

Fifth Rule

CONTINUANCE AND PERSISTENCE

We should all acknowledge that this journey is to continue until death overtakes us and takes us back to our Lord for reckoning. We need to struggle and employ spiritual exercises to seek the purification of the soul and intellect from all impurities throughout our lives. There is no limit set by any scholar, some of who have attained significantly higher stages of perfection of the soul. We should also appreciate the fact that we cannot catch the divine aspects of a deed unless we continue to perform for quite a long time so that its impression in our minds may become permanent. Undoubtedly, Islam encompasses all aspects of our life, not just prayers and worship.

The Prophet (S) once said to Qays (AR), the son of Asim,

Pride follows humiliation, life follows death, and The Hereafter follows this world. Everything that exists is without doubt subject to an accounting, and there is One Who watches over all things. There is a reward for every good deed and a punishment for every evil deed. There is a set period for everything.

O' Qays! You have a friend and companion who one day will be buried with you. When you are buried, he will still be alive although you are dead. If your companion is noble and a man of honor, he will honor you. If he is lowly and vile, he will torment and trouble you. He will be resurrected together with you and you will be resurrected together with him. No questions will be put to you, but all will be directed to him. Choose then a worthy and righteous companion, for if your companion is righteous he will comfort you, but if he is wicked, you will wish to flee him in terror.

That everlasting companion and friend is none other than your deeds.

Continuance and Persistence in actions (that ultimately please only Allah) are vital ingredients in preparing and taking this spiritual journey. One needs to be vigilant at all times that, positive and negative events may or may not happen to him, but one has to continue his or her journey without falling into traps laid down by The Accursed. Many a times, these experiences are set by Allah to see the person's loyalty and ability to persist, continue, and become a better, much more God-fearing person.

Imam al-Sadiq (AS) said,

"One day Prophet Musa (AS) was walking along the shore. A fisherman came suddenly, prostrated to the sun, and said some polytheistic things and words. Then he cast his net in the sea and pulled it out filled with fish, and did the same thing again twice and got many fish like the first time. Next someone else came. He made ablution and stood to pray. He praised The Lord and cast his net into the sea, but got no fish when he pulled it out. He did it repeatedly, but only caught a small fish the third time. He thanked God and left.

Then Prophet Musa (AS) said, "O' Lord! The atheist servant came, and cast his net three times and pulled it out full of fish. Then, Your believing servant made ablution and said his prayers and praised you and cast his net three times but only managed to catch one fish. Then he praised you and left!"

God told Prophet Musa (AS), "Look to the right." Prophet Musa (AS) looked to the right. The curtain to The Unseen was pushed aside and he saw the position that God had prepared for the believer (in Paradise). Then God said, "O' Prophet Musa (AS)! Look to the left." He turned around and looked to the left. The curtain to The Unseen was pushed aside and he saw the position that God had prepared for the atheist. Then God said, "O' Prophet Musa (AS)! What I did for the believer did not harm him, and what I did for the atheist one did not benefit him." Then Prophet Musa (AS) said, "O' Lord! It is right that whoever recognizes You is content with Your deeds."

Throughout the journey, we should expect hurdles (set by us and by The Accursed), but these should not hinder us from our eventual goal. Allah, Himself causes many events to happen just to test our steadiness and persistence.

Imam al-Sadiq (AS) has said,

A believer always has one or more of the following troubles. Either a person with whom he lives in the same house will close the door and not let him in, or there is a neighbor who will bother him, or someone will bother him on his way to work. Even if a believer lives on the top of a mountain, God will appoint a Satan to disturb him. God will establish a companion out of his own faith for him not to fear anyone.

If a believer is at sea on just a piece of wood, God will send a Satan to bother him.

A very important tradition follows,

Imam al-Baqir (AS) has said, "Two angels who were descending from The Heavens to the earth met each other. One asked the other about his mission. He said, "God gave me the mission to go to sea to force a fish to go to one of the oppressors so he, who had wished to catch it, would be able to do so. So I must go and force that fish in the sea towards him so that the oppressor can catch it, and achieve his last goal." The other Angel said,

My divine mission is even stranger than yours is. God gave me the mission to go to a believer who is fasting and stays up at night to worship God, and is such a good worshipper that he is famous in The Heavens. I am supposed to turn over the pan of food that he has just prepared for breaking his fast since God wants to test his faith this way.

Imam al-Baqir (AS) has said,

A believer is so honored by God that God will even grant him Heaven with everything in it if he asks for it, without anything being reduced from God's Dominion; but God will not grant him even one foot of this world if he asks for it. An infidel is so despised by God that God will even grant him this world with everything in it if he asks for it without anything being reduced from God's Dominion; but God will not grant him even one foot of Heaven if he asks for it. God will attend to His believing servants through calamities, and instruct them to abstain from this world just as a doctor instructs his patients to abstain from things.

Imam al-Sadiq (AS) quoted on the authority of God's Prophet (S) that God The Almighty said,

I will make ill whomever I wish to send to Heaven. If it is enough penalties for his sins, it is fine. Nevertheless, if not, I will make life difficult for him. If it is enough of penalty for his sins, it is fine. Nevertheless, if it is not, I will make his death hard for him so that he comes to Me free of sin, and I let him enter Heaven. I will make perfectly healthy whomever I wish to send to Hell. If what he asks Me is completely fulfilled this way, then it is fine. However, if it is not, I will free him from the fear of the oppressors. If what he asks Me is completely fulfilled this way, it is fine. However, if it is not, I will make his death an easy one so that when he comes to meet Me, none of his good deeds have remained un-rewarded. Then I will send him to Hell.

Imam al-Baqir (AS) said,

One has a very high noble position near God. God will make him suffer many calamities to reach that position. Many people will rush in to express their condolence to him and express their sympathy. If the people only knew what position God has granted him, they would have never sympathized with him, or expressed their condolence. God sends down some worldly things to some people to seize their Hereafter, and the people rush in to express congratulations. If the people only knew what is awaiting him in The Hereafter, they would have never become happy or congratulated him.

Salman, son of Ghanem narrated that Imam al-Sadiq (AS) asked him,

"How did you find the Shiites?" He said, "I found them needy, while difficulties came towards them faster than rain water flows towards the drain." Imam al-Sadiq (AS) said, "God is The Helper. Are you pleased with your belief or do you prefer to be paid 100,000 Dirham instead?" He said: I swear by God that I do not want it even if it is as much gold as the mountains of Makkah." Who is more self-sufficient than you and your companions? None of you have anything to lose, even if you wander about and eat the leaves of the trees and plants until your death approaches."

Finally, we need to always ask for Allah's Help and Assistance, for without His Help, we cannot even near the earlier stages of this journey. Imam al-Baqir (AS) quoted on the authority of Imam al-Sajjad (AS) that God's Prophet (S) said,

A believer will go after business and trade. When he finds what he is after, God will send down an Angel and will instruct The Angel to prevent him from that work, since if he continues doing that he will go to Hell. An Angel will descend and prevent him from doing what he wanted to do, by God's Favor. The next morning he says, "Something prevented me from doing that." Of course it was God who prevented him. He does not know that God The Glorious, The High was witness to his deeds and knew that if he succeeds in doing that act, He will send him to Hell.

Imam al- Sadiq (AS) said,

"There was a man in the past, who was content with whatever hurt him in this world, and so many good deeds were recorded for him that was not recorded for anyone else on The Earth, and he never committed any sins. One of The Angels who liked him asked God for permission to descend down to earth and visit him. He was standing in prayer and The Angel sat down near him. Suddenly a lion jumped on the man and tore him into four pieces and threw each piece on a side. The Angel stood up, collected the parts of his body and buried him. Then he went to the seashore and saw a polytheist there for whom the people brought a variety of foods in golden and silver dishes. The man was uttering polytheistic sayings and was the king of India.

The Angel ascended to The Heavens. He was summoned and asked what he had seen. He said, "The most amazing thing that I saw was that You let a lion tear into pieces the man for whom You recorded the best good deeds, and I saw that you gave perfect health to a polytheist to whom You gave a Kingdom, and for whom the people brought a variety of foods in golden and silver dishes." God The Almighty said, "Do not be surprised about My first servant. He had asked Me for a high rank in Heaven which he could not attain any other way. I fed him to a lion to let him reach that rank. However, I did not do anything for the other man, since he will get My Torture in The Hereafter."