intercession, as it is also related in the *Hadiths*.¹¹

Thus, the satanic deception stops man from good deeds, and causes him to leave this world either faithless or loaded with heavy burdens, afflicting him with wretchedness and misfortune. In some instances, Satan, by giving man hope in the vast mercy of the Most Merciful, cuts his hand off the skirt of mercy, while he is careless of the fact that raising up so many prophets, revealing the Books, descending the angels, and the revelations and inspirations to the prophets, and their showing the right path, are all of the mercy of the Most Merciful. The whole world is enveloped in the vast mercy of Allah, while we, at the fringe of the spring of life, die of thirst.

The greatest of the divine mercies is the Qur'an. If you are looking greedily for the mercy of the Most Merciful, hoping for His vast mercy, do benefit from the Qur'an, the vast mercy. It has opened to you the way to happiness, and has distinguished for you the pit from the paved road. But you fall over into the pit by yourself, because you deviate from the right path. So, what has mercy to do with that?

Had it been possible to show the road of good and happiness to the people in a different way, it would have been done, according to the vastness of the mercy. Had it been possible to force the people into happiness, it would have been done. But alas! How far it is! The road to the Hereafter is a road, which

cannot be trodden except at one's free will. Happiness cannot be attained forcibly. Piety and righteous deeds are not so if not done voluntarily. This is probably the very meaning of the noble *Qiyah*:

“There is no compulsion in religion” (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:256).

Yes, what can be made compulsory and forcible is the appearance of the divine religion, not its reality. The prophets (*'a*) were enjoined to impose the appearance, in any possible way, on the people, so that the appearance of the world might become the appearance of the divine justice, and to guide the people to the interior, so that they themselves might march on their own feet towards happiness.

In short, this is also a satanic delusion, which cuts, by coveting mercy, man's hand short from mercy.

1. Refer to footnote 6.

2. Forty Hadiths is one of Imam Khomeinī's works, which he finished in the month of Muharram 1358 L.H. In its preface, after praising, blessing and invocation, he says: "...I, a poor and weak servant, have, for sometime, been thinking to collect forty hadiths of the hadiths of the infallible and pure Ahl al-Bayt (*'a*) out of the reliable books of the Companions and 'Ulamā' (may Allah be pleased with them), and to explain each in a way suitable for the common people. I, thus, wrote it in Persian so that the Persian-speaking people may benefit from it, and, inshā' Allāh (Allah willing), I may be covered by the noble hadith of the Seal of the Prophets (s) who said: "Whoever preserved for my Ummah forty hadiths that may benefit them, Allah would resurrect him on the Day of Resurrection as a learned jurist." I was, thanks to God, successful, with Allah's good help, in starting it. I ask Allah, the Exalted, to help me in finishing it. Surely He is the Giver of success!"

3. Surah at-Tahrim 66:6.

4. 'Ilm ul-Yaqin, vol. 2, p. 1061 (with a slight difference).

5. Surah al-'Ankabūt 69:45.

6. It refers to the *Qiyah*: "Read your book; your soul suffices as a reckoner against you this day." Surah al-Isrā' 17:14.

7. Itiqādāt, p. 29. by the late Majlisī; Furū' al-Karfī, vol. 3, "Book of as-Salat," ch. on "The Merit of as-Salat," hadith 6, p. 265.

8. Surah Maryam 19:39.

9. Surah az-Zumar 39:56.

10. This concept is understood from the narrative of 'Amr ibn Yazīd in Furū' al-Karfī, vol. 3, p. 242, and in 'Ilm ul-Yaqin, vol. 2, p. 1051.

11. As in Bihār al-Anwār, vol. 8, "Book of Justice and Resurrection," ch. 12, hadiths 35 and 36, p. 362.

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/adab-as-salat-disciplines-of-prayer-second-revised-edition-imam-khomeini/chapter-8-presence-heart>