

Actions and Intentions (part 2 of 2): Purity of Intention in the Religious Realm

Description: Everyday actions become acts of worship which are rewarded by God if the proper intention is kept.

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Purity of Intention in the Mundane Realm

Since the wording of the *hadeeth* discussed in Part One is general, it is understood that a person may even be rewarded for their everyday normal activity which they perform, as long as their intention is correct and that act is not prohibited by the religion. The religion of Islam has encouraged and sometimes even placed the obligation upon humans of specific manners and mores in regards to life outside worship. It has legislated various methods in performing every day activities, from sleeping to eating. If a person performs the various activities in conformity to its legislation, they will be rewarded for it.

This aspect of intention allows one's entire life to become an act of worship, as long as the objective of that life is the pleasure of God, Whose pleasure is achieved by doing good and refraining from evil. A person can turn everyday activities into acts of worship by purifying his or her intention and sincerely seeking God's pleasure through these activities. God's Messenger, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, said:

"Helping a person or his belongings onto his mount is an act of charity. A good word is charity. Every step taken on the way to performing prayers is charity. Removing an obstacle from the road is charity." (*Saheeh Al-Bukhari*)

Earning a living can be rewarded as well. The Companions saw a man and were astonished by his hard work and industry. They lamented: "If he were only doing this much work for the sake of God..."

God's Messenger replied:

"If he is working to support his small children, then it is for the sake of God. If he is working to support his elderly parents, then it is for the sake of God. If he is working to occupy himself and keep his desires in check, then it is for the sake of God. If, on the other hand, he is doing so to show off and earn fame, then he is working for the sake of Satan." (*al-Mundhiri, as-Suyuti*)

One may gain reward even for the most natural acts, if of course they are accompanied by the proper intention: God's Messenger said:

"When one of you sleeps with his wife, it is an act of charity." (*Saheeh Muslim*)

The same can be said for eating, sleeping, and working as well as traits of good character, such as truthfulness, honesty, generosity, courage, and humbleness. These can become worship through sincere intention and deliberate obedience to God.

In order for these otherwise mundane actions to be deserving of divine reward, the following conditions must be met:

A. The action must be lawful in and of itself. If the action is something prohibited, its perpetrator deserves punishment. God's Messenger said:

"God is pure and good, and He accepts only what is pure and good." (*Saheeh Muslim*)

B. The dictates of Islamic Law must be completely observed. Deception, oppression, and iniquity must be avoided. God's Messenger said:

"He who deceives us is not one of us." (*Saheeh Muslim*)

C. The activity should not keep the person from performing his or her religious obligations. God says:

"O you who believe, do not let your wealth and children distract you from the remembrance of God..." (Quran 63:9)

From this discussion, we can see the greatness of this *hadeeth* and how important it is in forming the concept of the acceptability of deeds and reward from God. We also see from this *hadeeth* that the concept of worship and service in Islam is not limited to performing certain legislated ritual acts, but rather encompasses the whole life of the Muslim, making him a true slave to God.

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