

Strengthening Faith.

Independence &
Religion of Ease

PodSeries - Vol 417



Achieve Noble Character

Strengthening Faith, Independence & Religion of Ease

ShaykhPod Books

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Strengthening Faith, Independence & Religion of Ease

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Compiler's Notes

We have tried diligently to do justice in this volume however if there are any short falls found then the compiler is personally and solely responsible for them.

We accept the possibility of faults and shortcomings in an effort to complete such a difficult task. We might have unconsciously stumbled and committed errors for which we ask for indulgence and forgiveness of our readers and the drawing of our attention thereto will be appreciated. We earnestly invite constructive suggestions which can be made to ShaykhPod.Books@gmail.com.

Introduction

The following short book discusses Three Aspects of Noble Character: Strengthening Faith, Independence and Religion of Ease.

Implementing the lessons discussed will aid a Muslim to Achieve Noble Character. According to the Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2003, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has advised that the heaviest thing in the Scales of Judgment Day will be Noble Character. It is one of the qualities of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, which Allah, the Exalted, complimented in Chapter 68 Al Qalam, Verse 4 of the Holy Quran:

“And indeed, you are of a great moral character.”

Therefore, it is a duty on all Muslims to gain and act on the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in order to Achieve Noble Character.

Strengthening Faith, Independence & Religion of Ease

Strengthening Faith - 1

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2317, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that a muslim cannot make their Islam excellent until they avoid the things which do not concern them.

This Hadith contains an all-encompassing advice which should be applied to every aspect of one's life. It includes a person's speech as well as their other physical actions. It means that a Muslim who desires to perfect their faith must avoid those things, through speech and actions, which do not concern them. And instead they must occupy themselves with those things that do. One should take the things that concern them very seriously and strive to fulfil the responsibilities which accompany them, according to the teachings of Islam, solely for the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted. It is important to note, that one would not be perfecting their faith if they avoided things according to their own thinking or desires. But the one who perfects their faith avoids the things which Islam has advised to avoid. Meaning, one should strive to fulfil all their duties, avoid all sins and the things which are disliked in Islam and even avoid the excess use of unnecessary lawful things. Achieving this excellence is a characteristic of the excellence of faith mentioned in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 99. This is when one acts and worships Allah, the Exalted, as if they can observe Him or they at least become fully aware of Allah, the Exalted, observing their

every thought and action. Being aware of this divine surveillance will encourage a muslim to always abstain from sins and hasten towards righteous deeds. The one who does not avoid the things which do not concern them will not reach this level of excellence.

A major aspect of avoiding the things which do not concern a person is linked to speech. The majority of sins occur when a person utters words which do not concern them, such as backbiting and slander. The definition of vain talk is when a person utters words which may not be sinful but are useless and therefore not their concern. As confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 2408, vain speech is hated by Allah, the Exalted. Countless arguments, fights and even physical harm have occurred simply because someone spoke about something which did not concern them. Many families have become divided; many marriages have ended because someone did not mind their business. It is why Allah, the Exalted, has advised in the Holy Quran the different types of useful speech which people should concern themselves with. Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 114:

“No good is there in much of their private conversation, except for those who enjoin charity or that which is right or conciliation between people. And whoever does that seeking means to the approval of Allah - then We are going to give him a great reward.”

In fact, uttering words which are not a person’s concern will be the main reason people enter Hell. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2616. This is why the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi,

number 2412, that all speech will be counted against a person unless it is connected to advising good, forbidding evil or the remembrance of Allah, the Exalted. This means that all other forms of speech are not a person's concern as they will not benefit them. It is important to note, that advising good encompasses anything which is beneficial in one's worldly and religious life, such as their occupation.

Therefore, Muslims should strive to avoid the things which do not concern them through words and actions so that they can perfect their faith. Put simply, the one who dedicates time to the things which do not concern them will fail in the things which do concern them. And the one who occupies themselves with the things which do concern them will not find time to spend on the things which do not concern them. Meaning, they will achieve success through the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, in both worlds.

Finally, the one who occupies themselves with the things which concern them will complete all the useful worldly and religious things they are responsible for and therefore obtain peace of mind. One of the main sources of stress is when one occupies themselves with things which do not concern them, as it prevents them from fulfilling their worldly and religious responsibilities. Behaving in the right manner will allow one to complete their important responsibilities while ensuring they have plenty of free time to relax and do the things they enjoy.

Strengthening Faith - 2

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 159, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, gave a short but far reaching piece of advice. He advised people to sincerely declare their belief in Allah, the Exalted, and then remain steadfast on it.

Remaining steadfast on one's faith means that they must strive in the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in all aspects of their life. It consists of fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, which relate to Him, such as the obligatory fasts and those which relate to people, such as treating others kindly. It includes refraining from all the prohibitions of Islam which are between a person and Allah, the Exalted, and those involving others. A muslim must also face destiny with patience truly believing Allah, the Exalted, chooses what is best for His servants. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

"...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not."

Finally, it involves fulfilling these aspects according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 31:

"Say, "If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins..."

Steadfastness can include refraining from both types of polytheism. The major type is when one worships something other than Allah, the Exalted. The minor type is when one performs good deeds other than for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, such as showing off. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3989. Therefore, an aspect of steadfastness is to always act for the sake of Allah, the Exalted.

It includes obeying Allah, the Exalted, at all times and refraining from cherry picking when and what Islamic teachings one will follow according to their desires.

Steadfastness includes sincerely obeying Allah, the Exalted, instead of obeying and pleasing oneself or others. If a Muslim disobeys Allah, the Exalted, by pleasing themselves or others they should know that neither their desires nor people will protect them from Allah, the Exalted. On the other hand, the one who is sincerely obedient to Allah, the Exalted, will be protected from all things by Him even if this protection is not apparent to them.

Remaining steadfast on one's faith includes following the path set out by the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and not adopting a path which deviates from this. The one who strives to adopt this path will not need anything else as this is enough to keep them steadfast in their faith. Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 59:

"O you who have believed, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you..."

As indicated by this verse, an aspect of being steadfast is obeying anyone whose commands and advice is rooted in the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted, and the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

As people are not perfect they will undoubtedly make mistakes and commit sins. So being steadfast in matters of faith does not mean one has to be perfect but it means they must strive to adhere strictly to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, as outlined earlier, and to sincerely repent if they commit a sin. This has been indicated in chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 6:

"...so take a straight course to Him and seek His forgiveness..."

This is further supported by a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1987, which advises to fear Allah, the Exalted, and to erase a (minor) sin which has occurred by performing a righteous deed. In another Hadith found in Imam Malik's Muwatta, book 2, Hadith number 37, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised muslims to try their best to remain steadfast on the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, even though they will not be able to do it perfectly. Therefore, a muslim's duty is to fulfil the potential they have been given through their intention and physical actions in the steadfast obedience of Allah, the Exalted. They have not been commanded to achieve perfection as this is not possible.

It is important to note, that one cannot remain steadfast in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, through their physical actions without purifying their spiritual heart first. As indicated in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3984, the limbs of the body will only act in a pure way if the spiritual heart is pure. Purity of heart is only achieved by gaining and acting on the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

Steadfast obedience requires one to control their tongue as it expresses the heart. Without controlling the tongue steadfast obedience to Allah, the Exalted, is not possible. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2407.

Finally, if any deficiency in the steadfast obedience of Allah, the Exalted, occurs, one must make sincere repentance to Allah, the Exalted, and seek the forgiveness of people, if it involves their rights. Chapter 46 Al Ahqaf, verse 13:

“Indeed, those who have said, “Our Lord is Allah,” and then remained on a right course - there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve.”

Strengthening Faith - 3

In a long Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 99, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, explained the meaning of excellence of faith. This excellence refers to one's conduct and behavior towards Allah, the Exalted, and the creation. Acting with excellence has been mentioned throughout the Holy Quran, such as chapter 10 Yunus, verse 26:

“For them who have done excellent is the best [reward] - and extra...”

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has explained this verse in Hadiths found in Sahih Muslim, numbers 449 and 450. The word extra in this verse refers to when the inhabitants of Paradise will be blessed with the divine vision of Allah, the Exalted. This reward befits the muslim who acts with excellence as excellence means to lead one's life as if they can witness Allah, the Exalted, observing their outer and inner being at all times. A person who can observe a powerful authority watching them will never misbehave out of awe of them. In fact, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, once advised someone to always behave as if they were constantly being observed by a righteous man they respected. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Imam Tabarani's, Al Mu'jam Al Kabir, number 5539. Whoever acts in this manner will very rarely commit sins and always hasten towards good deeds. This attitude creates the fear of Allah, the Exalted, and acts as a shield from the fire of trials in this world and the fire of Hell in the hereafter.

This vigilance will ensure one not only fulfills all their duties towards Allah, the Exalted, but it also encourages them to fulfill their responsibilities towards the creation. The peak of which is to sincerely treat others with kindness. This person will fulfill the Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 251, which advises that a person cannot be a true believer until they love for others what they love for themselves.

This level of excellence ensures one acts with the right intention, which is the foundation of faith, according to the Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1. Success is guaranteed for the one who performs good deeds and demonstrates good behavior with the right intention namely, to please Allah, the Exalted. The more excellent a person acts, the stronger their faith becomes until they become a muslim who is far from heedlessness and is always struggling to beautify their hereafter and worldly life according to the teachings of Islam.

It is feared that the opposite of this reward will be given to those who turned away from Allah, the Exalted. As they lived without fearing the all-encompassing gaze of Allah, the Exalted, they will be veiled from seeing Him in the hereafter. Chapter 83 Al Mutaffifin, verse 15:

“No! Indeed, from their Lord, that Day, they will be partitioned.”

Those who fail to reach the level of acting as if they witness Allah, the Exalted, must act on the second part of the advice given in the main Hadith under discussion, namely, to sincerely believe that Allah, the Exalted, is constantly observing them. Even though this state is lower in rank than the one who acts as if they observe Allah, the Exalted, none the less, it is a great way of adopting true fear of Allah, the Exalted. As mentioned earlier, this attitude will prevent one from committing sins and encourage them towards good deeds. As advised by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in Imam Tabarani's, Al Mu'jam Al Kabir, number 7935, the one who strives to adopt this mentality will be granted shade on the Day of Judgment by Allah, the Exalted.

The divine presence of Allah, the Exalted, is mentioned throughout the Holy Quran, such as Chapter 57 Al Hadid, verse 4:

"...He is with you wherever you are. And Allah, of what you do, is Seeing."

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has advised to adopt the true awareness of the divine presence of Allah, the Exalted, in many Hadiths. For example, in one divine Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 7405, Allah, the Exalted, declares that He is with whoever remembers Him. This is the reason why it has been reported in Hilyat Al Awliya, volume 1, pages 84 and 85, about the Commander of the Faithful, Ali Bin Abu Talib, may Allah be pleased with him, that he shied away from the glitter and pomp of the material world and found solace in the lonely night. Meaning, he sought the companionship of Allah, the Exalted, rather than the companionship of people.

Adopting the awareness of the divine presence of Allah, the Exalted, not only prevents sins and encourages good deeds but it also prevents loneliness and depression. A person is very rarely affected by mental health issues when they are constantly surrounded by a person who loves them and aids them. No one loves the creation more than Allah, the Exalted, and there is no doubt that He is the source of all aid. Therefore, acting with excellence benefits one's faith, actions, emotional state and the wider society.

A muslim must avoid becoming like those who treat Allah, the Exalted, as the most insignificant of those who observe them. This is a serious spiritual illness which leads to all types of sins and evil behavior towards Allah, the Exalted, and the creation.

The one who acts on the lower level by constantly remembering the divine vision will eventually reach the higher level and live as if they can see Allah, the Exalted, constantly observing their outer and inner states. Living in this manner ensures steadfast obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in all cases.

Both levels of excellence of faith is obtained when one learns and acts on Islamic knowledge. The more they do this, the more they will be aware of the divine presence. Remaining steadfast on this behaviour will then lead to excellence of faith.

Strengthening Faith - 4

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6407, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that the difference between the person who remembers Allah, the Exalted, and the one who does not, is like a living person compared to a dead person.

It is important for muslims who desire to create a strong connection with Allah, the Exalted, so that they can overcome all difficulties in this world and in the hereafter successfully, to remember Allah, the Exalted, as much as possible. Put simply, the more they remember Him the more they will achieve this vital goal.

This is achieved by practically acting on the three levels of the remembrance of Allah, the Exalted. The first level is to remember Allah, the Exalted, internally and silently. This includes correcting one's intention so that they only act in order to please Allah, the Exalted. The second is by remembering Allah, the Exalted, through one's tongue. This involves speaking in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, or remaining silent. As this has been commanded in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 176, remaining silent in cases when someone has nothing good to say, is a good deed and is therefore part of remembering Allah, the Exalted.

The highest and most effective way of strengthening one's bond with Allah, the Exalted, is practically remembering Him with one's limbs. This is achieved by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. The one who does this will use the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. But this requires one to gain and act on Islamic knowledge, which in turn is the root of all good and success in both worlds.

Those who remain on the first two levels will receive reward depending on their intention but they are unlikely to increase the strength of their faith and piety unless they move to the third and highest level of the remembrance of Allah, the Exalted.

The one who fulfils all three levels has been promised peace of mind and body in both worlds. Chapter 13 Ar Ra'd, verse 28:

"...Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah do hearts find peace."

And chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

Unfortunately, many Muslims who fulfill their obligatory duties and perform voluntary worship overlook and fail to fulfil these levels of remembering Allah, the Exalted, and as a result they fail to find peace in this world, despite their worship and good deeds.

Strengthening Faith - 5

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 574, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that whoever establishes the two cool obligatory prayers will enter Paradise.

The two cool obligatory prayers refer to the dawn and late afternoon obligatory prayers (Fajr and Asr), as during these two times the weather is cooler than at other times meaning, before sunrise and before sunset.

Establishing the obligatory prayers includes fulfilling all their conditions and etiquettes correctly according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, such as offering them on time. In fact, offering them as soon as they occur is one of the most beloved deeds to Allah, the Exalted. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 252.

Even though, there are five obligatory prayers which must be established yet, only two have been mentioned in the main Hadith under discussion. This is because these two prayers are arguably the two hardest to establish. The obligatory dawn prayer occurs at a time when most people are asleep. Therefore, it requires much energy and motivation in order to leave one's comfortable bed in order to offer it correctly. The obligatory late

afternoon prayer mostly occurs at a time where most people have completed their working day and have returned home tired. So to leave one's relaxation after a tiring and even stressful day of work in order to correctly offer their obligatory prayer is difficult. Therefore, if one correctly establishes these two prayers they will, through the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, find it easier to establish the other obligatory prayers, which usually occur at more convenient times.

Muslims should therefore strive to establish all their obligatory prayers as it is the very essence of Islam and it in fact separates belief from disbelief. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2618.

Finally, one must note that the main Hadith under discussion does not mean one can achieve success by only offering the five obligatory prayers while neglecting their other obligatory duties and responsibilities to Allah, the Exalted, and people. In reality, the one who establishes their obligatory prayers will strive to fulfill all their other obligatory duties and responsibilities, as this is one of the outcomes of establishing the obligatory prayers. Chapter 29 Al Ankabut, verse 45:

"...Indeed, prayer prohibits immorality and wrongdoing..."

In addition, the Hadith guarantees Paradise to the one who establishes their obligatory prayers but does not guarantee that they will not enter Hell first as a result of their sins. Therefore, as always, one must understand the verses of the Holy Quran and the Hadiths in their correct context.

Strengthening Faith - 6

In a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4168, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that the strong believer is more beloved to Allah, the Exalted, than a weaker believer.

This does not necessarily refer to physical strength, which one uses to perform righteous deeds. But it also refers to gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge in order to obtain certainty of faith. The one who possesses strong faith will fulfil their duties to Allah, the Exalted, and people correctly and in every situation, during ease and difficulties, according to their knowledge. Whereas, a weak believer will easily fail in their duties to Allah, the Exalted, and people in difficult situations.

In addition, the faith of the weak believer is based on blind imitation of others, and not Islamic knowledge. Blind imitation prevents one from improving their behaviour through gaining new knowledge and it often leads to deviant practices, especially when the person one imitates is ignorant themselves. Blind imitation does not suffice when one faces difficult situations, which require steadfastness, which in itself is rooted in gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge. For example, the one who does not possess Islamic knowledge easily questions and challenges destiny.

The stronger one's faith the greater their obedience to Allah, the Exalted, in the form of fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This in turn increases their success in both worlds. Chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 53:

“We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth...”

Strengthening Faith - 7

In a divine Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6502, Allah, the Exalted, declares some important things. The first thing mentioned is that Allah, the Exalted, declares war on the person who shows enmity to one of His righteous friends.

This occurs as the one who shows enmity to a person's friend is in fact showing enmity to the person indirectly. This indirectly warns muslims to only befriend the righteous servants of Allah, the Exalted, and to never show any enmity or dislike for them, as this is the attitude of the enemies of Allah, the Exalted, such as the Devil. Chapter 60 Al Mumtahanah, verse 1:

“O you who have believed, do not take My enemies and your enemies as allies...”

It is important to note, that any form of disobedience to Allah, the Exalted, is waging war against Him. Therefore, a muslim should avoid all forms of disobedience, including disliking those who strive in obeying Him, as this only invites the anger of Allah, the Exalted. For example, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3862, that a person should never insult his Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, as insulting them is like

insulting the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and whoever harms him, has insulted Allah, the Exalted. And this sinful person will soon be punished, unless they sincerely repent.

In addition, as righteousness, which is based on one's intention, is hidden from people, Muslims must avoid disliking other Muslims, as they do not know who is a righteous friend of Allah, the Exalted. So this part of the main Hadith encourages one to show good manners to all Muslims, by treating them in a way one wishes to be treated by people.

The next thing mentioned in the main divine Hadith under discussion is that a muslim can only draw close to Allah, the Exalted, through fulfilling their obligatory duties. And they can achieve the love of Allah, the Exalted, through voluntary righteous deeds.

This description splits the servants of Allah, the Exalted, into two categories. The first group draws near to Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling their obligatory duties in respect to Allah, the Exalted, such as the obligatory prayer, and in respect to people, such as the obligatory charity. This can be summed up by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and being patient with destiny.

The second category of those who are brought near to Allah, the Exalted, are superior to the first group as they not only fulfil their obligatory duties

but strive in voluntary righteous deeds. This clearly shows that this is the only path to the proximity of Allah, the Exalted. Whoever takes a path other than this will not achieve this vital goal. This completely rejects the concept of obtaining sainthood without striving in obedience to Allah, the Exalted. The person who claims this is simply a liar. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 4094, that when the spiritual heart is pure the rest of the body becomes pure. This leads to righteous deeds. So if a person does not perform righteous deeds, such as their obligatory duties, then their body is impure which means their spiritual heart is impure as well. This person can never reach the proximity of Allah, the Exalted.

It is important to note, the greatest voluntary righteous deeds one can perform are those based on the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Anyone who chooses to perform voluntary righteous deeds not based on his traditions has been fooled by the Devil, as no path will take one close to Allah, the Exalted, except the path and actions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 31:

“Say, [Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him], “If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins....””

The pious muslims who belong in the second higher group are also those who avoid the unnecessary and vain things of this material world. This attitude aids them in focusing their efforts on performing voluntary righteous

deeds. It is this group who have perfected their faith by loving, hating, giving and withholding all for the sake of Allah, the Exalted. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4681.

In addition, the Muslims from this higher group strive to use each blessing they have been granted, such as their energy and time, in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. They avoid using them in ways which will not please Allah, the Exalted, nor benefit them in the hereafter, even if these ways are permissible.

The next thing mentioned in the main Hadith under discussion is that when one strives in fulfilling the obligatory duties and performing voluntary righteous deeds, Allah, the Exalted, blesses their five senses so that they use them in obedience to Him. This righteous servant will very rarely commit sins. This increase in guidance has been indicated in Chapter 29 Al Ankabut, verse 69:

“And those who strive for Us - We will surely guide them to Our ways...”

This muslim reaches the level of excellence which has been discussed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 99. This is when a muslim performs actions, such as the prayer, as if they observe Allah, the Exalted. The one who reaches this level will guard their mind and body from sins. This is the one who, when they speak, they speak for Allah, the Exalted, when they

are silent, they are silent for Allah, the Exalted. When they act, they act for Him and when they are still, they are for His sake. This is an aspect of monotheism and understanding the Oneness of Allah, the Exalted.

It is important to note that this empowerment includes dealing with difficulties with patience and times of ease with gratitude, which involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. This empowerment also includes obtaining peace of mind, as the mental state of the one who is empowered will not be easily shaken nor broken down by the different situations one can face in this world.

The next thing mentioned in the main Hadith under discussion is that this muslim's supplication will be fulfilled and they will be granted the refuge and protection of Allah, the Exalted. This is a clear lesson for those who desire lawful worldly things. They should not seek to obtain them using any means except through the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted. No spiritual teacher or anyone else will be able to grant things to a person unless the person strives in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted and they are destined to obtain those things. In addition, no person can and will grant another refuge and protection from the punishment of Allah, the Exalted, in both worlds. One can only obtain this protection through the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted. This eliminates the wishful thinking of some who believe they can persist in the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted, and still obtain protection from His punishment, especially in the hereafter, through the intercession of someone else. Even though, the intercession of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, on Judgement Day is a fact, none the less behaving in this mocking manner may cause one to lose it.

To conclude this Hadith makes it clear that the proximity of Allah, the Exalted, is only gained through His sincere obedience, in the form of fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and being patient with destiny according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. All other prescribed methods are false and nothing but wishful thinking, which has no value or weight in Islam.

Strengthening Faith - 8

In a long Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6806, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, mentioned seven groups of people who will be granted shade on the Day of Judgment by Allah, the Exalted.

This shade will protect them from the horrors of the Day of Judgment which includes the unbearable heat caused by the Sun being brought within two miles of the creation. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2421.

One of these groups includes a young person who was raised in the worship of Allah, the Exalted. This is a great deed as one's desire for worldly things and possessing the mental and physical strength to obtain them is greatest during one's youth. For example, it is common to observe the elderly regularly attending a Mosque but rare to observe a young person. So if they put their desires aside and strive in fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, first, then their reward will be great.

It is important to note, this Hadith does not refer to a young person who is constantly worshipping Allah, the Exalted. It refers to the one who fulfils their duties towards Allah, the Exalted, such as the obligatory prayers according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and

blessings be upon him, and their duties towards people. The one who behaves in such a manner will find plenty of time to do other lawful things. But this attitude is rarely observed in a young person as most muslims only appreciate the importance of fulfilling their duties when they get older. This is why it is extremely important for parents and elders to encourage their children from a young age to fulfil their duties. In fact, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, even advised parents in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 495, to encourage their children to offer the obligatory prayers before they reach the age when they become obligatory on them. This preparation ensures they will fulfil their duties when they become binding on them. Unfortunately, this is an aspect of raising children muslims often overlook as they encourage their children on succeeding in worldly matters and delay their religious education. But by this time they become set in their ways to act on the commands of Allah, the Exalted.

The next person who will be granted shade on Judgment Day is the muslim whose heart is attached to the Mosques. This includes the muslim who strives to offer their obligatory prayers at the Mosque with congregation. One can understand the seriousness of not performing this deed by understanding the Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 1481. It warns that the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, desired to command the houses of the men who failed to offer their prayers in congregation at the Mosque without a valid excuse to be burned down.

In this day and age for a working muslim it is difficult to offer all their obligatory prayers at the Mosque with congregation. But even still with the exception of a few every muslim can offer at least a few obligatory prayers in congregation at the Mosque every day. For example, those who work

night shifts can offer the obligatory prayers which occur during the day. And those who work day shifts can offer the obligatory prayers which occur during the night with congregation at the Mosque.

This Hadith also includes those who regularly attend Mosques in order to teach or learn Islamic knowledge as this deed causes their hearts to keep returning to the Mosque.

The final person mentioned in the main Hadith under discussion who will be granted shade on Judgment Day is the one who remembers Allah, the Exalted, in solitude and cries. Firstly, the fact that this reaction occurs in solitude indicates the sincerity of the muslim meaning, their reaction is purely for the sake of Allah, the Exalted. This reaction could be due to a number of factors which include one's realization of the uncountable blessings they have been granted even though they show a lack of gratitude for them by using them incorrectly. One's understanding of the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, when He conceals their sins from the creation. A muslim continuously receiving blessings from Allah, the Exalted, even when they sin. A muslim's reflection and assessment of their own deeds which encourages them to sincerely repent. One's realization that they will only be forgiven and granted Paradise through the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, and not because of their righteous deeds, which is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6467. The important thing to note is that this reaction only occurs when one truly reflects on this material world, the afterlife, death, Judgment Day and their deeds. The one who is heedless to this will never achieve this outcome.

Strengthening Faith - 9

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1987, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, gave some important pieces of advice. The first is to fear Allah, the Exalted, through piety.

This is achieved when one fulfils the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refrains from His prohibitions and faces destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This is only achieved through learning and acting on the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This advice encompasses all the teachings and duties of Islam. When one strives in this manner they will eventually reach the high level of faith called excellence. This is when one acts, such as performing the prayer, as if they witness Allah, the Exalted, observing them. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 99. This ensures one fulfils their duties both to Allah, the Exalted, and to the creation. The latter involves fulfilling the rights of people according to the teachings of Islam. This is best fulfilled by treating others how one desires to be treated by people.

The second advice given in the main Hadith under discussion is that a muslim should follow up a sin with a righteous deed so that it wipes out the sin. This refers to minor sins only as major sins require sincere repentance. If one adds sincere repentance to their righteous deed then it will erase any sin, minor or major. But a part of acting rightly is to strive not to repeat the sin again, as sinning with the intention of following it up with a righteous deed is a dangerous misleading mentality. One should

strive not to commit sins and when they do occur, they must sincerely repent. Sincere repentance involves feeling remorse, seeking forgiveness of Allah, the Exalted, and anyone who has been wronged, as long as this will not lead to further trouble, one must sincerely promise to avoid committing the same or similar sin again and make up for any rights which have been violated in respect to Allah, the Exalted, and people.

Strengthening Faith - 10

In a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah number 3371, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that a muslim must never consume alcohol, as it is the key to all evil.

Unfortunately, this major sin has increased amongst the muslims over time. This is the key to all evil as it gives rise to other sins. This is quite obvious as a drunk loses control over their tongue and physical actions. One only needs to look at the news to observe how much crime is committed due to drinking alcohol. Even those who drink moderately only cause damage to their bodies, which science has proven. The physical and mental diseases associated with alcohol are numerous and cause a heavy burden on the National Health Service and the tax payers. It is the key to all evil as it negatively affects all three aspects of a person: their body, mind and soul. It destroys the relationships between people, as alcohol negatively affects one's behaviour. For example, there is a clear correlation between alcohol consumption and domestic violence. Chapter 5 Al Ma'idah, verse 90:

“O you who have believed, indeed, intoxicants, gambling, [sacrificing on] stone alters [to other than Allah], and divining arrows are but defilement from the work of Satan, so avoid it that you may be successful.”

The fact that drinking alcohol has been placed next to things which are associated with polytheism in this verse, highlights how important it is to avoid.

It is such a serious sin that the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3376, that the one who drinks alcohol regularly will not enter Paradise.

Spreading the Islamic greeting of peace is a key to obtaining Paradise according to a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 68. None the less, a Hadith found in Imam Bukhari's, Adab Al Mufrad, number 1017, advises muslims not to greet someone who regularly drinks alcohol.

Alcohol is a unique major sin as it has been cursed in ten different ways in a single Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3380. These include the alcohol itself, the one who produces it, the one it is produced for, the one who sells it, the one who buys it, the one who carries it, the one to whom it is carried to, the one who uses the wealth obtained through selling it, the one who drinks it and the one who pours it. The one who deals with something that has been cursed like this will not obtain true success unless they sincerely repent.

Even though, breaking alcohol addiction is difficult, none the less, one must strive hard to avoid all the things which will tempt them towards it, such as bad friends. They must utilise all the help available to them, such as counselling sessions. They must never forget that Allah, the

Exalted, does not burden a person with a duty they cannot complete.
Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 286:

“Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity...”

These things will aid them in turning away from this major sin for good.

Strengthening Faith - 11

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6464, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that deeds should be done correctly, sincerely and moderately. He added that a person's deeds will not take them to Paradise and concluded that the most beloved deeds to Allah, the Exalted, are those which are regular even if they are few.

Muslims should ensure that they perform deeds correctly meaning, according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, as performing deeds without this guidance will lead one away from the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 31:

"Say, [Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him], "If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins..."

Next, they must perform them for the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted, and not for any other reason, such as showing off. These people will be told to gain their reward from those who they acted for on Judgment Day, which will not be possible. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3154.

Muslims should perform voluntary righteous deeds moderately without over burdening themselves as this often leads to one giving up. Instead, they should act according to their capacity and means regularly even if these actions are little in size and number, as this is far superior to big actions which are performed once in a while. Moderation also prevents one from neglecting any of their duties and responsibilities, whether they are in respect to Allah, the Exalted, or people. Moderation also allows one to fulfil all their responsibilities while ensuring they have plenty of time to enjoy lawful pleasures without excessiveness, extravagance or waste.

Finally, a muslim must understand that their righteous deeds are a blessing from Allah, the Exalted, as the inspiration, knowledge, strength and opportunity to perform them comes from Allah, the Exalted. Therefore, muslims will only enter Paradise through the mercy of Allah, the Exalted. In addition, no matter how many good deeds one performs they will never be able to show adequate gratitude for the countless blessings they have been granted by Allah, the Exalted. Understanding these facts prevent one from adopting the deadly characteristic of pride. An atom's worth of which is enough to take one to Hell. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 266.

Strengthening Faith - 12

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2389, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that righteousness is good character and a sin creates a negative internal feeling and its doer would dislike others finding out about it.

This Hadith indicates that the root of all good and righteousness is good character. This is when one fulfills their duty towards Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. And it includes fulfilling the rights of people according to the teachings of Islam. This can be fulfilled when one treats people in the same way they desire others to treat them. In fact, a person will not become a true believer until they love for others what they love for themselves. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2515. Good character towards Allah, the Exalted, and people is important to adopt as it will be the heaviest thing in the Scales of Judgment Day and the person who possesses good character will gain the equivalent reward of the one who prays and fasts continuously. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2003.

The main Hadith under discussion also indicates how to judge one's actions. A sin is something which creates a negative internal feeling and the sinner would dislike others finding about their actions. If a muslim adheres to this advice they will avoid the vast majority of sins, as human beings have been created in a way which alerts them when they commit most sins. This guilty conscience is in fact, a proof that one's soul has

been predisposed to believe in their accountability on the Day of Judgement, as one feels negatively towards sins, even when they fully believe they will not be held accountable for them by people, such as the police.

It is important to note, muslims must still strive to gain and act on Islamic knowledge, as this internal warning does not occur with all sins and they will lose this warning system if they persist on the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4244. But none the less, it is still an excellent deterrent from sins, which muslims must pay heed to.

Strengthening Faith - 13

In a Hadith found in Imam Munzari's, Awareness and Apprehension, number 28, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised two characteristics which lead a muslim to Paradise.

In a Hadith found in Imam Munzari's, Awareness and Apprehension, number 28, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised three characteristics which lead a muslim to Paradise.

The first is to consume lawful food. This includes avoiding obtaining and utilizing the unlawful, such as wealth, in any aspect of one's life. It has been warned in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 2342, that the righteous deeds of a muslim who utilizes unlawful provision will not be accepted by Allah, the Exalted. Obtaining lawful provision is the foundation stone of Islam, without it success is not possible. As one's lawful provision was allocated to them over fifty thousand years before the creation of the Heavens and the Earth, according to the Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6748, a Muslim must therefore utilise their strength and resources in obtaining it, full well believing they will receive it. This will prevent them from pursuing the unlawful.

The second characteristic mentioned in the main Hadith under discussion is following the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This does not mean only learning them but more importantly it includes acting on them. This encompasses

fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience. A muslim must never cherry pick which traditions to follow nor misinterpret them in order to fulfill their desires. They should not rearrange the order of priority of his traditions meaning, the established traditions should be acted on first followed by the non-established meaning, the non-regular traditions. As the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, is the practical role model of the Holy Quran, it is not possible to achieve success and peace in either this world or the next without following in his footsteps practically. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 31:

“Say, [Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him], "If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins...””

Strengthening Faith - 14

In a Hadith found in Imam Munzari's, Awareness and Apprehension, number 30, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that the Holy Quran will intercede on Judgment Day. Those who follow it during their lives on Earth will be led to Paradise by it on Judgment Day. But those who neglect it during their lives on Earth will find that it pushes them into Hell on Judgment Day.

The Holy Quran is a book of guidance. It is not merely a book of recitation. Muslims must therefore strive to fulfill all aspects of the Holy Quran to ensure that it guides them to success in both worlds. The first aspect is reciting it correctly and regularly. The second aspect is to understand it through a reliable scholar. And the final aspect is to act on its teachings according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This will ensure they act on the Holy Quran correctly, as the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, is the practical implementation of the Holy Quran. Those who behave in such a manner are the ones who are given glad tidings of right guidance through every difficulty in this world and its intercession on the Day of Judgment. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

But as warned by the main Hadith, the Holy Quran is only guidance and a mercy for those who correctly act on its aspects according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. But those who avoid understanding and acting on it or intentionally misinterpret it and instead act according to their desires will be deprived of this right guidance and its intercession on Judgment Day. In fact, their complete loss in both worlds will only increase until they sincerely repent. Chapter 20 Taha, verse 124:

"And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed [i.e., difficult] life, and We will gather [i.e., raise] him on the Day of Resurrection blind."

Finally, it is important to understand that even though the Holy Quran is a cure for worldly problems, a muslim should not only use it for this purpose. Meaning, they should not only recite it in order to fix their worldly problems thereby, treating the Holy Quran like a tool, which is removed during a difficulty and then placed back in a toolbox when the issue is resolved. The main function of the Holy Quran is to guide one through the difficulties of this world in order to reach the hereafter safely. This purpose is not possible to fulfill without understanding and acting on the Holy Quran. Blind recitation is simply not enough. Neglecting this main function and only using it to fix one's worldly problems is not correct as it contradicts the behaviour of a true muslim. It is like the one who purchases a car with many different accessories yet it cannot be driven, which is the main purpose of a car. There is no doubt that this person is simply foolish. Chapter 17 Al Isra, verse 82:

“And We send down of the Quran that which is healing and mercy for the believers, but it does not increase the wrongdoers except in loss.”

Strengthening Faith - 15

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 1528, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that the most beloved places to Allah, the Exalted, are the Mosques and the most hated places to Him are the market places.

Islam does not prohibit muslims from going to places other than the Mosques, nor does it command them to always inhabit the Mosques. But it is important that they prioritize attending Mosques for the congregational prayers and attending religious gatherings, over visiting the markets and other places, unnecessarily.

When a need arises there is no harm to attend other places, such as shopping centers, but a muslim should avoid going to them unnecessarily, as they are places where sins more often occur. Whenever they do go to other places they must ensure they avoid disobeying Allah, the Exalted, which includes wronging others. They should avoid over socialising, as this is the cause of the majority of sins, which occur in society.

The Mosques are meant to be a sanctuary from sins and a comfortable place to obey Allah, the Exalted, in. This involves fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Just like a student

benefits from a library, as it is an environment created for studying, similarly, muslims can benefit from Mosques, as their very purpose is to encourage muslims to obtain and act on useful knowledge so that they can obey Allah, the Exalted, correctly.

Mosques are also an excellent place to remind one of their purpose, which is to sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, by using the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Him. The Mosques also encourage one to prioritise their activities in the correct way, so that they fulfill their necessities and responsibilities, prepare adequately for the hereafter and enjoy lawful pleasures in moderation. The one who avoids the Mosques often wastes their time and resources on vain and pointless activities and they therefore lose out on gaining benefit in both worlds.

Not only should a muslim prioritize the Mosques over other places but they should encourage others, such as their children, to do the same. In fact, it is an excellent place for the youth to avoid sins, crimes and bad company, which lead to nothing but trouble and regret in both worlds.

Strengthening Faith - 16

In a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 1081, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised muslims how to gain blessings in their provision, divine support and an improvement in their condition and state.

The first thing is to sincerely repent to Allah, the Exalted, before one dies. As the time of death is unknown, this Hadith actually indicates sincerely repenting whenever one commits a sin, meaning, repenting without delay. This consists of feeling regretful, seeking forgiveness from Allah, the Exalted, and whoever else has been wronged, making a firm promise not to commit the same or a similar sin again and, if possible, to make up for any rights which have been violated in respect to Allah, the Exalted, and people.

The next thing advised in the main Hadith is that a muslim must make use of their time before they become preoccupied with responsibilities, an illness or a difficulty. A muslim must utilise their resources, such as their time, on things which please Allah, the Exalted, and avoid vain and sinful things. One must remember the great regret they will face on Judgement Day when they observe the reward given to those who used their resources in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, if they failed to do the same. They must not postpone doing good to a time or day which they are not guaranteed to reach and even if they reach it, they may not be in the right position to do the good deed. It is hoped that the one who behaves in this manner will be supported by Allah, the Exalted, when they are no longer in a position to perform extra righteous deeds due to a change in circumstances. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in

Imam Bukhari's, Adab Al Mufrad, number 500. A Muslim must first aim to minimize using their time on things which do not benefit them in this world or the next. Next, they should try to reduce the things which only benefit them in this world and concentrate more on doing things which benefit them in the hereafter, which by definition, automatically benefits them in this world too. The one who remains steadfast on this will use their resources, such as their time, in the right way, in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted.

The next thing mentioned in the main Hadith is that a muslim must strengthen their bond with Allah, the Exalted, by remembering Him much. True remembrance of Allah, the Exalted, consists of three levels. The first is internal remembrance meaning, to correct one's intention so that they only act to please Him. This is proven when one does not expect nor hope from any return or gratitude from people. The second level consists of remembering Allah, the Exalted, by speaking good words and avoiding vain and sinful speech. And the highest level is to sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, through one's actions by using the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Him. This has been discussed in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

The final thing mentioned in the main Hadith is giving much charity both hidden and open. This includes both the obligatory and voluntary charity. It is important to note, this means giving charity according to one's means, whether it is much or little. Allah, the Exalted, does not observe quantity, He observes and judges actions based on quality meaning, one's sincerity. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1. This leaves muslims with no excuses but to give charity according to their means. In addition, it is important to give charity regularly instead of once in a while, as regular deeds are more beloved to Allah, the Exalted, even if they are little. This has been

advised in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6465. Finally, those who desire to encourage others to give charity can give it publicly. This will lead to them gaining the same reward as those who donate because of their inspiration. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 2351. But those who are fearful of showing off, which cancels their reward, should do so privately. Islam has provided many options and opportunities for muslims to gain much reward in order to obtain peace and success in both worlds. One must remember that charity includes all good deeds that help others, not just wealth. So the one who does not possess wealth, should give charity in other ways, such as giving others their time, energy and emotional support. The least one can do is keep their verbal and physical harm away from others, as this is considered as giving charity to oneself. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 250.

Strengthening Faith - 17

In a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4031, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that a person who imitates a people is counted as one of them.

All muslims irrespective of the strength of their faith desire to be counted and end up with the righteous in the next world. But this Hadith clearly warns that a muslim will only be considered a righteous person and end up with them if they imitate the righteous. This imitation is a practical thing not only a declaration through words. This imitation is correctly done by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This will ensure they use the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 29 Al Ankabut, verse 9:

"And those who believe and do righteous deeds - We will surely admit them among the righteous."

But those who verbally declare their love for the righteous and fail to imitate them and instead imitate the characteristics found in hypocrites and the sinful will be considered and judged as one of them. This does not mean they will lose their faith but it means they will be judged as disobedient muslims. How can a disobedient muslim be counted as an

obedient muslim and end up with the righteous? This is only wishful thinking which has no value in Islam. Chapter 40 Ghafir, verse 58:

"And not equal are the blind and the seeing, nor are those who believe and do righteous deeds and the evildoer. Little do you remember."

Finally, the main Hadith also indicates the importance of befriending good people, as one is influenced, negatively or positively, by their companions. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4833. Therefore, if one desires to imitate the righteous, they should befriend them in this world. This company and imitation will increase the love one has for the righteous. This real love unites one with their beloved in the hereafter. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 3688.

Strengthening Faith - 18

In a Divine Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 2219, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that all righteous deeds people perform are for themselves except for fasting, as this is for Allah, the Exalted, and He shall reward it directly.

This Hadith indicates the uniqueness of fasting. One of the reasons it is described in this manner is because all other righteous deeds are visible to people, such as the prayer, or they are between people, such as secret charity. Whereas, fasting is a unique righteous deed, as others cannot know someone is fasting by only observing them.

In addition, fasting is a righteous deed which puts a lock on every aspect of oneself. Meaning, a person who fasts correctly will be prevented from committing verbal and physical sins, such as looking at and hearing unlawful things. This is also achieved through the prayer but the prayer is only performed for a short time and is visible to others whereas, fasting occurs throughout the day and is invisible to others. Chapter 29 Al Ankabut, verse 45:

“...Indeed, prayer prohibits immorality and wrongdoing...”

It is clear from the following verse a person who does not complete the obligatory fasts without a valid reason will not be a true believer, as the two have been directly connected. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 183:

“O you who have believed, decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you that you may become righteous”

In fact, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has warned in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 723, that if a muslim does not complete a single obligatory fast without a valid reason they cannot make up for the reward and blessings lost, even if they fasted every day for their entire life.

In addition, as indicated by the verse quoted earlier, fasting correctly leads to piety. Meaning, simply starving during the day does not lead to piety but paying extra attention to abstaining from sins and performing righteous deeds during the fast will lead to piety. It is why a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 707, warns that a fast will not be significant if one does not abstain from speaking and acting on falsehood. A similar Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 1690, warns that some fasting people obtain nothing except hunger. When one becomes more aware and careful in obeying Allah, the Exalted, while they are fasting, this habit will eventually affect them so they behave in a similar way even when they are not fasting. This is in fact true piety.

The righteousness mentioned in the verse quoted earlier is connected to fasting, as fasting reduces one's evil desires and passions. It prevents

pride and the encouragement of sins. This is because fasting hinders the appetite of the stomach and one's carnal desires. These two things lead to many sins. In addition, the desire for these two things is greater than the desire for other unlawful things. So whoever controls them through fasting will find it easier to control the weaker evil desires. This leads to true righteousness.

As briefly indicated earlier, there are different levels of fasting. The first and lowest level of fasting is when one abstains from the things which will break their fast, such as food. The next level is abstaining from sins which damage one's fast thereby reducing the reward of their fast, such as lying. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 2235. Fasting which involves each member of the body is the next level. This is when each body part fasts from sins for example, the eyes from looking at the unlawful, the ears from listening to the unlawful and so on. The next level is when one behaves in this manner even when they are not fasting. Finally, the highest level of fasting is abstaining from all things which are not connected to Allah, the Exalted, meaning, one avoids using the blessings they have been granted, such as their time, in ways which are sinful or vain.

A muslim should also fast inwardly as their body fasts outwardly by abstaining from sinful or vain thoughts. They should fast from persisting on their own plans in respect to their desires and try to concentrate on fulfilling their duties and responsibilities. In addition, they should fast from inwardly challenging the decree of Allah, the Exalted, and instead except destiny and whatever it brings knowing Allah, the Exalted, only chooses the best for His servants, even if they do not understand the wisdom behind these choices. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

Finally, a muslim should aim for the highest reward by keeping their fast a secret and not inform others if it is avoidable, as informing others unnecessarily leads to a loss of reward as it is an aspect of showing off.

Strengthening Faith - 19

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1773, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that the reward for an accepted Holy Pilgrimage is nothing except Paradise.

The real purpose of the Holy Pilgrimage is to prepare muslims for their final journey to the hereafter. The same way a muslim leaves behind their home, business, wealth, family, friends and social status in order to perform the Holy Pilgrimage, this will occur at the time of their death, when they take their final journey to the hereafter. In fact, a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2379, advises that a person's family and wealth abandons them at their grave and only their deeds, good and bad, remain with them.

When a muslim bears this in mind during their Holy Pilgrimage, they will fulfil all the aspects of this duty correctly. This muslim will return home a changed person, as they will prioritise preparing for their final journey to the hereafter over amassing the excess aspects of this material world. They will strive in fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, which includes taking from this world in order to fulfill their needs and the needs of their dependents without waste, excessiveness or extravagance. This will ensure they use the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted.

Muslims should not treat the Holy Pilgrimage as a holiday and a shopping trip as this attitude defeats the purpose of it. It must remind muslims of their final journey to the hereafter, a journey which has no return and no second chances. Only this will inspire one to fulfil the Holy Pilgrimage correctly and prepare adequately for the hereafter. The one who behaves in this manner will be led to Paradise by their Holy Pilgrimage.

Strengthening Faith - 20

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2305, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, indicated some important characteristics for muslims to adopt.

The first is that the best worshipper is the one who avoids the unlawful. This includes avoiding all forms of verbal and physical sins. It includes fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, as abandoning them is unlawful. It includes avoiding using the blessings one has been granted in sinful ways. In addition, a muslim must never obtain and utilize unlawful provision, such as wealth, as this will cause all of their righteous deeds to be rejected, as the foundation of good deeds must be lawful. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 2342. Just like the inward foundation of Islam is one's intention, similarly the outward foundation of Islam is obtaining and utilising the lawful. A muslim should avoid doubtful things, as this often leads to the unlawful. Avoiding what creates doubt will safeguard one's faith and honor. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1205. When one behaves in this manner, all their righteous worship and good deeds will be accepted by Allah, the Exalted.

The last thing mentioned in the main Hadith under discussion is that too much laughter kills the spiritual heart. This mentality demands one to always think and discuss funny issues and avoid serious issues. The matter of preparing for death and the hereafter are serious issues and if one avoids thinking about and discussing them then they will never correctly prepare for them. This will lead to a dead spiritual heart. A Muslim must be cheerful and optimistic in order to make others feel

comfortable but they should avoid adopting a constant joking attitude, as this attitude leads to vain and even sinful things.

Strengthening Faith - 21

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2012, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that thinking things through is from Allah, the Exalted, while being hasty is from the Devil.

This is an extremely important teaching to understand and act on, as muslims who perform much righteous deeds often destroy them through hastiness. For example, they may utter some evil words in a fit of rage which may cause them to plunge into Hell on Judgment Day. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2314.

The vast majority of sins and difficulties, such as arguments, occur because people fail to think things through and instead act in a hasty way. The sign of intelligence is when one thinks before speaking or acting and only precedes when they know their speech or action is good and beneficial in worldly and religious matters.

Even though, a muslim should not delay in performing righteous deeds yet, they should still think things through before performing them. This is because a righteous deed may receive no reward simply because its conditions and etiquettes have not been fulfilled because of one's hastiness. In this respect, one should only move forward in any matter after they have thought things through.

The one who behaves in this manner will not only minimize their sins and increase their obedience to Allah, the Exalted, but they will minimize the difficulties they encounter, such as arguments, difficulties and disagreements, in all aspects of their life.

Strengthening Faith - 22

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2306, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised muslims to hasten in performing righteous deeds before seven things occur.

The first is overwhelming poverty. This can refer to financial difficulties which distract a person from the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, which involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. In addition, stressing over wealth can even push one towards the unlawful. A muslim should remember that any righteous deed rooted in the unlawful will be rejected by Allah, the Exalted. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 2342. Allah, the Exalted, has allocated provision for the entire creation over fifty thousand years before He created the Heavens and the Earth, according to a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6748. Therefore, a muslim should trust that their lawful provision will reach them as long as they continue to strive for it in lawful ways, according to the teachings of Islam. A muslim should remember that Allah, the Exalted, chooses what is best for His servants according to His infinite wisdom. He does not give according to someone's desires, as this will most likely lead to their destruction. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

"...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not."

And chapter 42 Ash Shuraa, verse 27:

“And if Allah had extended [excessively] provision for His servants, they would have committed tyranny throughout the earth. But He sends [it] down in an amount which He wills...”

Finally, this part of the Hadith also indicates the importance of using one's excess wealth in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, before a time comes when they may want to give charity but may not be in the right financial position to do so.

The next thing mentioned in the main Hadith under discussion is that muslims should hasten in performing righteous deeds before they become distracted by wealth. Wealth itself is not evil but depending on how one obtains it and uses it can either make it a great blessing for them or a great burden for them in both worlds. If a muslim strives to obtain excess wealth while neglecting their duties to Allah, the Exalted, and people and hoard or misspend their wealth, it will become a great curse for them in both worlds. Chapter 20 Taha, verse 124:

"And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed [i.e., difficult] life, and We will gather [i.e., raise] him on the Day of Resurrection blind."

But if a muslim obtains enough to fulfill their needs and the needs of their dependents without excessiveness, waste or extravagance and uses their blessings, such as wealth, in other ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, then they will achieve true richness in both worlds. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

The next thing mentioned in the main Hadith under discussion which prevents righteous actions is a debilitating sickness. This is a warning to make use of one's good health before they encounter sickness. One should observe those who have lost their good health either through sickness or through ageing and therefore make use of the good health they possess, by striving to gain success in both worldly and religious matters, while giving priority to religion over the world. For example, a muslim should use their good health to journey to the Mosques regularly in order to offer their obligatory prayers with the congregation before a time comes when they desire to do this but do not possess the physical strength to do so. The amazing thing about utilizing one's good health correctly is that when a muslim eventually loses it, Allah, the Exalted, will continue to grant them the same reward they used to receive when doing good deeds during their time of good health. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Imam Bukhari's, Adab Al Mufrad, number 500. But those who live in heedlessness and fail to utilise their good health will receive no reward during their good health or when they fall sick.

This is connected to the next thing mentioned in the main Hadith under discussion namely, senility. A muslim should make use of their youth and strong intelligence before they reach senility. This includes gaining and acting on knowledge and using one's mental strength to obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This will ensure they use the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. One should not delay in this by believing they can learn and act on Islamic knowledge when they are older as there is no guarantee they will reach older age. In addition, even if they do reach elderly age, it will be difficult for them to learn Islamic knowledge, as the prime age to learn is when one is younger. Finally, even if they manage to gain Islamic knowledge in older age, it will be harder for them to implement the knowledge, as older people become more easily accustomed to their habits and they therefore find it harder to change their behaviour positively. Therefore, one must not delay using their mental strength to learn and act on useful knowledge while they are younger. Finally, it is important to behave in this manner before senility occurs, as even the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, sought refuge from senility in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6390.

The next thing mentioned in the main Hadith under discussion which prevents righteous actions is a sudden death. Death is certain but the time is unknown. A muslim should not live in heedlessness believing that their death is far away, as countless people have and will die long before reaching their life expectancy. Nor should they live in such a way as if they are not going to die at all. Having hopes of a long life can be considered the root of all evil, as it causes one to delay performing righteous deeds, believing they can always perform them tomorrow. It causes them to delay sincere repentance, as they believe they have plenty of time to change for the better. And having hopes for a long life

causes one to prioritize obtaining worldly things, such as wealth, in order to make their expected long life on this Earth comfortable. These things prevent one from preparing adequately for the hereafter, which involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. Muslims should therefore reduce their hope for a long life so that they change for the better and direct their focus to the permanent hereafter. Muslims should not delay and instead act today as the tomorrow they hope for may never arrive. A wise person does not prioritize preparing for a day they may never reach, such as their retirement, over practically preparing for the day which they are guaranteed to experience, such as the day they will die. In addition, they should also strive to perform the righteous deeds which will benefit them in case their life ends unexpectedly, such as an ongoing charity, which benefits the donor, as long as the charity continues to benefit others. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1376.

The next thing mentioned in the main Hadith under discussion is the arrival of the anti-Christ. This event will prevent one from performing righteous deeds and instead tempt them towards disbelief. One lesson to learn from this is the importance of avoiding doubtful things. Just like a person who journeys close to a border is more likely to cross it, similarly, a muslim who is surrounded by temptations will more likely be led astray and fail to perform righteous deeds. The one who avoids places and things which tempt them to commit sins will protect their faith and honor. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1205. Muslims should therefore guard their faith by avoiding things, places and the people who invite or tempt them towards the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted, and ensure their dependents, such as their children, do the same.

The final thing mentioned in the main Hadith under discussion, which prevents one from performing righteous deeds, is the Final Hour.

This is when the trumpet blast will occur. The trumpet blast will lead to the death of the creation. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 7381. The important thing to learn is that this is a call which no one can or will reject responding to. It will lead to the resurrection and final judgment. Therefore, Muslims should respond to the call of Allah, the Exalted, through the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, through sincere obedience by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 8 An Anfal, verse 24:

“O you who have believed, respond to Allah and to the Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life...”

This will ensure they use the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted.

Whoever responds positively to this call in this world will find the final call easy to endure and respond to. Whereas, the one who lives heedless to the call of Allah, the Exalted, in this world, will not find peace in this world and they will be forced to answer the call of the trumpet, which will be a great burden for them to endure and respond to. A person can only ignore the call of Allah, the Exalted, for so long as the final call will occur,

sooner or later, and no one will be able to avoid or ignore it. If this is inevitable, it makes sense that one responds to it now, today, instead of living in heedlessness. If one hears the trumpet blast while heedless, no action or regret will benefit them and what comes after for this person will be even more terrifying.

Strengthening Faith - 23

In a Hadith found in Imam Munzari's, Awareness and Apprehension, number 2556, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, gave glad tidings to the one who possesses the following characteristics.

One of these characteristics is earning lawful provision. It is important to understand that if the foundation of someone's life is based in the unlawful then anything build on top of it will be impure. The righteous deeds, such as charity, of the one who obtains and utilizes the unlawful will be rejected. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 2342. The same way the internal foundation of Islam is one's intention, similarly, the outer foundation of Islam is obtaining and utilising the lawful. A muslim should understand that their provision, which includes wealth, was allocated to them over fifty thousand years before the creation of the Heavens and the Earth. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6748. This allocation can never change, so there is no need to obtain and utilize the unlawful, as this leads to difficulties in this world, as everything they obtain through the unlawful will become a source of stress for them, and it leads to a severe punishment on a Great Day. Chapter 20 Taha, verse 124:

"And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed [i.e., difficult] life, and We will gather [i.e., raise] him on the Day of Resurrection blind."

The next characteristic mentioned in the main Hadith under discussion is behaving righteously even when one is in private and away from the observation of others. This muslim becomes fully aware that the divine vision is constantly observing their inner and outer being. This proves their sincerity towards Allah, the Exalted, as they behave righteously even when they are hidden from the sight of people. As these muslims have gained and acted on Islamic knowledge and strived in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, they have obtained excellence of faith. This is when one acts, such as offering the prayer, as if they can observe Allah, the Exalted, observing them. This has been discussed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 99. This prevents them from bothering about the sight of people, as they are too focused and vigilant over the divine vision. This sincerity is important to adopt so that one only acts to please Allah, the Exalted, and maintains their sincere obedience to Him even in private.

Strengthening Faith - 24

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1660, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, mentioned the most virtuous people. This is the one who sincerely strives in the way of Allah, the Exalted.

This includes striving against one's own evil desires and the evil desires of others and instead remaining firm on the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This includes fulfilling one's duties towards Allah, the Exalted, as described and one's duties towards people for example, striving in this material world in order to fulfill one's needs and the needs of their dependents without waste, excessiveness or extravagance. And it includes gently commanding good and forbidding evil according to Islamic knowledge. This will ensure one uses all the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. A muslim will not fulfill this Hadith until they fulfill both aspects of their duties.

Strengthening Faith - 25

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2324, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that the material world is like a prison for the believer and a Paradise for the non-believer.

Muslims have been commanded to live by a specific code namely, to fulfill the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refrain from His prohibitions and face destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This will ensure they use the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. This duty also includes treating the creation in a way one desires others to treat them. Because of this code, muslims are under constant supervision and fully believe that every deed is recorded and will be judged on the Day of Resurrection. Because of this fact a muslim rejects their evil and vain desires in order to please Allah, the Exalted. They continue in this way until they are released from this prison and reach the eternal bliss of the hereafter.

On the other hand, a non-muslim does not live by this code and instead indulges in their desires so this world becomes like a Paradise for them, whereby they use the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to themselves. But if they die in this state, the hereafter will become their eternal prison.

Therefore, a muslim should make their life easier by adhering to the rules of this world until they are released. But if they keep breaking them they will only face one hardship after another, just like a prisoner faces hardship if they keep breaking the rules of their prison.

But it is important to note, this does not mean a muslim's life is bad. It only means they are constantly being observed and must live by a code in order to succeed, they must use their blessings in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. The truth is that the one who obeys Allah, the Exalted, correctly will find peace of mind and body even if outwardly they appear to be in a difficulty. This is because Allah, the Exalted, the Controller of hearts, places contentment in their heart. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

This is directly opposite to those who use the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to themselves, those who outwardly appear to be enjoying the luxuries of the world but face anxiety, stress, depression and suicidal thoughts as they have obtained no peace of mind or body. A muslim should therefore never be fooled by outward appearances. Chapter 20 Taha, verse 124:

"And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed [i.e., difficult] life, and We will gather [i.e., raise] him on the Day of Resurrection blind."

Strengthening Faith - 26

In a Divine Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6833, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that the more one obeys Allah, the Exalted, which involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, the greater the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, they will receive. In each case, a muslim's minimal effort will lead to receiving a greater mercy. This mercy will ensure they are rightly guided through every situation they face so that they overcome them in order to obtain peace of mind, body and true lasting success in both worlds. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

But the one who holds back from the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, and instead uses the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to themselves, will not obtain this mercy and they therefore will not obtain right guidance during their life. Instead they will encounter one difficulty after another, one moment of darkness after another. Chapter 20 Taha, verse 124:

"And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed [i.e., difficult] life, and We will gather [i.e., raise] him on the Day of Resurrection blind."

Strengthening Faith - 27

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2451, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon, advised that a muslim cannot become pious until they avoid something which is not harmful to their religion out of caution that it will lead to something which is harmful.

Piety can be summed up to mean fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. It includes fulfilling the rights of people, which involves treating others how one desires to be treated by people.

An aspect of piety is to avoid things which are doubtful not just unlawful. This is because doubtful things take a muslim one step closer to the unlawful. The closer one is to the unlawful the easier it is to fall into it. It is why a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1205, advises that the one who avoids unlawful and doubtful things and only uses lawful things will protect their religion and honor.

If one observes those who have become misguided in society, in most cases, it occurred gradually, not in one sudden step. Meaning, the person first indulged in doubtful things before falling into the unlawful. This is the reason why Islam stresses the need to avoid unnecessary and vain things in one's life as they can lead them to the unlawful. For example, vain and useless speech meaning, speech which derives no

benefit nor is it a sin, often leads to evil speech, such as backbiting, lying and slander. If a person avoids the first step by not indulging in vain speech they would avoid evil speech. This process can be applied to all things which are vain, unnecessary and especially, doubtful. Therefore, a muslim should strive to adopt piety as described earlier, a branch of which is to avoid vain and doubtful things out of fear they will lead to the unlawful.

Strengthening Faith - 28

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2618, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that the difference between belief and disbelief is abandoning the obligatory prayers.

In this day and age this has become far too common. Many give up their obligatory prayers for trivial reasons, all of which are undoubtedly rejected. If the obligation of the prayer has not been removed for the one who is engaging in battle how can it be removed from anyone else? Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 102:

“And when you [i.e., the commander of an army] are among them and lead them in prayer, let a group of them stand [in prayer] with you and let them carry their arms. And when they have prostrated, let them be [in position] behind you and have the other group come forward which has not [yet] prayed and let them pray with you, taking precaution and carrying their arms...”

Neither is the traveller or the sick exempt from offering their obligatory prayers. The traveller has been advised to reduce the amount of cycles in some of the obligatory prayers in order to reduce the burden for them but they have not been exempt from offering them. Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 101:

“And when you travel throughout the land, there is no blame upon you for shortening the prayer...”

The sick have been advised to perform dry ablution if contact with water will harm them. Chapter 5 Al Ma'idah, verse 6:

“...But if you are ill or on a journey or one of you comes from the place of relieving himself or you have contacted women and do not find water, then seek clean earth and wipe over your faces and hands with it...”

In addition, the sick can perform the obligatory prayer in a way which is easier for them. Meaning, if they cannot stand, they are allowed to sit and if they cannot sit, they can lay down and offer the obligatory prayer. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 372. But again, no complete exemption is granted to the sick unless one is mentally ill which prevents them from comprehending the obligation of the prayer.

The other major issue is that some muslims delay their obligatory prayers and offer them beyond their correct times. This clearly contradicts the Holy Quran, as the believers have been described as those who offer their obligatory prayers on time. Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 103:

“...Indeed, prayer has been decreed upon the believers a decree of specified times.”

Many believe that the following verse of the Holy Quran refers to those who unnecessarily delay their obligatory prayers. This has been discussed in Tafseer Ibn Kathir, volume 10, pages 603-604. Chapter 107 Al Ma'un, verses 4-5:

“So woe to those who pray. [But] who are heedless of their prayer.”

Here Allah, the Exalted, has clearly cursed those who have adopted this evil trait. How can one find success in this world or the next if they have been removed from the mercy of Allah, the Exalted?

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, declared in a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 512, that delaying one's obligatory prayers unnecessarily is a sign of hypocrisy. The Holy Quran has made it clear that one of the main reasons people will enter Hell is failing to establish the obligatory prayers. Chapter 74 Al Muddaththir, verses 42-43:

“[And asking them], "What put you into Saqar?" They will say, "We were not of those who prayed.”

Abandoning the obligatory prayers is such a serious sin that the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, declared in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2621, that whoever commits this sin has disbelieved in Islam.

In addition, no other good deed will benefit a muslim until their obligatory prayers are not established. A Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 553, clearly warns that one's good deeds are destroyed if they miss the afternoon obligatory prayer. If this is the case for abandoning one obligatory prayer can one imagine the penalty of abandoning them all?

Observing the obligatory prayers at their correct times has been advised to be one of the most beloved deeds to Allah, the Exalted, in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 252. From this one can determine that delaying the obligatory prayers beyond their time or completely missing them is one of the most hated deeds by Allah, the Exalted.

It is an important duty for all elders to encourage the children under their care to offer the obligatory prayers from a young age so that they establish them before it becomes legally binding on them. Those adults that delay this and wait until their children are older, have failed in this extremely important duty. The children who were only encouraged to offer the obligatory prayers when it became obligatory on them very rarely established them quickly. In most cases, it takes years for them to fulfil this important duty correctly. And the blame falls on the elders of the family especially, the parents. This is why the Holy Prophet Muhammad,

peace and blessings be upon him, has advised in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 495, that families most encourage their children to offer the obligatory prayers when they turn seven years old.

Another major issue many muslims face is that they may offer the obligatory prayers but fail to do so correctly. For example, many do not complete the stages of the prayer correctly and instead rush through it. In fact, a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 757, clearly warns that the one who prays like this has not prayed at all. Meaning, they are not recorded as a person who offered their prayer and therefore their obligation has not been fulfilled. A Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 265, clearly warns that the prayer of the one who does not settle in each position of the prayer is not accepted.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, described the one who does not bow or prostrate correctly in the prayer as the worse thief. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Muwatta Malik, Book number 9, Hadith number 75. Unfortunately, many muslims who have spent decades offering their obligatory and many voluntary prayers like this, will find that none of them have counted and thus they will be treated as one who did not fulfil their obligation. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 1313.

The Holy Quran indicates the importance of offering the obligatory prayers with congregation, usually at a Mosque. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 43:

“...and bow with those who bow [in worship and obedience].”

In fact, due to this verse and Hadiths of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, some reliable scholars have declared this obligatory on muslim men. For example, one Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 550, clearly warns that the muslims who would not offer their obligatory prayers with congregation at the Mosque were considered hypocrites by the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them. In fact, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, even threatened to burn the houses of the men who failed to perform their obligatory prayers at the Mosque with congregation without a valid excuse. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 1482. Those muslims who are in a position to perform this important deed should do so. They should not fool themselves into claiming they are performing other righteous deeds, such as helping their family with house chores. Even though, this is a tradition of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, according to a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 676, but it is important not to rearrange the importance of his traditions according to one's desires. Whoever does this is not following his traditions, they are only following their own desires, even if they are performing a righteous deed. In fact, this same Hadith concludes by advising that when it was time for the obligatory prayer, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, would leave for the Mosque.

Finally, as warned by the main Hadith, the one who persists on abandoning the obligatory prayers may well find that they leave this world without their faith. In fact, they may well lose it during their life without even realizing it. One must never fool themselves into thinking it is acceptable to fail to support their verbal claim to faith with actions, such as the obligatory prayers. One must bear in mind that the very definition of Muslim, is the one who has practically and internally submitted

themselves to Allah, the Exalted. Therefore, there is no such thing as being a Muslim who does not practice Islam, as this attitude contradicts the definition of a Muslim. If a person does not fulfil the definition of a Muslim, how can they consider themselves as one?

Strengthening Faith - 29

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3371, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that supplication is the essence of worship.

This is because it is a practical demonstration of humility and one's servanthood to Allah, the Exalted, as it is befitting for the servant to ask from the Master.

It is important to know that according to a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3604, every good supplication is accepted in three ways. It is either fulfilled, the equivalent reward is given in the hereafter or an equivalent evil is removed from one's life.

In the following verse, Allah, the Exalted, guarantees a response to all those who perform supplication. Therefore, one should always bear this in mind and persist in supplications. Chapter 40 Ghafir, verse 60:

“And your Lord says, “Call upon Me; I will respond to you...”

Even before supplicating one should ensure their earnings are lawful and what they consume is lawful. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has clearly warned in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2989, that the supplication of a person who earns and consumes the unlawful will never be accepted.

The first etiquette of supplication is that one should try to face the Qibla when supplicating. This was the tradition of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. An example of this action is found in Sunan An Nasai, number 2899.

One should raise their hands begging Allah, the Exalted, to fulfill their desire, as this was the practice of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1030.

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3556, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that Allah, the Exalted, is too shy and generous to turn away a beggar empty handed who raises their hands to Him.

One should begin and conclude their supplication by first praising Allah, the Exalted, and then sending blessings upon the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 1481.

In fact, as mentioned in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 486, a person's supplication remains suspended between the Heavens and the Earth until they send blessings upon the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

One should praise Allah, the Exalted, with phrases mentioned in the Holy Quran or the Hadiths of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. The beautiful names of Allah, the Exalted, are found extensively throughout these divine teachings and should be utilised. For example, chapter 59 Al Hashr, verse 24:

"He is Allah, the Creator, the Producer, the Fashioner; to Him belong the best names..."

The best supplications are found in the Holy Quran and the Hadiths of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and therefore should be used. For example, chapter 14 Ibrahim, verse 41:

"Our Lord, forgive me and my parents and the believers the Day the account is established."

But it is absolutely acceptable to supplicate for specific things, as long as they are lawful.

As advised in the Holy Quran one should supplicate to Allah, the Exalted, with humility, hoping for His mercy and in fear of His greatness. Chapter 7 Al A'raf, verse 56:

“...And invoke Him in fear and aspiration...”

It is vital to supplicate with enthusiasm full well believing Allah, the Exalted, will fulfil one's needs. In addition, as advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3479, Allah, the Exalted, does not respond to someone who supplicates while heedless or distracted.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3505, that when the following verse of the Holy Quran is recited the supplication is always accepted. Chapter 21 Al Anbiya, verse 87:

“...There is no deity except You; exalted are You. Indeed, I have been of the wrongdoers.”

One should seal their supplication with the word, Ameen, as this ensures its acceptance. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 938.

After the supplication is concluded, it is a practice of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, to wipe one's hands over their face. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 1492.

Finally, one should be persistent in supplicating, as giving up is a hasty action which can lead to the supplication being unfulfilled. This warning is given in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3387.

One should make it a habit to remember Allah, the Exalted, in times of ease so that Allah, the Exalted, will help them in times of difficulty. This is advised in a Hadith found in Musnad Ahmad, number 2803. As advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3499, Allah, the Exalted, readily accepts the supplication made after the obligatory prayers and in the last part of the night. A Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6321, advises that in the last part of the night the divine descent occurs at which point Allah, the Exalted, calls out and responds to supplications. There is a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 521, which advises that the supplication between the two call to prayers is never rejected. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has declared that a muslim is closest to Allah, the Exalted, while they are prostrating and they should therefore supplicate to Him at this time. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 1138. As mentioned in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 1046, there is an hour during every Friday where Allah, the Exalted,

readily accepts supplications. When a fasting person breaks their fast their supplication is also accepted. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 1753. One should ask the sick to supplicate for them, as it has been advised in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 1441, that their supplications are like the supplications of the Angels. The supplication made when drinking Zamzam water is always accepted. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3062. A Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 2540, advises that the supplication at the time when it rains is accepted. A Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 1534, encourages people to supplicate for others in their absence, as they are readily accepted. If one is facing any form of oppression they should supplicate to Allah, the Exalted, as they will be accepted. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1905. This same Hadith advises that the supplication of the traveller is never rejected. Finally, one should encourage their parents to supplicate for them as they are readily accepted. This is supported by a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3862.

Some do not regularly supplicate to Allah, the Exalted, as they claim that He is All Aware and requires no one to inform Him of their desires. Even though this is a fact, it is better to supplicate, as this is the tradition of all the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them all, and has been advised in the Holy Quran. Chapter 40 Ghafir, verse 60:

“And your Lord says, “Call upon Me; I will respond to you.” Indeed, those who disdain My worship will enter Hell [rendered] contemptible.”

Supplicating is an excellent way to demonstrate one's humility and servanthood to Allah, the Exalted. In fact, as mentioned in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3370, nothing is more honourable to Allah, the Exalted, than supplication. Finally, Allah, the Exalted, becomes angry when a person does not supplicate to Him, as it may indicate they believe they are independent of Allah, the Exalted, which is not true. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3373.

Finally, one must always remember that the supplications found within the Holy Quran and the established traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, are secondary to actions. Meaning, the supplications are performed after an act of practical obedience. This indicates that supplications support actions. Therefore, supplications without the practical obedience of Allah, the Exalted, are unlikely to be fruitful. This was not the habit of the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, or the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them. Unfortunately, many Muslims have become excellent at making supplications but fail to practically obey Allah, the Exalted, which involves using the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Him. Even the main Hadith under discussion indicates the importance of practical worship, which is supported by supplications. Supplications cannot replace practical obedience, they instead support them. Both must be present in order to achieve peace and success in both worlds. Chapter 35 Fatir, verse 10:

"...To Him ascends good speech, and righteous work raises it..."

Strengthening Faith - 30

In a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4606, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that any matter which is not based on Islam will be rejected.

If muslims desire lasting success in both worldly and religious matters they must strictly adhere to the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Even though, certain actions which are not directly taken from these two sources of guidance can still be considered righteous deeds, it is important to prioritize these two sources of guidance over all else. In truth, the more one acts on things which are not taken from these two sources, even if they are righteous deeds, the less they will act on these two sources of guidance. An obvious example is how many muslims have adopted cultural practices into their lives which do not have a foundation in these two sources of guidance. Even if these cultural practices are not sins, they have preoccupied muslims from learning and acting on these two sources of guidance, as they feel satisfied with their behaviour. This leads to ignorance of the two sources of guidance, which in turn will only lead to misguidance.

This is why a muslim must learn and act on these two sources of guidance which have been established by the leaders of guidance and only then act on other voluntary righteous deeds if they have the time and energy to do so. But if they choose ignorance and fabricated practices, even if they are not sins, over learning and acting on these two sources of guidance they will not achieve success.

Finally, when one persists on doing deeds that are not directly connected to the two sources of guidance, due to ignorance, they will easily fall into practices and beliefs which contradict established Islamic knowledge. This takes the Muslim down the path of sins and misguidance while they think they are rightly guided. The one who knows they are lost is likely to accept and alter their direction when advised to by others. But the one who thinks they are on the correct path is highly unlikely to alter and correct their direction, even when they are warned by others who possess knowledge and clear evidence. The only way to avoid this outcome is to strive to gain and act on the knowledge found in the two sources of guidance and avoid other actions, even if they appear to be good deeds.

Strengthening Faith - 31

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1205, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that the lawful and unlawful have been made clear by Islam. In between them are doubtful things which should be avoided in order to protect one's faith and honor.

The vast majority of muslims are aware of the obligatory duties and the majority of unlawful things, such as drinking alcohol. So these create no doubt within muslims. Therefore, they should act according to their clear knowledge. Meaning, fulfil the obligatory duties and abstain from the unlawful according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. All other things which are not obligatory and create a doubt in society should therefore be avoided. Allah, the Exalted, will not question why someone did not perform a voluntary deed, instead He will ask why they performed a voluntary deed. Therefore, leaving the voluntary action will have no consequences in the hereafter whereas performing a voluntary deed will namely, punishment, reward or forgiveness. It is important for muslims to act on this short but extremely important Hadith as it will solve and prevent many problems and debates. It is important to understand that when one indulges in doubtful or even vain things it will take them one step closer to the unlawful. For example, sinful speech is often preceded by vain and useless speech. Therefore, it is much safer for a muslim's faith and honor to avoid doubtful and vain things.

This Hadith also indicates the importance of adhering to the basic and clear teachings of Islam while avoiding things which have not been

clarified nor discussed in the two sources of guidance: the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. If these issues were important, they would have been discussed in the two sources of guidance. Unfortunately, many Muslims concentrate so much on debating on side issues, issues which will not be questioned about on Judgement Day, that they distract themselves and others from those things which Allah, the Exalted, will question them about. This attitude must be avoided.

Strengthening Faith - 32

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 7400, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that the one who continues worshipping Allah, the Exalted, during widespread turmoil and seditions is like the one who has emigrated to the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, during his lifetime.

The reward of emigrating to the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, during his life time was a great deed. In fact, it erased all of one's previous sins, according to a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 321.

Worshipping Allah, the Exalted, means to continue sincerely obeying Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and being patient with destiny according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This ensures one continues to use the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted.

It is obvious that the time mentioned in this Hadith has arrived. It has become very easy to become misguided from the teachings of Islam as worldly desires have opened up for the muslim nation. Due to advancements in social media, fashion and culture it has become easier for Muslims to falsely believe peace of mind lies in misusing the blessings they have been granted. It has become easier to adopt the

mentality of following the majority, who have reduced faith to empty practices which have no bearing on how one practically uses the blessings they have been granted. Wishful thinking in Allah, the Exalted, has become widespread amongst the Muslim nation whereby they ignore the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, yet expect peace and salvation in both worlds. What was considered deviant behaviour by any sensible person has become something people are being urged to embrace. Turning away from all of this misguidance will be difficult and even one's family and friends will criticize them for holding on to the teachings of Islam instead of following the majority. But if one persists Allah, the Exalted, will replace any losses they suffer, such as the loss of love and respect from friends and relatives, with something much superior, namely, peace of mind and body. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

And what Allah, the Exalted, has reserved for them in the hereafter is much greater. On the other hand, those who turn away from the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted, thereby misusing the blessings they have been granted, will find that all their worldly relationships and blessings become a source of stress and curse for them in this world. And what they receive in the hereafter will be far worse. Chapter 20 Taha, verses 124-126:

"And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed [i.e., difficult] life, and We will gather [i.e., raise] him on the Day of Resurrection blind." He will say, "My Lord, why have you raised me blind while I was [once] seeing?" [Allāh] will say, "Thus did Our signs come to you, and you forgot [i.e., disregarded] them; and thus will you this Day be forgotten.""

Therefore, muslims should not get distracted by the worldly desires which have become widespread and avoid controversial issues and people and instead remain obedient to Allah, the Exalted, in every aspect of their life, if they desire to obtain the reward mentioned in this Hadith.

Strengthening Faith - 33

In a Divine Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1145, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that Allah, the Exalted, descends every night to the nearest Heaven according to His infinite majesty and invites people to ask Him to fulfill their needs so that He can fulfill them.

Voluntary night time worship proves one's sincerity towards Allah, the Exalted, as no other eyes are watching them. Offering it is a means to having an intimate conversation with Allah, the Exalted, and it is a sign of one's servanthood to Him. It has countless virtues, for example, a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 1614, advises that it is the best voluntary prayer.

No one will have a rank higher on Judgment Day or in Paradise than the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and this rank has been directly connected to the voluntary night prayer. This shows that those who establish the night voluntary prayer will be blessed with the highest ranks in both worlds. Chapter 17 Al Isra, verse 79:

“And from [part of] the night, pray with it [i.e., recitation of the Quran] as additional [worship] for you; it is expected that your Lord will resurrect you to a praised station.”

A Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3579, advises that a muslim is closest to Allah, the Exalted, in the last part of the night. Therefore, one can derive countless blessings if they remember Allah, the Exalted, at this time.

All muslims desire their supplications to be answered and their needs to be fulfilled. Therefore, they should strive to offer the voluntary night prayer as a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 1770, advises that there is a special hour in every night when good supplications are always answered.

Establishing the voluntary night prayer is an excellent way to prevent one from committing sins, it helps a person to stay away from pointless social gatherings and it protects a person from many physical illnesses. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3549.

One should prepare for the voluntary night prayer by not over eating or drinking especially, before bed, as it induces laziness. One should not unnecessarily tire themselves out during the day. A short nap during the day can help with this. Finally, one should avoid sins and strive to obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, as the obedient find it easier to offer the voluntary night prayer.

Finally, the main Hadith also indicates the importance of never giving up hope as the door to repentance and success is always open. People are given opportunity every day and night to return to sincerely obeying Allah, the Exalted, so that they can find peace and success in both worlds. One should appreciate the great mercy Allah, the Exalted, shows, as He is not in need of the creation yet invites them to Himself so that they can succeed. One must take these opportunities before their time runs out and they are left with nothing except regrets.

Strengthening Faith - 34

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 52, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that if one's spiritual heart is sound the whole body will become sound but if their spiritual heart is corrupt, then the whole body will become corrupt.

First of all, this Hadith refutes the foolish belief where one claims to have a purified heart even though their speech and actions are bad. This is because what is inside will eventually manifest outwardly.

The purification of the spiritual heart is only possible when one eliminates evil characteristics from themselves and replaces them with good characteristics discussed in Islamic teachings. This is only possible when one learns and acts on Islamic teachings so that they can sincerely fulfill the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refrain from His prohibitions and face destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Behaving in this manner will lead to a purified spiritual heart. This purification will then reflect in the outward limbs of the body, such as one's tongue and eyes. Meaning, they will only use their blessings in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. This is in fact a sign showing the love Allah, the Exalted, has for His righteous servant, according to a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6502.

It is important to note, that this purification will guide one through all worldly difficulties successfully so that they achieve peace and success in both worldly and religious matters. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

On the other hand, when one abandons learning and acting on Islamic knowledge, they will adopt the bad characteristics which are advocated by society, social media, culture and fashion. These bad characteristics will encourage them to misuse the blessings they have been granted. This in turn leads to stress and difficulties in both worlds. Chapter 20 Taha, verses 124-126:

"And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed [i.e., difficult] life, and We will gather [i.e., raise] him on the Day of Resurrection blind." He will say, "My Lord, why have you raised me blind while I was [once] seeing?" [Allāh] will say, "Thus did Our signs come to you, and you forgot [i.e., disregarded] them; and thus will you this Day be forgotten."

And chapter 26 Ash Shu'ara, verses 88-89:

"The Day when there will not benefit [anyone] wealth or children. But only one who comes to Allāh with a sound heart."

Strengthening Faith - 35

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 528, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that the five obligatory prayers erase one's sins just like taking a bath five times a day would clean the body from dirt.

The first thing to note is that this Hadith refers to minor sins only, as major sins require sincere repentance. Sincere repentance involves feeling remorse, seeking the forgiveness of Allah, the Exalted, and those who have been wronged, as long as this does not lead to further problems, promising not to commit the same or similar sin again and making up for any rights which have been violated in respect to Allah, the Exalted, and people.

In addition, it is important for muslims to not only purify their outer beings of minor sins, by establishing the five obligatory prayers, but also fulfill the other aspect of purification namely, inner purification. This is indicated by the fact that the five obligatory prayers were spread across the day instead of being put together. Meaning, a muslim should repeatedly inwardly turn to Allah, the Exalted, throughout the day just like their body turns to Allah, the Exalted, five times a day through the obligatory prayers. This inner purification involves correcting one's intention so that they only perform actions in order to please Allah, the Exalted. This is the foundation of Islam and is what Allah, the Exalted, assesses when judging an action. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1. Those who act for the sake of other people will be told to gain their reward from them on Judgment Day,

which will not be possible. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3154.

Finally, this inner purification includes learning and acting on the teachings of Islam so that one removes the bad characteristics they possess, such as envy, and instead adopts good characteristics, such as patience. The outer purification is important but if a muslim desires to achieve success and overcome all difficulties in both worlds they must purify their inner being as well as their outer being. Inner purification will ensure one speaks and acts in the correct way. It will ensure they use every blessing they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. It will ensure they fulfil the rights of Allah, the Exalted, and people. This leads to peace of mind and success in both worlds. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

On the other hand, avoiding inner purification will prevent one from using the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, even if they fulfill the basic obligatory duties of Islam. It will hinder them from fulfilling all the rights of Allah, the Exalted, and especially the rights of people. This will lead to a difficult and stressful life in both worlds. Chapter 20 Taha, verse 124:

"And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed [i.e., difficult] life..."

Strengthening Faith - 36

In a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4119, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that the best people are those who remind others of Allah, the Exalted, when they are observed.

This does not refer to those who adopt an Islamic outward appearance, such as growing a beard or wearing a scarf, as many of these people do not remind others of Allah, the Exalted, at all. This Hadith refers to those who learn and act on Islamic knowledge so that they sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This leads to the purification of one's heart which leads to the purification of their outward limbs. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3984. This will cause others to remember Allah, the Exalted, when they observe the actions of these righteous muslims, as they use the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, instead of in ways pleasing to themselves and others. And this remembrance will only increase when these righteous muslims speak, as they only speak in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, meaning, they avoid evil and vain speech and only speak on beneficial matters in respect to the world and the hereafter. They love, dislike, give and withhold only for the sake of Allah, the Exalted. This leads to perfecting one's faith according to a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4681.

Strengthening Faith - 37

In a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 2511, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned of behaving cowardly. This attitude prevents trust in Allah, the Exalted, and in what He has promised, such as one's guaranteed provision. It can cause one to seek their provision in doubtful and unlawful means, which will destroy a person in both worlds. Allah, the Exalted, does not accept any deed which has a foundation in the unlawful. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 2342. Just like the inward foundation of Islam is one's intention, similarly the outward foundation of Islam is obtaining and utilising the lawful.

In addition, being a coward prevents one from striving against the Devil and one's inner Devil which requires genuine struggle. This will lead one to fail in obeying Allah, the Exalted, which involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. And it will therefore prevent them from fulfilling the rights of people. Both worldly and religious success requires effort and time. A coward will be too afraid to undertake this struggle and will instead be lazy which leads to failure in both worldly and religious matters.

In addition, a coward will easily claim they are trying their best in obeying Allah, the Exalted, while they are hardly putting in any effort. They claim this even though the Holy Quran makes it clear that if a person tries their best and acts according to their potential they will correctly fulfil the rights of Allah, the Exalted, and people. This is because Allah, the

Exalted, never gives duties to a person which are beyond their capacity to fulfil. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 286.

"Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity..."

Cowardice will also encourage one to aim for the minimum in both religious and worldly matters. They will refrain from fulfilling their potential, as this requires genuine effort. This attitude will only lead to stress and regrets in both worlds.

Strengthening Faith - 38

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1999, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that Allah, the Exalted, loves beauty.

Islam does not prohibit a muslim from dedicating energy, time and money in beautifying themselves, as this can be considered fulfilling the rights of their body. This has been commanded in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 5199. But the key thing which differentiates acting in this manner to acting in a disliked or even sinful manner is when one is excessive, wasteful or extravagant when beautifying themselves. A good way to determine this is that beautifying oneself should never cause one to neglect fulfilling one's duty to Allah, the Exalted, or people, which is not possible to fulfill without gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge. Nor should beautifying oneself prevent them from using the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. And in reality correcting one's physical appearance so that they appear clean and smart is not expensive nor does it take much time or effort.

This beautifying attitude applies to all things, such as one's home. As long as one avoids extravagance and waste and continues to use the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, they are free to make things comfortable for themselves in a moderate manner.

In addition, it is more important to understand that true beauty which Allah, the Exalted, loves is connected to internal beauty meaning, one's character. This beauty will endure in both worlds whereas one's outer beauty will eventually fade away with the passing of time. One should therefore prioritize obtaining this true beauty over external beauty by striving to gain and act on Islamic knowledge so that they eliminate any bad traits, such as envy, from their character and adopt good characteristics, such as generosity. This will aid one in fulfilling the rights of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and will aid them in fulfilling the rights of people, which includes treating others in a way one wishes people to treat them.

Strengthening Faith - 39

In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2347, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that his true friend is the one who possesses the following characteristics.

One of these characteristics is that they have a good share in the prayer. This means they establish their obligatory prayers by fulfilling them correctly with all their conditions and etiquettes, such as offering them on time. This also includes establishing the voluntary prayers which are based on the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, such as the voluntary night prayer. This is in fact the best prayer after the obligatory prayers according to a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 1614. A good share in the prayer also includes offering the obligatory prayers with the congregation at a Mosque when possible. It is sad to see how many Muslims live in proximity of a Mosque yet still do not join the congregation, even when they are free from work.

The next thing characteristic mentioned in the main Hadith under discussion is that this muslim obeys Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in public and in private. Doing so in private indicates a person's sincerity to Allah, the Exalted, meaning, they only perform righteous deeds for His sake. This is the one who firmly remembers that no matter where they are, the inner and outer aspects of their being is constantly being observed by Allah, the Exalted. If one persists on this belief they will adopt excellence of faith, which is

mentioned in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 99. It means they act, such as performing the prayer, as if they can observe Allah, the Exalted, watching them. This attitude encourages righteous deeds and prevents sins.

Strengthening Faith - 40

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 2736, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that whoever knows the ninety nine names of Allah, the Exalted, will enter Paradise.

Knowing does not only refer to memorizing them. It actually means to study them and act on them according to one's status and potential. For example, Allah, the Exalted, is the Most Merciful according to His infinite status. This attribute means that Allah, the Exalted, bestows countless favors on the creation and is always extremely kind to them. This same characteristic has been attributed to others, such as the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 9 At Tawbah, verse 128:

“There has certainly come to you a Messenger from among yourselves. Grievous to him is what you suffer; [he is] concerned over you [i.e., your guidance] and to the believers is kind and merciful.”

When used in reference to the creation, merciful means soft-hearted and compassionate. Similarly, Allah, the Exalted, is All Forgiving according to His infinite status. And adopting this attribute by forgiving others, for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, is something which has been encouraged in Islam. Chapter 24 An Nur, verse 22:

“...and let them pardon and overlook. Would you not like that Allah should forgive you?...”

So the divine attributes of Allah, the Exalted, can be adopted by muslims according to their status and potential.

Therefore, muslims must first understand the meaning of the divine attributes and names and then adopt the meaning of the names in their character through action, until they become firmly rooted into their spiritual heart so that they can achieve noble character. This noble character will ensure they use the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as outlined in the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This leads to peace and success in both worlds. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

Strengthening Faith - 41

In a long divine Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 7405, Allah, the Exalted, advises that He is with anyone who remembers Him.

With the rise of mental problems and disorders, such as depression, it is vital for muslims to understand the importance of this declaration. There is a small chance of a person experiencing a mental issue when they are constantly surrounded and aided by someone that truly loves them. If this is true for a person it is undoubtedly more befitting for Allah, the Exalted, who has promised to be with the one who remembers Him. Acting on this declaration alone would eliminate mental issues, such as depression. It is the reason why being secluded from others or being amongst others did not affect the mental state of the righteous predecessors as they were always in the company of Allah, the Exalted. It is obvious that when one obtains the company of Allah, the Exalted, they will overcome all obstacles and difficulties successfully until they reach His proximity in the hereafter.

In addition, out of His infinite mercy Allah, the Exalted, has not restricted this declaration in any way. For example, He did not declare He was only with the righteous or with those who perform specific good deeds. He in fact, encompassed every muslim irrespective of the strength of their faith or how many sins they have committed. Therefore, a muslim should never lose hope in the mercy of Allah, the Exalted. But it is important to note the condition mentioned in this Hadith namely, to remember Allah, the Exalted. This remembrance includes correcting one's intention so that they only act to please Allah, the Exalted, and therefore do not expect nor hope for any gratitude from people.

Remembrance with the tongue involves speaking what is good or remaining silent. And the highest level of remembrance is to use the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This is the true remembrance of Allah, the Exalted. The one who behaves in such a manner will be blessed with the company and support of Allah, the Exalted.

Simply put, the more one obeys and remembers Allah, the Exalted, the more they will receive His company. What one gives is what they shall receive.

The next thing mentioned in the main Hadith under discussion is that whoever remembers Allah, the Exalted, privately will be remembered by Him privately. And whoever remembers Allah, the Exalted, publicly meaning, in a gathering, will be remembered by Allah, the Exalted, in a better gathering meaning, amongst the Heavenly Angels.

This like many other examples found within the Holy Quran and the Hadiths of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, indicates a basic teaching of Islam namely, what one gives is what they shall receive. Another example, which confirms this Hadith is found in chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 152:

“So remember Me; I will remember you...”

A Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1924, advises that the one who shows mercy to the creation will be shown mercy by the Creator. Generally speaking, in this material world a person receives things according to their efforts. Yet, strangely some expect to obtain the high ranks of Paradise without any effort. These teachings clearly show that a muslim will receive blessings and mercy based on their efforts. The more obedient they are to Allah, the Exalted, as outlined earlier, the more they will receive in return. There is no doubt that Allah, the Exalted, can give whatever He wants to whomever He wants irrespective of how much or little they strive in His obedience but Allah, the Exalted, has set up a system which must be followed namely, striving in His obedience in order to obtain more blessings and mercy. Therefore, each muslim must reflect and decide how much mercy and blessings of Allah, the Exalted, they desire and then strive in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, accordingly.

This reality is clearly described in the final part of this Hadith where Allah, the Exalted, indicates that the more one strives in achieving His proximity, through His sincere obedience, the more of His mercy they shall receive.

Strengthening Faith - 42

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6412, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that there are two blessings people often do not appreciate until they lose them namely, good health and free time.

Good health is a special blessing as it allows a person to take advantage of gaining other blessings related to the world and religion. One of the wisdoms behind minor illnesses is that they should inspire a muslim to be grateful for good health. True gratitude is when one uses the blessings they possess, in this case good health, in the correct way as prescribed by Islam. One should observe those who have lost their good health either through sickness or through ageing and therefore make use of the good health they possess by striving to gain success in worldly and religious matters while giving priority to religion over the material world. For example, one should use their good health to journey to the Mosques in order to offer their prayers with congregation before a time comes when they desire to do this but do not possess the physical strength to do so. They should keep voluntary fasts, especially during the short days of winter, before they lose their good health. They should strive to offer the voluntary night prayer regularly, as it is the best voluntary prayer according to a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 1614.

The amazing thing about utilizing one's health correctly is that when they eventually lose it, Allah, the Exalted, will continue to grant them the same reward they used to receive when doing good deeds during their good health. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Imam Bukhari's,

Adab Al Mufrad, number 500. But those who live in heedlessness will fail to utilize their good health and therefore receive no reward during their good health or when they fall sick.

One aspect of appreciating and showing true gratitude for good health is to help those who have lost their good health according to one's means, such as emotional or financial help. It is important to regularly ponder over the sick, as this will inspire one to use their good health correctly.

Finally, those who utilize their good health correctly will be supported by Allah, the Exalted, during their periods of sickness. Whereas, those who do not, will not receive this support and will therefore become impatient when facing sickness. This negative attitude will only lead to further trouble for them and cause them to lose out on much reward.

Everything in this material can be bought, even through illegal means, except time. It is the single blessing which does not return after it leaves a person. Even though this reality is not denied by anyone irrespective of their faith yet, many muslims do not appreciate and make good use of the time they have been given. Many have adopted the mentality that they will prepare for the hereafter tomorrow. But as each day passes this tomorrow keeps getting delayed until, in many cases, this tomorrow never comes. And they only realize this tomorrow when it is too late meaning, at the time of their death. Those who are fortunate enough to reach this tomorrow during their lives may inhabit the Mosques when they reach elderly age but as they have dedicated so much time and energy to the material world their bodies might be in Mosques yet, their hearts and tongues are still engrossed in the material world. This is obvious to those who regularly attend Mosques. These muslims are

unlikely to learn and act on Islamic teachings because of their elderly age and their worldly mentalities. So they may attend the Mosques yet continue to misuse the blessings they have been granted.

In addition, with the passing of time, in most cases, one's responsibilities only increase, such as marriage and raising children. So delaying preparing for the hereafter until one is supposedly more free is simply foolish. Islam does not teach muslims to abandon the world but it does encourage them to make correct use of their time, by taking enough from the material world in order to fulfil their necessitates and responsibilities without extravagance or waste and then dedicate the rest of their efforts to preparing for the permanent hereafter. They should minimize using their time on sinful and vain things, things which will not benefit them in this world or the next, and dedicate more of their time and resources to those things which will benefit them in both worlds. This is how one uses their time correctly. How many muslims can honestly say they dedicate the majority of their efforts to preparing for the eternal hereafter over beautifying their temporal world?

Strengthening Faith - 43

In a long Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2616, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, described some important deeds which muslims must strive to perform. The Holy Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, described fasting as a shield. In another Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 1639, he explains this further by advising that fasting is a shield against fire just like a shield protects a person in a fight.

This could mean that fasting is a protection against the fire of difficulties one faces in this world and the fire of Hell they will encounter in the next. In addition, fasting is a shield against the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted, as the Holy Quran has declared fasting a means to obtaining righteousness and an aspect of this is refraining from the disobedience Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 183:

“O you who have believed, decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you that you may become righteous.”

But it is important to note, fasting acts as a shield as long as one does not damage their fast through evil speech or actions. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 2235. It is why the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has warned the fasting person not to behave indecently or quarrel with others in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1894.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has warned in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 707, that Allah, the Exalted, does not desire one to leave their food and drink if they fail to abstain from foul speech and actions. This behaviour clearly contradicts the aim of fasting. In reality, a fast should affect every organ of one's body, not just their stomach, by safeguarding them from sins.

A muslim should therefore fulfil all the etiquettes and conditions of a fast by fulfilling their duties and abstaining from sins so that they can implement this behaviour all year round, even when they are not fasting. This is a real fast which leads to piety and a protection from the difficulties of this world and the fire of Hell in the next.

The next thing mentioned in the main Hadith highlights the importance of the voluntary night prayer. This Hadith indicates that it erases sins just like charity does.

The voluntary night prayer has countless virtues for example, a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 1614, declares that it is the best voluntary prayer. The night is when Allah, the Exalted, descends to the Heavens of this world, according to His infinite dignity, and invites people towards His forgiveness and mercy. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6321.

No one will have a rank higher on Judgment Day or in Paradise than the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and this rank has been directly connected to the night prayer. This shows that those who establish the night voluntary prayer will be blessed with the highest ranks in both worlds. Chapter 17 Al Isra, verse 79:

“And from [part of] the night, pray with it [i.e., recitation of the Qurān] as additional [worship] for you; it is expected that your Lord will resurrect you to a praised station.”

All muslims desire their supplications to be answered and their needs to be fulfilled. Therefore, they should strive to offer the voluntary night prayer as the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has advised in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 1770, that there is a special hour in every night when good supplications are always answered.

Establishing the night prayer is an excellent way to prevent one from committing sins, as it helps them to avoid pointless social gatherings and it protects one from many physical illnesses also. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3549.

One should prepare for the night prayer by not over eating or drinking, especially before bed, as it induces laziness. One should not unnecessarily tire themselves during the day. A short nap during the day can help with this. Finally, one should strive to obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing

destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, as the obedient find it easier to offer the voluntary night prayer.

Another thing mentioned in the main Hadith under discussion is that the central pillar of Islam is establishing the obligatory prayers.

Establishing the obligatory prayers means to fulfil all its etiquettes and conditions correctly, such as offering them on time. It is the most important obligatory duty on each muslim and without it success in this world or the next is virtually unobtainable. This has been made clear in many verses and Hadiths of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, such as the one found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2618. It clearly warns that establishing the prayers separates belief from disbelief. Those who fail to establish the prayers are at risk of leaving this world without their faith, which is the greatest loss. As Allah, the Exalted, does not burden a person beyond their limits, no muslim has an excuse for not establishing their prayers. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 286:

“Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity...”

Failing to establish the obligatory prayers while claiming to try one's best contradicts this truth. And there is no doubt that the Holy Quran is the truth.

As the obligatory prayers are the central pillar of Islam, it indicates that if one fails to establish them their house of Islam will collapse, irrespective of what other good deeds they do. The obligatory prayers cannot be replaced by any other deed or internal belief. In fact, the obligatory prayers are the most important practical proof of one's internal belief. Without this practical proof one is unlikely to obtain success in this world or the next. Chapter 20 Taha, verse 14:

"...establish prayer for My remembrance."

And chapter 20 Taha, verses 124-126:

"And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed [i.e., difficult] life, and We will gather [i.e., raise] him on the Day of Resurrection blind." He will say, "My Lord, why have you raised me blind while I was [once] seeing?" [Allāh] will say, "Thus did Our signs come to you, and you forgot [i.e., disregarded] them; and thus will you this Day be forgotten.""

Strengthening Faith - 44

I had a thought which I wanted to share. I was pondering over the verse of the Holy Quran found in chapter 47 Muhammad, verse 7:

“O you who have believed, if you support Allah, He will support you and plant firmly your feet.”

This verse means that if one aids Islam then Allah, the Exalted, will help them in both worlds. It is strange how countless people desire the help of Allah, the Exalted, yet do not fulfil the first part of this verse through the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience. The excuse most people give is that they do not have time to perform righteous deeds. They desire the help of Allah, the Exalted, yet will not make time to do the things which please Him. Does this make sense? Those who do not fulfil the obligatory duties and then expect the aid of Allah, the Exalted, in their moment of need are quite foolish. And those who do fulfil the obligatory duties yet refuse to go beyond them will find that the aid they receive is limited. How one behaves is how they are treated. The more time and energy dedicated to Allah, the Exalted, the more support they will receive. It really is that simple.

A Muslim needs to understand that the majority of the obligatory duties, such as the five daily prayers, only takes a small amount of time in one's day. A Muslim cannot expect to barely dedicate an hour a day to offering the obligatory prayers and then neglect Allah, the Exalted, for the rest of the day and still expect His continuous support through all difficulties. A person would dislike a friend who treated them in such a manner. How then can one treat Allah, the Exalted, the Lord of the worlds, like this then?

Some only dedicate extra time to pleasing Allah, the Exalted, when they encounter a worldly problem then demand Him to fix it as if they done Allah, the Exalted, a favour by performing voluntary good deeds. This foolish mentality clearly contradicts servanthood to Allah, the Exalted. It is amazing how this type of person finds time to do all their other leisurely activities, such as spending time with family and friends, watching TV and attending social functions yet finds no time to dedicate to pleasing Allah, the Exalted. They cannot seem to find time to recite and adopt the teachings of the Holy Quran. They do not seem to find time to study and act on the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. These people somehow find wealth to spend on their unnecessary luxuries yet seem to find no wealth to donate in voluntary charity.

It is important to understand that a Muslim will be treated according to how they behave. Meaning, if a Muslim dedicates extra time to please Allah, the Exalted, then they will find the support they need to journey through all difficulties safely. But if they fail to fulfil the obligatory duties or only fulfil them without dedicating any other time to pleasing Allah, the Exalted, then they will find a similar response from Allah, the Exalted. Put simply, the

more one gives the more they shall receive. If one does not give much they should not expect much in return.

Strengthening Faith - 45

I had a thought which I wanted to share. I was pondering over the Companions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, may Allah be pleased with them, and what made them the best group ever created after the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them. The fact they physically observed the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, during his lifetime is definitely one factor. But anyone who knows about their life and their righteous deeds understands that their superiority is due to more than just this unique and great deed.

One of the main reasons for their superiority is shown in a Hadith involving the Companion Abdullah Bin Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, which is found in Sahih Muslim, number 6515. Ibn Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, was once riding on his conveyance in the desert when he came across a Bedouin. Ibn Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, greeted the Bedouin, placed his turban on the Bedouin's head and insisted that the Bedouin ride on his conveyance. Ibn Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, was told that the greeting he gave the Bedouin was more than enough as the Bedouin would have been greatly pleased at the fact that the great Companion of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, may Allah be pleased with him, greeted him. Yet, Ibn Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, went much further than this and showed the Bedouin great respect. Ibn Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, replied that he only did this because the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, once advised that one of the best ways a person can honour their parent is by showing love and respect to their parent's relatives and friends. Ibn Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, added that the Bedouin's father was a friend of his father

the Commander of the Faithful, Umar Bin Khataab, may Allah be pleased with him.

This incident indicates the superiority of the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them. They completely submitted to the teachings of Islam. They not only fulfilled the obligatory duties and avoided all sins but completely fulfilled all acts which were recommended to them to the highest possible degree. Their submission caused them to put aside their own desires and only act to please Allah, the Exalted. Ibn Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, could have easily ignored the Bedouin as none of the actions he done were obligatory yet, unlike many Muslims who would use this excuse, he completely submitted to the teachings of Islam and acted the way he did.

It is the lack of submission to the teachings of Islam which has weakened the faith of Muslims. Some only fulfil the obligatory duties and turn away from other righteous deeds, such as voluntary charity, which contradict their desires by claiming the actions are not obligatory. All Muslims desire to end up with the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and his Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, in the hereafter. But how is this possible if they do not follow their path or way? If a Muslim follows a path other than theirs then how can they end up with them? To end up with them one must follow their path. But this is only possible if one completely submits to the teachings of Islam like they did instead of cherry picking the deeds which suit their desires.

Strengthening Faith - 46

I had a thought which I wanted to share. I was pondering over the following verse of the Holy Quran: Chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 53:

“We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth...”

All Muslims have faith in Islam but the strength of their faith varies from person to person. For example, the one who follows the teachings of Islam because their family told them to is not the same as the one who believes in it through evidence. A person who has heard about something will not believe in it in the same way as the one who has witnessed the thing with their own eyes.

As confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224, gaining useful knowledge is a duty on all Muslims. One of the reasons for this is that it is the best way a Muslim can strengthen their faith in Islam. This is important to pursue as the stronger one's certainty of faith the greater the chance they will remain steadfast on the correct path, especially when facing difficulties. In addition, having certainty of faith has been described as one of the best things one can possess in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3849. This knowledge should be obtained by studying the

Holy Quran and the Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, through a reliable source.

Allah, the Exalted, did not only declare a truth in the Holy Quran but He also provided evidence for it through examples. Not only examples which are to be found in the past nations but examples which have been placed in one's very own life. For example, in the Holy Quran Allah, the Exalted, advises that sometimes a person loves a thing even though it will cause them trouble if they obtained it. Similarly, they might hate a thing while there is much hidden good in it for them. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

There are many examples of this truth in history such as the Pact of Hudaiba. Some Muslims believed this pact, which was made with the non-Muslims of Mecca, would completely favour the latter group. Yet, history clearly shows that it favoured Islam and the Muslims. This event is discussed in the Hadiths found in Sahih Bukhari, numbers 2731 and 2732.

If one reflects on their own life they will find many examples when they believed something was good when it was actually bad for them and vice versa. These examples prove the authenticity of this verse and help one's faith strengthen.

Another example is found in chapter 79 An Naziat, verse 46:

“It will be, on the Day they see it (Judgement Day) as though they had not remained [in the world] except for an afternoon or a morning thereof.”

If one turns the pages of history they will clearly observe how great empires came and went. But when they left they passed away in such a way as if they were only on Earth for a moment. All but a few of their signs have faded away as if they were never present on Earth in the first place. Similarly, when one reflects on their own life they will realise that no matter how old they are and no matter how slow certain days might have felt overall their life so far has passed in a flash. Understanding the truthfulness of this verse strengthens one's certainty of faith and this inspires them to prepare for the hereafter before their time runs out.

The Holy Quran and the Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, are full of such examples. Therefore, one should strive to learn and act on these divine teachings so that they adopt certainty of faith. The one who achieves this will not be shaken by any difficulty they face and will remain steadfast on the path which leads to the gates of Paradise.

Strengthening Faith - 47

I had a thought which I wanted to share. There are many Muslims who desire lawful things, such as a child and instead of being content with what Allah, the Exalted, chose for them they instead pursue their desires in lawful ways such as spiritual exercises based on the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, which is obviously permissible in Islam. Yet, after all this effort and stress they do not understand nor act on a simple but profound teaching of Islam which would aid them in their quest. In fact, they often act in certain ways which only reduces the chances of their request being fulfilled. For example, a Muslim does not need to be a scholar to understand that it is less likely for a Muslim to obtain what they desire if the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, is removed from them. For Example, this can occur when one lies in order to make others laugh. In fact, this person has been cursed three times in one Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2315. A curse results in the removal of the mercy of Allah, the Exalted. Some of these Muslims who desperately desire things from Allah, the Exalted, also backbite and slander others. This also leads to the removal of the mercy of Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 104 Al Humazah, verse 1:

“Woe to every slanderer and backbiter.”

There are many other examples which lead to the removal of the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, which in turn dramatically reduces the chances of one's request being fulfilled. Muslims should therefore act on this important

principle by seeking and acting on knowledge before seeking other means such as spiritual exercises in order to fulfil their lawful desires as these things will not aid them in fulfilling their requests until they correct their behaviour.

Strengthening Faith - 48

I had a thought which I wanted to share. I was pondering over a powerful weapon and trap of the Devil which can affect every Muslim irrespective of the strength of their faith. The Devil tries to convince Muslims to always observe those who are worse than them in behaviour in order to justify their lack of striving in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, and improving their character and behaviour for the better. For example, a Muslim who offers their obligatory prayers once in a while will observe someone who does not pray at all in order to make themselves feel better. A thief will look at a murderer and convince themselves stealing is not so bad. The examples are endless. It is very strange how these Muslims so easily observe those who appear worse than them in order to justify their lack of effort in obeying Allah, the Exalted, but these same people will not observe those who are in a worse off position than them when they face difficulties. For example, the person who suffers from back pain will not observe the one who is physically disabled so that it prevents them from complaining. This attitude has specifically been advised by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2513.

In addition, if observing those who appear worse in their behaviour does not save one from punishment in a worldly court, such as a thief being pardoned by a judge because there are many murderers in the world, how can one imagine this excuse will hold up in the court of Allah, the Exalted?

Muslims should therefore avoid this trap of the Devil by observing those who appear better than them so that they are inspired to improve their character and behaviour progressively for the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted. This is what Allah, the Exalted, demands meaning, He does not demand perfection.

Strengthening Faith - 49

I had a thought which I wanted to share. Muslims often question how they can mould their life to fit their faith instead of moulding their faith in order to fit their worldly life. One of the ways of achieving this is by always performing the obligatory prayers as soon as they occur for women and to offer the obligatory prayers at the Mosques for men. As establishing the prayers is the main pillar of Islam, which has been advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2616, when one performs it as described it forces them to arrange their worldly activities so that they fit around their obligatory prayers. Whereas, when one either offers their obligatory prayers late or at home instead of the Mosque it becomes easy to fit the obligatory prayers around one's worldly time table which in turn causes them to mould their faith around their worldly life. The correct attitude will also prevent one from indulging in unnecessary and vain activities, such as visiting the shopping centres unnecessarily, as these often prevent a Muslim from offering their obligatory prayers on time or at the Mosque. Avoiding these unnecessary things and activities allows one to mould their life around their religion.

In addition, as offering the obligatory prayers on time is one of the most beloved deeds to Allah, the Exalted, according to a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 611, a Muslim should adhere to this habit and not postpone offering their obligatory prayers without an extremely good reason which only occurs very rarely. If one desires to mould their life around their faith then they must fulfil their obligatory prayers on time as soon as they happen for women and men should fulfil them at the Mosque

with congregation. This will ensure they prioritise preparing for the hereafter without becoming distracted by the excess of this material world.

Strengthening Faith - 50

I had a thought which I wanted to share. Muslims often have periods within their lives where they exert themselves by increasing the amount of worship they perform. This often happens in the Holy month of Ramadan where Muslims decide to change their lives around by striving much harder than normal. The issue with exerting too much effort in a short period of time is that it often leads to one giving up and returning back to normal. First of all, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has warned Muslims in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 43, not to over burden themselves and only perform voluntary deeds which they can handle. He concluded by declaring that the most beloved of deeds to Allah, the Exalted, are the ones done regularly irrespective of their size. Muslims should therefore adhere to this advice as it is more likely they keep up their obedience over a longer period of time.

In reality, the important time is not the period where one feels a spiritual high and exerts extra effort. The important time is when one returns back to normal as spiritual highs very rarely last. Muslims must ensure that no matter how much they return from a spiritual high they must continue fulfilling their obligatory duties. Then they should dedicate some time to learning and acting on the established traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Changing step by step like this is much better than exerting extra effort over a short period of time and there is a greater chance that one will maintain their improved obedience to Allah, the Exalted, in the long term if they change gradually, step by step. No one is demanding Muslims to become saints overnight. Improvement takes time but this means that one should not stand still and actually take small but regular steps to improve their obedience to Allah, the Exalted, by

fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience.

Strengthening Faith - 51

I had a thought which I wanted to share. It is important to understand that no matter how much religious knowledge one obtains or how much worship and righteous deeds they perform they will never be safe from the attacks and traps of the Devil. This is because the Devil attacks each person according to how much knowledge they possess and how much righteous deeds they perform. For example, he will try to convince the Muslim who is strict in offering their obligatory prayers not to offer them in congregation at the Mosque or by convincing them to delay their obligatory prayers beyond their starting times as he knows he will not be able to convince them to completely abandon the obligatory prayers. Whereas, in respect to the Muslim who is struggling to establish their obligatory prayers he will attempt to convince them that they are too difficult to establish therefore they should only offer them when they are completely free. He tries to convince those who perform many voluntary righteous deeds not to gain and act on Islamic knowledge in order to improve their character so that they continue to destroy their good deeds through bad characteristics such as, lying and backbiting.

The Devil aims to prevent a person from reaching a higher level if he cannot convince them to fall in rank through disobedience to Allah, the Exalted. Therefore, Muslims should always be on guard against his attacks and traps by persistently striving to increase in rank, improve their character and avoid acts of disobedience which is all achieved by gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge.

Strengthening Faith - 52

I had a thought which I wanted to share. Even though the number of Muslims have increased over time it is obvious that the strength of Muslims has only decreased. Each Muslim irrespective of the strength of their faith believes in the authenticity of the Holy Quran as doubting it would cause them to lose their faith. In the following verse Allah, the Exalted, has given the key to obtaining superiority and success which would remove the weakness and grief Muslims are experiencing all around the world. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 139:

“So do not weaken and do not grieve, and you will be superior if you are [true] believers.”

Allah, the Exalted, has made it clear that Muslims only need to become true believers in order to achieve this superiority and success in both worlds. True belief involves fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This includes the duties towards Allah, the Exalted, and those towards people, such as loving for others what one loves for themselves which has been advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2515. This requires one to learn and act on Islamic teachings. Through this attitude was success and superiority granted to the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them. And if Muslims desire to achieve it then they must

return to this rightly guided attitude. As Muslims believe in the Holy Quran they should understand this simple teaching and act on it.

Strengthening Faith - 53

I had a thought which I wanted to share. Unfortunately, some Muslims have adopted a weak characteristic which only hinders them from improving for the better. Namely, they compare their situation and circumstances to others who are facing easier circumstances and use this as an excuse not to increase their obedience to Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. For example, a person who works full time excuses their lack of striving in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by comparing themselves to someone who works part time and simply claims it is easier for them to increase their obedience to Allah, the Exalted, as they have more free time. Or a poorer Muslim turns away from giving any form of charity by observing those who possess more wealth and claims that the wealthy person can more easily give charity than them. They fail to understand that these excuses may make their souls feel better but it does not aid them in this world or in the next. Allah, the Exalted, does not desire people to act according to the means of others. He only desires people to act in His obedience according to their own means. For example, a person who works full time can dedicate whatever free time they possess in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, even if that is less than someone who works part time. In this respect what the part timer does has no effect on the one who works full time so using them as an excuse not to strive harder is simply a lame excuse. The poor Muslim should simply donate according to their means even if that is much less than the wealthy person as Allah, the Exalted, will judge them on what they do and He will not judge them according to what other Muslims do.

Muslims should give up these useless excuses and simply obey Allah, the Exalted, according to their own means.

Strengthening Faith - 54

I had a thought which I wanted to share. If a person was hired for a specific job, such as painting a house, they are highly unlikely to receive their wages if they decide to do another duty, such as hoovering the house. Even though what they decided to do is not bad but as they have chosen to do a job they were not hired for they will undoubtedly displease their employer. This is simple to understand and accept. Similarly, a Muslim has been commanded to fulfill the commands set out in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, but if they decide to do something else and neglect this duty irrespective of if the thing they decide to do is lawful, such as pursuing the excess of this material world beyond their needs, doing actions which are different from what have been prescribed in the two divine sources or simply unlawful they should not expect to please Allah, the Exalted, as He has made it clear what Muslims should be doing. The same way an employee who decides to do something different should not expect to receive their wages neither should a Muslim who decides to strive for anything other than what they have been told to strive for by Allah, the Exalted. The wages in the case of the Muslim include blessings, mercy and the forgiveness of Allah, the Exalted, in both worlds. Simply put, if a Muslim desires to obtain these wages they must do their job and not busy themselves with other things which either contradicts their duty or things which are different from their duty.

Strengthening Faith - 55

I had a thought which I wanted to share. There are many Muslims who dedicate much of their time, effort and wealth on things which are neither righteous deeds nor sins meaning, they are vain things. Vain things can also include acquiring unnecessary things, such as beautifying one's home beyond their necessities. Even though, they might be correct in their claim that they are not committing sins it is important to understand a fact. Namely, time is a precious gift from Allah, the Exalted, which cannot be gained once it departs. All other things can be acquired, such as wealth, all other things except time. So when one dedicates their time as well as other blessings such as wealth to unnecessary and extra things meaning, vain things, it will only lead to a great regret on Judgment Day. This will occur when they observe the reward given to those who made use of their time and performed righteous deeds. Time wasters may have avoided sins which save them from punishment but as they wasted time on vain things they may face criticism. And they will surely lose out on the reward they could have gained if they utilised their time and other blessings correctly.

In addition, it is important to understand that the more one indulges in vain things the closer they are to falling into extravagance and waste both of which are blame worthy. For example, those who waste blessings are considered the siblings of the Devil. And it can be argued when one dedicates their time to vain things they have in fact wasted the precious blessing of time. Chapter 17 Al Isra, verse 27:

“Indeed, the wasteful are brothers of the devils...”

Strengthening Faith - 56

I had a thought which I wanted to share. I was pondering over the following verse of the Holy Quran: chapter 29 Al Ankabut, verse 38:

“...And Satan had made pleasing to them their deeds and averted them from the path...”

As mentioned in this verse the Devil fools people into committing sins and making wrong decisions by beautifying the incorrect choice for them. This occurs in situations when a person must make a choice between two or more options. It also occurs when the choice is between the lawful and unlawful and even between two lawful options. If the Devil cannot guide someone to a sin then he attempts to guide them to the inferior option, even if it is lawful, hoping it will lead to some sort of a sin, such as a person complaining about life and destiny. The Devil beautifies a choice by causing one to focus on its apparent benefit to such a degree that they lose focus on the bigger picture and the consequences of the choice. An adult then behaves like a child who makes choices without reflecting over the consequences of their actions. This is one of the main reasons why people commit sins. In reality, if one truly reflected on the punishment of sins they would never commit them.

Something which helps in situations like this is to mentally take a step back and assess the options by comparing their long-term benefits and harms. Only when the lawful benefits of something outweighs the harm should a person proceed. The other thing which helps is to deeply reflect on the consequences of the potential options. Some choices might be lawful but if one goes ahead with them it may make their life difficult in the long run. For example, sometimes people rush into marriage with someone they apparently love. They base their decision solely on their feelings instead of reflecting on other more important aspects, for example, if their potential future spouse will make a good life partner or a good parent and if they will help them in their obedience to Allah, the Exalted. Many marriages have ended in divorce because the couple did not reflect on the long term implications of a potential marriage. Many people often claim their spouse was very different before they got married but in most cases they have not changed at all. The truth is that before marriage they did not spend so much time with them so they did not observe certain characteristics which became obvious after marriage.

Some often rush into action and later have regrets as their choice caused them more trouble and in many cases the issue was not a big deal in the first place. This type of action can only be avoided when one reflects on the situation and observes the bigger picture meaning, the wider and long-term implications and consequences of taking a step forward.

One should not only assess if something is lawful or unlawful before making a decision. Even though, this is the most important thing to consider yet, it is not the only thing. As many lawful incorrect choices, which are beautified by the Devil, can lead to trouble further on in life.

To sum up, before making any choice a person must take a step back and reflect deeply over its lawfulness and its potential long-term benefits and harms under the guidance of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Whoever acts like this will rarely make a wrong choice they later regret.

Strengthening Faith - 57

I had a thought which I wanted to share. I was pondering over the fact that every Muslim openly declares that they desire the companionship of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, the other Holy Prophets, peace be upon him them, and the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, in the hereafter. They often quote the Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 3688, which advises that a person will be with those they love in the hereafter. And because of this they openly declare their love for these righteous servants of Allah, the Exalted. But it is strange how they desire this outcome and claim love for the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, yet they barely know him as they are too busy to study his life, character and teachings. This is foolish as how can one truly love someone they do not even know?

In addition, when these people are asked for proof of their love for the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, on Judgment Day what will they say? What will they present? The proof of this declaration is studying and acting on the life, character and teachings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. A declaration without this evidence will not be accepted by Allah, the Exalted. This is quite obvious as no one understood Islam better than the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, did and this was not their attitude. They declared love for the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and supported their claim through actions by following in his footsteps. This is why they will be with him in the hereafter.

Those who believe love is in the heart and does not require it to be shown through actions is as foolish as the student who hands back a blank exam paper to their teacher claiming that knowledge is in their mind so they do not need to practically write it down on paper and then still expects to pass.

The one who behaves in such a manner does not love the righteous servants of Allah, the Exalted, only their own desires and they have undoubtedly been fooled by the Devil.

Finally, it is important to note that members of other religions also claim love for their Holy Prophets, peace be upon them. But as they failed to follow in their footsteps and act on their teachings they will certainly not be with them on Judgment Day. This is quite obvious if one ponders over this fact for a moment.

Strengthening Faith - 58

I had a thought which I wanted to share. It is important for Muslims to understand a simple yet profound lesson namely, they will never succeed in this world or the next in worldly or religious matters through the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted. Since the dawn of time to this age and till the end of time no person has ever achieved true success nor will they ever through the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted. This is quite obvious when one turns the pages of history. Therefore, when a Muslim is in a situation which they desire to achieve a positive and successful outcome from they should never choose to disobey Allah, the Exalted, irrespective of how tempting or easy it may seem to be. Even if one is advised by their close friends and relatives to do so as there is no obedience to the creation if it means disobedience to the Creator. And in truth they will never be able to protect them from Allah, the Exalted, and His punishment in either this world or the next. The same way Allah, the Exalted, grants success to those who obey Him He removes a successful outcome from those who disobey Him even if this removal takes time to witness. A Muslim should not be fooled as this will occur sooner or later. The Holy Quran has made it extremely clear that an evil plan or action only encompasses the doer even if this punishment is delayed. Chapter 35 Fatir, verse 43:

“...but the evil plot does not encompass except its own people...”

Therefore, no matter how difficult the situation and choice Muslims should always choose the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in both worldly and

religious matters as this alone will lead to true success in both worlds even if this success is not obvious immediately.

Strengthening Faith - 59

I had a thought which I wanted to share. It is commonly observed that in the special days and nights of the Islamic year, such as the night of power, which is considered to be on the 27th night of the Islamic month of Ramadan according to a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 1386, Muslims come out in droves and inhabit the Mosques or pray more at home. Even though, this is a good thing it is important to understand that a Muslim should not only behave in this manner on the special days and nights of the Islamic year. They should instead respect each day and night throughout the whole year by fulfilling their duties in them without neglect. They should never believe the worship of one day or night in the year will make up for their neglect of the rest of year as this is completely untrue and a trick of the Devil. Being a Muslim is a 24/7 duty it is not a duty which extends only on certain days and nights. Meaning, a Muslim must fulfil their duties in respect to Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions, face destiny with patience and fulfil the rights of people every day of their life according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Cherry picking certain days and nights is a major reason why Muslims feel disconnected from Allah, the Exalted, as they only turn to Him occasionally. The truth is simple, what Muslims dedicate to Allah, the Exalted, is what they will receive in return. If they only dedicate a few days or nights in the year to Him then they should not expect a great return. Islam does not demand one to pray all night instead it demands Muslims to fulfil their obligatory duties and as much of the established traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, as possible. This does not take much time up and leaves one with plenty of time to do other things as well.

In reality, the one who does not respect every day and night by fulfilling their duties in them will find that even the special days and nights are just ordinary days and nights for them. But the one who respects every day and night will find that every day and night is like the special days and nights, like the night of power, for them. Meaning, Allah, the Exalted, will bless them just like He blesses them on the special days and nights in the Islamic year.

Strengthening Faith - 60

I read a news article a while ago, which I wanted to briefly discuss. It reported on the issue of widespread corruption and how it has infected every social level in most countries. Widespread corruption is quite evident and needs know deep investigation or research to prove its existence. In some cases it occurs out in the open.

One of the reasons corruption spreads throughout society, to the point that even top government officials are involved in it, is a direct result of the general public becoming corrupt. When ordinary people mistreat others, through physical or financial means, thereby disobeying Allah, the Exalted, believing no one can hold them accountable, then as a punishment, Allah, the Exalted, appoints them corrupt leaders and government officials. Meaning, how one acts is how they are treated. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, once warned in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4019, that when the general public cheat each other financially, Allah, the Exalted, punishes them by appointing them oppressive leaders. One aspect of this oppression is corruption which causes the general public great distress. The same Hadith warns that when the general public break their covenant of sincere obedience to Allah, the Exalted, then they will be overpowered by their enemies who will confiscate their wealth and property. Again, this is an aspect of corruption where people of influence, such as government officials, freely take the belongings of others without any fear of the consequences.

When the general public becomes corrupt, then their leaders and other people in influential social positions are inspired to act in the same way, believing that this behaviour is accepted by the general public. This leads to corruption on a national level. But if the general public obeyed Allah, the Exalted, by not mistreating others through corruption, then their leaders and those in an influential social position would not dare act in a corrupt way, full well knowing the general public would not stand for it. And according to the Hadith quoted earlier, if the general public remain obedient to Allah, the Exalted, He would protect them from corrupt officials by appointing people into influential positions who are just in their affairs.

Instead of taking the immature path of blaming others for the widespread corruption, muslims should truly reflect on their own behaviour and if necessary adjust their attitude. Otherwise, corruption in society will only increase with time. No one should believe that as they are not in an influential social position they have no effect on the corruption which occurs in society. As explained earlier, corruption occurs because of the behaviour of the general public and it therefore can only be removed by the good behaviour of the general public. Chapter 13 Ar Ra'd, verse 11:

“...Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves...”

Strengthening Faith - 61

I read a news article a while ago, which I wanted to briefly discuss. It reported on a person who did not respect their national anthem, which was labelled unpatriotic by some. In reality, a true patriot to Allah, the Exalted, and one's nation is not refusing to stand during a national anthem or saluting a flag. A true patriot is the one who supports others, such as their government, in things which are beneficial and praiseworthy in respect to Islam, irrespective of who is organising or responsible for it. And who constructively criticises others, such as their government, when they do something blame worthy in the sight of Islam, irrespective of who orchestrated it. This criticism must be constructive within the limits of the law while avoiding all forms of vain or vulgar speech and actions. It should never lead to rebellion, as this only leads to the harm of innocent people, which history has clearly shown time and time again.

It is important to note, that each muslim can behave in this manner, even if they are not in a position of political or social influence. Each person can behave like a true patriot in respect to others, especially their relatives, by behaving in the manner outlined earlier meaning, supporting good and kindly forbidding evil according to the teachings of Islam. Chapter 5 Al Ma'idah, verse 2:

“...And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression...”

If each family unit behaved in such a manner, it would undoubtedly affect each town, city and eventually the nation, until a true improvement occurs, which in turn benefits all irrespective of their faith. This good intention and supporting it with sincere actions to improve a nation in this way, is true patriotism. Everything else is only a meaningless show. This is how one makes a country truly great again.

Strengthening Faith - 62

I read a news article a while ago, which I wanted to briefly discuss. It reported on a celebrity and how they earned and spent their wealth. The Holy Quran has labelled those who are wasteful as the siblings of the Devil. Chapter 17 Al Isra, verse 27:

“Indeed, the wasteful are brothers of the devils, and ever has Satan been to his Lord ungrateful.”

The comparison has been made to the Devil for several reasons. First of all, the people who spend wealth excessively on unnecessary things often do so in haste without thinking things through meaning, an impulsive spender. In fact, according to a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2012, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has warned that being hasty is from the Devil while thinking things through is from Allah, the Exalted. If a muslim truly pondered over what they desired to purchase, they would not spend on unnecessary and extravagant things as this is not a sign of a true muslim.

In addition, when one spends on unnecessary and extravagant things, they in most cases, are only fuelling the companies who make a profit by distracting people from right guidance, such as the entertainment industry, which is the Devil's main and ultimate goal.

Spending wastefully always distracts one from preparing for the hereafter, as this person dedicates much time to earning wealth, spending it wastefully and enjoying what they acquired. Distracting a muslim from preparing for the hereafter is another goal of the Devil. Preparing for the hereafter involves using the blessings one has been granted, such as wealth, in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

Finally, the verse quoted earlier specifically mentions the ingratitude of the Devil. In reality, the one who spends wastefully on unnecessary things does so because they too are ungrateful over what they already possess. If they possessed true gratitude, it would prevent them from acting in this manner. Islam does not prohibit one from spending on necessary things, it in fact, encourages muslims to do so. And even spending on lawful unnecessary things is acceptable, if it is done occasionally and without extravagance, as this is something which is disliked by Allah, the Exalted, and leads to wasting wealth. Chapter 6 Al An'am, verse 141:

"...And be not excessive. Indeed, He does not like those who commit excess."

trengthening Faith

Strengthening Faith - 63

I read a news article a while ago, which I wanted to discuss. It reported on the importance of learning from the past.

It is important for a muslim to understand a key truth namely, nothing in creation occurs without a wise reason, even if people do not observe this wisdom immediately. A muslim should treat everything which occurs, whether they are facing times of ease or difficulty, as a message in a bottle. They should not get too caught up in assessing and examining the bottle, as it is merely a messenger which delivers the important message. This occurs when muslims either exult over the good things which occur, thereby becoming heedless to the message within the good thing. Or they become grieved during difficulties, thereby becoming too distracted to understand the message within the difficulty. They should instead concentrate on following the advice of the Holy Quran and approach each situation in a balanced way. Chapter 57 Al Hadid, verse 23:

“In order that you not despair over what has eluded you and not exult [in pride] over what He has given you...”

This verse does not prohibit being happy or sad in different situations, as this is a part of human nature. But it advises a balanced approach whereby one avoids extreme emotions namely, exultant which is excessive happiness, or grief which is excessive sadness. This balanced approach will allow one to focus their mind on the more important message inside the bottle meaning, inside the situation, whether it is a situation of ease or difficulty. Through assessing, understanding and acting on the hidden message, a muslim can improve their worldly and religious life for the better. Sometimes the message will be a wakeup call to turn back to Allah, the Exalted, before their time runs out. Sometimes it will be a way of raising their rank. Other times a way of erasing their sins and sometimes a reminder not to attach themselves to the temporal material world and the things in it. Without this assessment one will merely journey through events without improving their worldly or religious life.

Strengthening Faith - 64

I read a news article a while ago, which I wanted to briefly discuss. It reported on taking a step back in order to assess what is truly beneficial and harmful in one's life. When a muslim observes the teachings of Islam they will find that certain worldly blessings have been described in a positive way but in other places it has been described in a negative way. This is because in reality most things are not innately good or bad. What makes them good or bad is whether they take one towards the obedience and pleasure of Allah, the Exalted, or not. For example, the Holy Quran has described a spouse as a way of finding tranquillity, mercy and affection. Chapter 30 Ar Rum, verse 21:

“And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquillity in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy...”

But the same Holy Quran has also warned that a spouse and children can be enemies to a muslim as well. Chapter 64 At Taghabun, verse 14:

“O you who have believed, indeed, among your spouses and your children are enemies to you, so beware of them...”

This indicates that they become a source of tranquillity when they encourage one towards the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, which involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. But one's family can become an enemy to them if they divert them away from the obedience of Allah, the Exalted.

So muslims should regularly assess and judge the worldly blessings they possess in order to determine whether they encourage them towards the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, or divert them from it. And if necessary take steps in order to benefit themselves in both worlds. Whoever does this self-assessment regularly will find that they continue to use the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, which in turn will ensure they find peace and success in both worlds. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

But if they fail to do this self-assessment, they will inevitably misuse the blessings they have been granted which will lead to a difficult life in this world and a strict accountability and a potential severe punishment on a Great Day. Chapter 20 Taha, verse 124:

"And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed [i.e., difficult] life, and We will gather [i.e., raise] him on the Day of Resurrection blind."

And chapter 9 At Tawbah, verse 24:

"Say, "If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your wives, your relatives, wealth which you have obtained, commerce wherein you fear decline, and dwellings with which you are pleased are more beloved to you than Allah and His Messenger and striving in His cause, then wait until Allah executes His command.""

Strengthening Faith - 65

I read a news article a while ago, which I wanted to briefly discuss. It reported on the Corona Virus and the precautions the public should take in order to keep themselves safe from it. It is amazing how these steps which non Islamic nations are trying to implement now were advised by the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, over 1400 years ago. For example, people are being advised to wash their hands regularly throughout the day whereas, Islam advises a muslim to wash their hands, arms, faces and feet, five times a day which is required to offer the obligatory prayer. In fact, a Hadith found in Imam Malik's, Muwatta, Book 2, Hadith number 37, advises that a true believer maintains the state of ablution throughout the day. Meaning, they not only wash these parts of the body for the five obligatory prayers but do so every time they use the toilet in order to remain in ablution throughout the day. In addition, muslims have been advised to wash their hands before and after meals. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 258. They have been advised to wash their hands before going to bed and after waking up from sleep. This has been advised in Hadiths found in Sunan Ibn Majah, numbers 3297 and 394. Put simply, people have been advised to maintain good hygiene and Islam has declared cleanliness to be half of faith in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 223.

In addition, people have been advised to avoid going out in public unnecessarily, which has been advised by Islam so long ago, as it often leads to vain and sinful things. In fact, this is an element of salvation according to a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2406.

People have been warned not to unnecessarily socialize with others. Islam has encompassed this teaching by declaring one should either speak good or remain silent in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3971, which indicates limiting socializing with others.

Finally, it has been stressed that people should support each other, such as food supplies, through this difficulty but Islam has been teaching the importance of this for over a millennium. For example, a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4893, advises that Allah, the Exalted, will aid the one who supports others.

To conclude, Muslims should implement these teachings in order to show the true face of Islam to the world.

Strengthening Faith - 66

I read a news article a while ago, which I wanted to briefly discuss. It reported on the behaviour and attitude of some criminals who chose a life of crime, as they desired to obtain wealth in an easy and simple way.

It is important for muslims to avoid this type of quick fix mentality in both worldly and religious matters. Unfortunately, some muslims have adopted this attitude. Whenever they encounter problems, instead of following the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, by remaining patient and firm on the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience, they instead search for a quick fix solution, desiring a short spiritual exercise which can solve all their problems. This was not the attitude of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, or his Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, even though they faced more severe difficulties. Allah, the Exalted, could have granted the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, victory and spread Islam in a single moment, yet it took over two decades of striving in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, to achieve this. A muslim should simply understand that if they cannot lawfully obtain worldly things without effort how can they obtain religious blessings without effort? The greatest spiritual exercise one can perform is remaining obedient to Allah, the Exalted, according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. There is no quick fix to problems, as the universe was created in such a way that one must put in effort in order to obtain things. If a muslim desires to overcome difficulties and obtain

blessings they must remain steadfast on the obedience of Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

Strengthening Faith - 67

I read a news article a while ago, which I wanted to briefly discuss. It reported on discovering new things and experiences. Some muslims have adopted a mentality whereby they are always trying to discover different things and teachings in respect to Islam. They purposely seek lectures and knowledge which is supposedly new and different from what they have already experienced. Even though, this is not an evil characteristic, it is an attitude which can lead to misguidance. This can occur when one fails to act on the knowledge they already have heard and studied, yet strive to experience new Islamic information and knowledge. Simply put, if a muslim has failed to understand and act on what they already know, how can learning new things benefit them? Acting on what one has already listened to and studied, is the very reason why the Holy Quran and the Hadiths of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, often repeat key pieces of information. For example, Allah, the Exalted, only needed to command muslims to establish their prayers once, yet He has done it many times throughout the Holy Quran. The same way a student cannot progress to the next level or academic year without acting on the knowledge they have already studied, a muslim will not be able to progress towards the closeness of Allah, the Exalted, unless they act on the knowledge they already possess, even if they search and listen to new things. Some foolishly seek knowledge connected to higher levels of piety without even acting on the basic principles of faith such as, refraining from lying and backbiting.

In addition, searching for new knowledge also encourages one to obtain knowledge which is not beneficial as it does not increase their sincere obedience to Allah, the Exalted, which involves using the blessings one has

been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Nor is this different knowledge connected to something which Allah, the Exalted, will ask them about on Judgement Day. This is why it is vital for muslims to concentrate on gaining and acting on the knowledge found within the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, as it will increase their obedience to Allah, the Exalted, and this knowledge is connected to things which will be questioned about on Judgement Day, such as fulfilling the rights of people.

The Holy Quran has made it clear that revising important information one already possesses is beneficial and the correct attitude, as this person is more likely to act on their knowledge than the one who only seeks new knowledge. In fact, this attitude benefits the believers. Therefore, if one does not obtain benefit from being reminded about things they already know, then they must reassess their faith. Chapter 51 Adh Dhariyat, verse 55:

“And remind, for indeed, the reminder benefits the believers.”

Strengthening Faith - 68

I read a news article a while ago, which I wanted to briefly discuss. It reported on the problems which are occurring in the middle east and how countless people are suffering. It is important for a muslim to be observant in their daily life and avoid being too self-absorbed in their own worldly matters so that they become heedless over the things which are occurring around them and the things which have already occurred. This is an important quality to possess, as it is an excellent way to strengthen one's faith which in turn helps one to remain obedient to Allah, the Exalted, at all times. This involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. For example, when a muslim observes a sick person, they should not only aid them by whatever means they possess, even if it is only a supplication on their behalf, but they should also reflect on their own health and understand that they too will eventually lose their good health either by an illness, ageing or even death. This should inspire them to be grateful for their good health and show this through their actions by taking advantage of their good health in both worldly and religious matters which are pleasing to Allah, the Exalted.

When they observe the death of a rich person, they should not only feel sad for the deceased and their family but realise that one day, which is unknown to them, they will die also. They should understand that just like the rich person was abandoned by their wealth, fame and family at their grave, so will they too be left to face their grave with only their deeds for company. This will encourage them to prepare for their grave and the hereafter.

This attitude can and should be applied to all things one observes. A muslim should learn a lesson from everything around them which has been advised in the Holy Quran. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 191:

*“...and give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth, [saying],
"Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly; exalted are You [above such a
thing]; then protect us from the punishment of the Fire.””*

Those who behave in this manner will strengthen their faith on a daily basis whereas those who are too self-absorbed in their worldly life will remain heedless, which will prevent them from improving their behaviour towards Allah, the Exalted, and the creation.

Strengthening Faith - 69

I read a news article a while ago, which I wanted to briefly discuss. It reported on the concept of a midlife crisis. A person who experiences this often questions their purpose and seems to feel a huge void in their life, even though they may possess many things and achieved much worldly success. This often occurs as these people are not fulfilling the purpose of their creation which is to gain knowledge about Allah, the Exalted, so that they can obey and worship Him correctly. This involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Him, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 51 Adh Dhariyat, verse 56:

“I did not create jinn and humans except to worship Me.”

This is similar to a person who owns the latest mobile phone which has many features, yet due to a fault it fails to fulfil its primary goal, which is to make phone calls. No matter how good these other features are, the owner will always feel a void in respect to it, as the phone does not fulfil its primary goal of existence. Similarly, a person will feel a void in their life even if they possess many worldly things. This feeling affects muslims and non-muslims. It is obvious why non-muslims feel like this, as they could not be further from fulfilling the purpose of their creation. So no matter what they achieve, they eventually feel this void in their life. It occurs to those muslims who may even fulfil their obligatory duties but as they fail to strive to gain and act on the vital knowledge needed to fulfil their purpose

correctly, they experience this void. In most cases, they do not even understand the Arabic language, so performing worship simply does not fill this void. One will not fill this void until they strive to fulfil the purpose of creation which is to gain knowledge on Allah, the Exalted, so that they can use every blessing they have been granted in ways pleasing to Him throughout every moment of their life.

Strengthening Faith - 70

I read a news article a while ago, which I wanted to briefly discuss. It reported on a large scale project and how things were not going according to the initial plan, such as the estimated cost of the project increasing dramatically.

Muslims should understand that making long term worldly plans is not the wisest decision, as these things very rarely work out as planned. One only needs to reflect on their own life and their own long term plans to recognize this truth. It is always best to plan on a short term basis, as this is more achievable and does not result in such emotional or financial difficulties when things do not work out as planned. On the other hand, failure in long term plans will lead to more serious emotional and financial difficulties.

In addition, long term plans always causes one's mind to focus on this material world, which distracts them from preparing for the hereafter, which involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This attitude will only lead to difficulties in both worlds. But when one makes short term worldly plans, it does not distract them from the bigger picture meaning, preparing for the hereafter.

In addition, long term plans distract a person from enjoying the lawful aspects of this world, such as spending time with one's children. They delay enjoying these things as they are too busy working towards their long term goal. This can disrupt their relationships and cause long term issues, such as divorce.

A muslim must understand that they can plan as much as they want but ultimately only what Allah, the Exalted, has planned and decided will occur. So it is best to minimise this as much as possible and instead focus on fulfilling one's necessities and responsibilities in this world and preparing for their journey to the hereafter. This is what the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, indicated in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6416. He advised muslims to live in this material world as a stranger or traveller. Allah, the Exalted, will bless this behaviour so that the muslim finds peace and happiness in both worlds. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

Strengthening Faith - 71

I read a news article a while ago, which I wanted to briefly discuss. It reported on the life of a celebrity who had passed away. It mentioned their legacy and the different things they achieved in their life. Even though, they achieved much worldly success there were still things in their life which tainted their successful legacy, such as crimes and allegations.

If one turns the pages of history they will observe many people who achieved great worldly success and in some cases benefited mankind yet, they will also observe at least one thing which taints their achievements. But if one observes the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, they will observe nothing except success and countless things which benefit mankind. Even though, there are people who falsely criticise the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, it is quite evident from his highly accurate and detailed biography, which has been verified by reliable muslim and non-muslim historians, that this criticism is based on nothing but falsehood. This is why muslims must put aside all role models and instead study and adopt the flawless character of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, as this is the only way to achieve real untainted success and peace of mind in both one's worldly and religious life. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 31:

“Say, [Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him], “If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins...””

There is no goal greater than this in this world. In fact, this is what people irrespective of their faith strive to achieve. And Allah, the Exalted, has placed all of it in the footsteps of his Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 33 Al Ahzab, verse 21:

“There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Last Day and [who] remembers Allah often.”

It is simple, if a person desires worldly and religious success they should follow in the footsteps of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. But if they choose a path other than his, whatever tainted success they achieve will eventually become a burden for them and it will lead to regrets and even punishment on a Great Day. Chapter 20 Taha, verse 124:

“And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed [i.e., difficult] life, and We will gather [i.e., raise] him on the Day of Resurrection blind.”

Strengthening Faith - 72

I read a news article a while ago, which I wanted to briefly discuss. It reported on the increase of crimes within London over the past decade. Unfortunately, there are some who claim that faith is not required in this world and others, who are Muslims, claim it is enough to profess Islam without supporting it with sincere obedience to Allah, the Exalted, which involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. But this increase in crime proves the importance of faith and strengthening it through knowledge and action. This is because crimes and sins only occur as a person feels they will either face no consequences for their actions, such as prison, or they will somehow escape them, for example, by fleeing the country. But the person who believes that no matter what action they perform, whether open or secret, big or small, and no matter what tricks they attempt, a Day will undoubtedly come where they will be held accountable for all their deeds, will always think twice before committing a crime or a sin. If this belief is strengthened through gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge it will deter one from committing crimes and sins. If people acted in this way, peace and justice would spread across society. The crime rate would decrease and the times would closely match the times of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and his rightly guided Caliphs, may Allah be pleased with them. This fact alone indicates the importance of faith and strengthening it through gaining and acting on knowledge. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 90:

“Indeed, Allah orders justice and good conduct and giving [help] to relatives and forbids immorality and bad conduct and oppression. He admonishes you that perhaps you will be reminded.”

And chapter 24 An Nur, verse 55:

“Allāh has promised those who have believed among you and done righteous deeds that He will surely grant them succession [to authority] upon the earth just as He granted it to those before them and that He will surely establish for them [therein] their religion which He has preferred for them and that He will surely substitute for them, after their fear, security, [for] they worship Me, not associating anything with Me. But whoever disbelieves after that - then those are the defiantly disobedient.”

Strengthening Faith - 73

I read a news article a while ago, which I wanted to briefly discuss. It reported on the faith of some people and their claims that their belief and obedience to their God is in their heart and they therefore do not need to demonstrate it practically. Unfortunately, this foolish mentality has infected many muslims who believe they possess a pure faithful heart even though they fail to fulfil the obligatory duties of Islam, something which is easily doable as Allah, the Exalted, does not charge a person with a responsibility they cannot fulfil. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 286:

“Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity...”

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has clearly declared in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3984, that when one's spiritual heart is pure, the body becomes pure, which means their actions become correct. But if one's spiritual heart is corrupt, the body becomes corrupt, which means their actions will be corrupt and incorrect. Therefore, the one who does not obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling their duties practically can never have a pure spiritual heart.

In addition, disbelief can be a literal rejecting of Islam or through actions, which involves disobeying Allah, the Exalted, even though one believes in Him. This can be clearly understood by an example. If an unaware person

is warned by another of an approaching lion and the unaware person takes practical steps to obtain safety, they will be considered someone who believed in the warning given to them, as they adapted their behaviour based on the warning. Whereas, if the unaware person does not practically change their behaviour after being warned, people will suspect that they do not believe in the warning given to them, even if the unaware person verbally claims belief in the warning given to them.

Finally, demonstrating one's faith in Allah, the Exalted, practically is their proof and evidence which is required on Judgment Day in order to be granted Paradise. A proof, Allah, the Exalted, has commanded one to obtain. Not having this practical evidence is as silly as a student who hands back a blank exam paper to their teacher claiming their knowledge is in their mind so they therefore do not need to write it down by answering the exam questions. The same way this student would undoubtedly fail, so will a person who reaches Judgment Day without the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in the form of fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, even if they possess faith in their heart.

Strengthening Faith - 74

I read a news article a while ago, which I wanted to briefly discuss. It reported on the leaders of the modern world. It was quite obvious that they take advantage of their position, as they misuse the tax payers wealth on their own personal things and unnecessary events. It is a shame how things have changed so much since the day of the righteous predecessors. In those days, when they became leaders, they in fact became the servants of the people and instead of spending the people's wealth on their own personal things, they would spend their own personal wealth on the people. Whereas, nowadays the leaders and royal families instead spend the wealth of the people and behave as if they are the masters of the nation.

It is important for muslims to select the righteous predecessors as their role models and adopt their characteristics. For example, muslims must fulfil their duties towards all those under their care which has been advised in a Hadith, found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 2928. This does not mean one should not care about themselves. It means they should fulfil their own personal duties and then strive to fulfil their duties in respect to their dependents without going overboard. They must first obey Allah, the Exalted, by using the blessings He has granted them in ways pleasing to Him, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and fulfil the rights of people.

Strengthening Faith - 75

I read a news article a while ago, which I wanted to briefly discuss. It reported on the widespread difficulties muslims all over the world are facing. Even though tests and trials have affected believers since the dawn of time, particularly in the time of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, yet it seems like the modern day tests only lead to more difficulties and humiliation for muslims. Whereas, the tests which the righteous predecessors faced, only led to their honour in both worlds. The main reason for this difference in the outcome of tests is that when the righteous predecessors faced tests, in fact greater tests than the modern day muslims, which is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4023, they faced their tests and difficulties while sincerely obeying Allah, the Exalted, in the form of fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and being patient with destiny according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This resulted in them safely passing the test and receiving great honour and blessings from Allah, the Exalted, in both worlds. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

And chapter 24 An Nur, verse 55:

“Allāh has promised those who have believed among you and done righteous deeds that He will surely grant them succession [to authority] upon the earth just as He granted it to those before them and that He will surely establish for them [therein] their religion which He has preferred for them and that He will surely substitute for them, after their fear, security, [for] they worship Me, not associating anything with Me. But whoever disbelieves after that - then those are the defiantly disobedient.”

Whereas, many muslims in this day and age face tests but do not remain steadfast on the obedience of Allah, the Exalted. They fail to understand that success and honour through tests is only granted to those who remain steadfast on the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, whereas, being disobedient only leads to disgrace. Therefore, muslims should not worship Allah, the Exalted, on an edge, whereby they are only obedient to Him in times of ease and turn away from Him angrily and disobediently in times of difficulty. This is not real servant hood or obedience to Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 22 Al Hajj, verse 11:

“And of the people is he who worships Allah on an edge. If he is touched by good, he is reassured by it; but if he is struck by trial, he turns on his face [to unbelief]. He has lost [this] world and the Hereafter. That is what is the manifest loss.”

Simply put, no action will aid muslims in the long run, if it is not based on the obedience of Allah, the Exalted. Disobedience will only lead from one difficulty to another, one disgrace to another. Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 147:

“What would Allah do with [i.e., gain from] your punishment if you are grateful and believe?...”

Strengthening Faith - 76

I read a news article a while ago, which I wanted to briefly discuss. It reported on the last words spoken by famous people before they passed away. It is common for people to enquire and pay extra attention to the final words of others, whether they are passing away or leaving on a long journey. People have adopted this mentality, as they know that someone's last words are often true and are very important. Therefore, muslims should reflect on the final verse of the Holy Quran to be revealed, which according to some scholars is chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 281:

“And fear a Day when you will be returned to Allah. Then every soul will be compensated for what it earned, and they will not be wronged [i.e., treated unjustly].”

Muslims should try to understand the importance of this verse, as it is the final words revealed to mankind from Allah, the Exalted. He chose to remind mankind of the Day of Judgment and preparing for it over all other things He could have spoken about. Therefore, muslims should understand the reality of this Great Day so that they can prepare adequately for it. This is only achievable through the sincere obedience to Allah, the Exalted, which involves using the blessings He has granted them in ways pleasing to Him, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. No deed, small or big, will be overlooked or forgotten. All will be held accountable for every breath they took on this Earth. They will be no second chances nor an opportunity

to make peace with Allah, the Exalted. If one has earned good, they will receive good. If they earned evil, then they may well find destruction.

The other last words which are important to understand and act on is recorded in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 2698. They are the last words of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. He advised muslims on the importance of establishing the obligatory prayers. Out of all the things he could have advised on, he chose to mention the obligatory prayers. This alone should make one understand the importance of establishing the obligatory prayers. In fact, according to a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2618, the prayer is the thing which separates disbelief from belief. Muslims feel disconnected from Allah, the Exalted, even though they believe in Him and call upon Him. But as most of them have failed to establish their obligatory prayers, meaning fulfil them with all their conditions and etiquettes, they have not maintained their bond with Allah, the Exalted. Muslims must understand that establishing the obligatory prayers is the first barrier which protects them from misguidance. One only needs to reflect on the people they know who became misguided and in most cases the first step of their misguidance was failing to establish the obligatory prayers. When this barrier was destroyed, then misguidance and committing major sins became easy. Chapter 29 Al Ankabut, verse 45:

“...Indeed, prayer prohibits immorality and wrongdoing...”

Therefore, muslims should act on the final words of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, by correctly establishing

their obligatory prayers and encourage their dependents, such as their children, to do the same. It is best to encourage them before it becomes obligatory on them so that they become used to it by the time they reach this age. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 495.

Muslims should not make up lame excuses when failing this duty, as Allah, the Exalted, does not burden someone with a duty they cannot fulfil. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 286:

“Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity...”

Strengthening Faith - 77

I read a news article a while ago, which I wanted to briefly discuss. It reported on the drastic increase in the number of youth getting involved in crime. Muslims must understand an important principle which can prevent the youth from reaching this outcome. Even though, there are many obligatory duties on muslims yet the greatest of them is establishing the obligatory prayers. This is when one performs the prayers while fulfilling all their conditions and etiquettes, such as performing them on time. This is because abandoning the obligatory prayers, in most cases, is the first step which leads to major sins and misguidance. This has been indicated in the Holy Quran. Chapter 29 Al Ankabut, verse 45:

“...Indeed, prayer prohibits immorality and wrongdoing...”

The obligatory prayers act as a barrier which protects one from this misguidance. But when destroys this barrier, it is only a matter of time before they become misguided. This has been warned in chapter 43 Az Zukhruf, verse 36:

“And whoever is blinded from remembrance of the Most Merciful - We appoint for him a devil, and he is to him a companion.”

One only needs to reflect on the people they know who have become misguided and they will realize that, in most cases, the first step of their misguidance was abandoning the obligatory prayers.

Therefore, it is vital for muslims to establish their obligatory prayers correctly and ensure their dependents, such as their children, do the same. Parents must be proactive by encouraging children to offer their prayers even before they reach the age it becomes obligatory on them. This has been advised by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 495. Delaying this important teaching will become a great regret for both the parents and the child, as encouraging an older child to establish their obligatory prayers when they are not used to it is extremely difficult. Parents should remember that they will answer for their failure to rightly guide their children on Judgment Day, as this was a duty on them. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 2928. Chapter 66 At Tahrim, verse 6:

“O you who have believed, protect yourselves and your families from a Fire...”

One of the main reasons why the obligatory prayers act as a barrier from misguidance is that it constantly and regularly reminds a muslim of their accountability on Judgement Day. The same way one stands in front of Allah, the Exalted, in the prayer, is the same way they will stand in front of Him on Judgement Day. The one who turns to Allah, the Exalted,

throughout their day and are reminded of their inevitable reality, the more they will avoid doing the things which displease Him.

Strengthening Faith - 78

I read a news article a while ago, which I wanted to briefly discuss. It reported on the rise and fall of tyrannical leaders. It is important to learn that no matter how much physical or social strength a person has, a day will certainly come when they face the consequences of their actions. In most cases, this occurs during their life, where the actions of a person leads them to trouble, such as prison, and eventually they will face the consequences of their actions in the hereafter as well. This applies to all people, not just leaders.

A muslim should therefore never mistreat others, such as their relatives. They should learn a lesson from the tyrannical leaders of history who were greater in strength than them yet a day certainly came when their strength did not benefit them and they faced the consequences of their evil deeds. Social influence and strength are fickle things, as they quickly pass from person to person thereby, never remaining with anyone for long. Therefore, a muslim who possesses such strength should use it in a way which is pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, by benefiting themselves and others. But if they abuse their authority and influence, then they will eventually face a punishment which no one can protect them from.

In addition, it is important not to abuse one's authority as it may cause them to be hurled into Hell on Judgment Day. Every oppressor will have to give their righteous deeds to their victims and if necessary take the sins of their victims, until justice is established. This will cause many oppressors to be

thrown into Hell. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6579.

To conclude, a muslim should never forget to hold themselves accountable for their deeds. Those who do, will avoid disobeying Allah, the Exalted, and harming others. But those who do not judge themselves will continue disobeying Allah, the Exalted, and harming others heedlessly not knowing that in actual fact they are only harming themselves. But when they realize this fact, it will be too late for them to escape punishment.

Strengthening Faith - 79

I read a news article a while ago, which I wanted to briefly discuss. It reported on the extreme suffering of muslims all around the world, such as Palestine. Even though, much of the world's natural resources, such as oil, are in the hands of muslims yet the muslims as a nation have very little influence on society and other nations. Muslims often blame others for this social weakness, such as the countries in the west. They blame their propaganda against muslims as the cause of this widespread social weakness and influence. Unfortunately, many do not understand that this was not the habit of the Companions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, may Allah be pleased with them. They were few in a number yet overcame entire nations. This is because instead of finger pointing at others they looked in the mirror and assessed their own characters and changed for the better according to the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. It was this sincere obedience to Allah, the Exalted, which led to their strength, even if they were few in number. Whereas, many muslims today are so busy pointing fingers at others that they do not reflect on their own flaws and disobedience to Allah, the Exalted. This caused them to become satisfied with themselves, which according to some scholars, is the root of all evil traits. This is because the one who is satisfied with himself will not strive to search for their own faults nor will they correct them according to the teachings of Islam. This will always lead to bad characteristics and the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted, which involves misusing the blessings He has granted them. In fact, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has warned in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4019, that when muslims break their covenant of obedience to Allah, the Exalted, their enemies will be granted power over them and they will freely take the belongings of muslims. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, even declared in a Hadith found in

Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4297, that a time will come when muslims will be great in number but still have no value in the eyes of the world. This is because of their love for the material world and their dislike for death. The love of the material world will always cause one to turn away from sincerely obeying Allah, the Exalted, which involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Him, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This will result in the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted, and thus the influence of the muslim nation will become insignificant, which will lead to a difficult and constricted life for them. Chapter 20 Taha, verse 124:

"And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed [i.e., difficult] life..."

Muslims should stop blaming others and instead reflect on their own character and correct it according to the teachings of Islam. This will cause them to strive for and love the hereafter. Allah, the Exalted, will then put their awe and respect in the hearts of the rest of society just like He done for the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them. This will allow the Islamic nation to once again obtain strength and influence within society and lead a peaceful and good life. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 139:

“So do not weaken and do not grieve, and you will be superior if you are [true] believers.”

Strengthening Faith - 80

I read a news article a while ago, which I wanted to briefly discuss. It reported on the portrayal of muslims in the media, especially the entertainment industry. If one reflects for a moment, they will realise that in most cases in the media, such as the movie industry, muslims are often represented in two ways. They are either shown to have an extreme mentality whereby, they misinterpret the teachings of Islam in order to harm innocent people. Or they are shown as care-free people who are only muslim by name, while their actions clearly contradict Islamic teachings. For example, they are often shown as alcohol drinkers and clubbers. It is very rare to see muslims being portrayed correctly, such as a balanced rightly-guided muslim who fulfils their obligatory duties and takes part in the material world without compromising on their faith. This incorrect portrayal of muslims should not fool muslims into believing that the vast majority of the Islamic nation fit into these two extreme categories. In fact, the vast majority are balanced muslims and those who possess an extreme mentality are the minority. A muslim who observes this should therefore not give up their modesty and compromise on their faith believing that everyone else is doing the same, so it is therefore acceptable for them to do so too. Unfortunately, this incorrect belief has already infected many muslims who use this poor excuse to take part in major sins, such as backbiting. This is an extremely immature attitude which fails to justify one's actions in a worldly court, how then can this excuse hold up in the court of Allah, the Exalted, on Judgement Day?

A muslim should therefore, not be fooled and remain steadfast on the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the

traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and not follow the behaviour of what the entertainment industry shows them. If a muslim chooses misguidance, then they should know for certain that claiming everyone else was also misguided will not save them from the punishment of Allah, the Exalted. And if they remain steadfast on right guidance, then the misguidance of others will not harm them in this world or in the next. Chapter 5 Al Ma'idah, verse 105:

“O you who have believed, upon you is [responsibility for] yourselves. Those who have gone astray will not harm you when you have been guided...”

Strengthening Faith - 81

There are many Hadiths of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, which advise mankind that whoever testifies that there is none worthy of worship except Allah, the Exalted, and that the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, is the servant and final messenger of Allah, the Exalted, will be saved from the fire of Hell. One such example is found in Sahih Bukhari, number 128.

The meaning of these Hadiths is that whoever dies while believing in this testimony will either enter Paradise and escape Hell or they will enter Hell to the extent of their sins and then eventually be allowed into Paradise where they will dwell forever. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 7510.

It is important to note, that those who desire to enter Paradise without entering Hell first must not only declare their belief in Islam verbally but they must also fulfil its conditions and obligations. The testimony of faith is undoubtedly the key to Paradise but a key needs teeth in order to unlock a specific door. The teeth of the key to Paradise are its obligations and duties. Without them meaning, the key without its teeth, will not open the door to Paradise. This is proven through many Hadiths which indicate entry into Paradise requires one to fulfil the conditions and duties of Islam. For example, a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1397, indicates that the testimony must be supported by actions in the form of the pillars of Islam, such as establishing the obligatory prayers.

The first part of the testimony namely, there is none worthy of worship save Allah, the Exalted, means that Allah, the Exalted, is the only One who must be obeyed and never disobeyed. When one accepts Allah, the Exalted, as their God they must not obey anything which leads to His disobedience as Allah, the Exalted, alone is their Master and they are only His slaves. But the moment one obeys anything which leads to the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted, then they have corrupted their belief in His Oneness which has been indicated in chapter 45 Al Jathiyah, verse 23:

“Have you seen he who has taken as his god his [own] desire...”

The Holy Quran has warned muslims that whoever commits sins is in reality worshipping the Devil as they have obeyed him over the obedience of Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 36 Yaseen, verse 60:

“Did I not enjoin upon you, O children of Adam, that you not worship Satan - [for] indeed, he is to you a clear enemy.”

The muslims who reject their desires, the desires of others and the commands of the Devil and instead only obey Allah, the Exalted, have truly taken Allah, the Exalted, as their God. These muslims have been granted

the protection of Allah, the Exalted, in both worlds. These muslims have practically actualised the testimony of Islam as they supported their verbal and internal claim with sincere actions according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. When one acts according to his traditions they have fulfilled the second aspect of the testimony namely, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, is the servant and final messenger of Allah, the Exalted. These muslims are the ones referred to in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 128. It advises they will be saved from the Hellfire by Allah, the Exalted.

The person who declares Islam with the tongue and internally accepts it is undoubtedly a muslim but their true sincere belief in the Oneness of Allah, the Exalted, is diminished according to their sins.

An aspect of truly acting on the testimony is sincerely loving Allah, the Exalted. In fact, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has indicated this in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4681. It advises that this is an aspect of perfecting one's faith. This is when one loves what Allah, the Exalted, loves and hates what He hates. As this was the characteristic of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, according to a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 2333, muslims have been commanded to follow him. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 31:

“Say, [O Muhammad], “If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins...”

It is clear from Islamic teachings that loving what Allah, the Exalted, hates and disliking what Allah, the Exalted, loves is a clear indication of a person following their own desires and obeying them over Allah, the Exalted. This attitude reduces one's belief in the Oneness of Allah, the Exalted. The following verse makes it clear that adopting this mentality is a deviation from true belief in the testimony of Islam. Chapter 9 At Tawbah, verse 24:

“Say, [O Muhammad], “If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your wives, your relatives, wealth which you have obtained, commerce wherein you fear decline, and dwellings with which you are pleased are more beloved to you than Allah and His Messenger and striving in His cause, then wait until Allah executes His command. And Allah does not guide the defiantly disobedient people.””

The one who worships Allah, the Exalted, according to their own desires worships Him on the edge. Meaning, when they face times of ease they become pleased but when they encounter difficulties they turn away from His obedience in anger. Chapter 22 Al Hajj, verse 11:

“And of the people is he who worships Allah on an edge. If he is touched by good, he is reassured by it; but if he is struck by trial, he turns on his face [to unbelief]. He has lost [this] world and the Hereafter. That is what is the manifest loss.”

A Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6502, informs muslims how to correctly believe and act on the testimony of faith, which prevents one being harmed by the fire of Hell in the next world. This is to first complete the obligatory duties correctly while fulfilling all their conditions and etiquettes. Then one must add to this by performing voluntary righteous deeds, the best of which are the established traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This leads to the love of Allah, the Exalted, and causes Allah, the Exalted, to empower every organ of their body so that they only obey Him. This true and sincere obedience is the fulfilment of the testimony of faith. This is the sound heart which contains only the love of Allah, the Exalted, and is free of worldly desires and the love of the material world. Chapter 26 Ash Shu'ara, verses 88-89:

"The Day when there will not benefit [anyone] wealth or children. But only one who comes to Allah with a sound heart."

It is important to note, this does not mean a muslim becomes free from committing sins but it means they sincerely repent from them whenever they are rarely committed.

To conclude, it is vital for muslims to not only declare the testimony of Islam internally and verbally but they must also show it in their actions as this is the only way to achieve true success in this world and completely escape punishment in the next world also.

Strengthening Faith - 82

Financial interest denotes the amount that a lender receives from a borrower at a fixed rate of interest. At the time of the revelation of the Holy Quran many forms of interest transactions were practiced. Of these one was that the vendor sold an article and fixed a time limit for the payment of the price, stipulating that if the buyer failed to pay within the specified period of time they would extend the time limit but increase the price of the article. Another was that a person loaned a sum of money to another person and stipulated that the borrower should return a specified amount in excess of the amount loaned within a given time limit. A third form of interest transaction was that the borrower and vendor agreed that the former would repay the loan within a certain limit at a fixed rate of interest, and that if they failed to do so within the limit the lender would extend the time limit but at the same time would increase the rate of interest. It is transactions such as these that the injunctions mentioned here apply.

Those who believe this fail to differentiate between the profit gained from lawful investment and financial interest. As a result of this confusion some argue that if profit on money invested in a business is lawful why should the profit made from a loan be deemed unlawful? They argue that instead of a person investing their wealth they loan it to somebody who in turn makes a profit out of it. In such circumstances why should the borrower not pay the lender a part of the profit? They fail to recognize that no business venture is immune from risk. No venture carries an absolute guarantee of profit. Therefore, it is not fair that the financier alone should be considered entitled to a profit at a fixed rate in all circumstances and should be protected against any chance of loss. It is not a part of justice that those who dedicate their resources are not guaranteed profit at any fixed rate whereas

those who lend their wealth are fully secured against all risks of loss and are guaranteed profit at a fixed rate.

In a normal lawful transaction a buyer derives benefit from an item which they purchase from a seller. The seller receives compensation for the effort and time spent on making the item. In interest-related transactions on the other hand, exchange of benefits does not take place equitably. The interest receiving party receives a fixed amount as a payment for the loan they gave and thus their gain is secured. The other party can make use of the funds loaned but it may not always yield a profit. If such a person spends the borrowed funds on a need there will be no profit. Even if the funds are invested then one stands the chance of both making a profit or incurring a loss. Hence an interest-related transaction causes either a loss on one side and a profit on the other or an assured and fixed profit on one side and an uncertain profit on the other. Therefore, lawful trade is not equal to financial interest.

In addition, the burden of interest makes it extremely difficult for borrowers to repay the loan. They may even have to borrow from another source in order to pay off the original loan and interest. Because of the way interest works the sum outstanding against them often remains even after they have repaid the loan. This financial pressure can prevent people obtaining the necessities of life for themselves and their families. This stress can lead to many physical and mental problems.

Ultimately, in this type of system only the rich get richer while the poor get poorer.

Even though dealing with financial interest may outwardly seem that a person gains wealth but in reality it only causes an overall loss to them. This loss can take many forms. For example, it may lead them to losing good and lawful business dealings they could have obtained if they refrained from dealing with financial interest. Allah, the Exalted, may cause them to use their wealth in ways which do not please them. For example, they may encounter physical ailments which causes them to spend their precious unlawful wealth thereby failing to use it in ways pleasing to them. The overall loss has a spiritual aspect also. The more they deal with financial interest the greater their greed becomes meaning, their greed for worldly things is never satisfied which by definition makes them poor even if they possess much wealth. These people will go from one worldly issue to another throughout the day failing to achieve contentment as they lost the grace which accompanies lawful business and wealth. This may even push them towards gaining more unlawful wealth through financial interest and other means. The loss in the hereafter is more obvious. They will be left empty handed on the Day of Judgement as no good deed which is rooted in the unlawful, such as giving charity with unlawful wealth, is accepted by Allah, the Exalted. It does not take a scholar to determine where this person is likely to end up on Judgement Day.

There is a huge difference between lawful business transactions and interest-related transactions. The former plays a beneficial role in society whereas the latter leads to its decline. By its very nature interest breeds greed, selfishness, apathy and cruelty towards others. It leads to the worship of wealth and destroys compassion and unity with others. Thus it can ruin society from both an economic and a moral viewpoint.

Charity, on the other hand, is the outcome of generosity and compassion. Due to mutual co-operation and goodwill the society will develop positively which in turn benefits everyone. It is obvious that if there is a society whose individuals are selfish in their dealings with one another, in which the interests of the rich are directly opposed to the interests of the common people, that society does not rest on stable foundations. In such a society, instead of love and compassion there is bound to grow mutual spite and bitterness.

To conclude, when people fulfil their own needs and the needs of their dependents and then spend in charitable ways with their surplus wealth or take part in mutually lawful business ventures then the trade, industry, and agriculture in such a society will improve. The standard of living within the society will rise and production in it will be much higher than in societies where economic activity is constricted by financial interest.

Strengthening Faith - 83

Severe warnings over failing to donate the obligatory charity have been given in the Holy Quran and the Hadiths of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. For example, a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1403, warns that the person who does not donate their obligatory charity will encounter a large poisonous snake which will continuously bite them on the Day of Judgement. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 180:

“And let not those who [greedily] withhold what Allah has given them of His bounty ever think that it is better for them. Rather, it is worse for them. Their necks will be encircled by what they withheld on the Day of Resurrection...”

According to a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4019, when the members of a society withhold the obligatory charity Allah, the Exalted, will withhold rain and if it was not for the animals He would not let it rain at all. This major sin is therefore one potential cause of the long periods of drought some nations face.

Not offering the obligatory charity is a sign of extreme greed as it is only an extremely tiny portion of one's wealth namely, 2.5%. It is clear that the

miser is far from Allah, the Exalted, the people and close to Hell. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1961.

Muslims must understand that donating the obligatory charity does not only protect them from punishment but it leads to blessings in one's life which far outweigh the wealth they donated. In fact, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has made it clear in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6592, that charity does not decrease one's wealth. This means that when one donates Allah, the Exalted, compensates them. For example, He provides them with business opportunities which cause them to gain more wealth than they donated. This repayment is confirmed in many places of the Holy Quran for example, chapter 57 Al Hadid, verse 11:

“Who is it that would loan Allah a goodly loan so He will multiply it for him and he will have a noble reward?”

In addition, this Hadith could indicate that as each person's provision is pre-recorded whatever wealth which is destined to be spent on them will never change irrespective of how much wealth a person donates. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6748.

A muslim must therefore avoid the wrath of Allah, the Exalted, by donating a very small fraction of their wealth in the form of the obligatory charity

while hoping for a reward which is much greater both in this world and the next.

Strengthening Faith - 84

A great obstacle to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, is weakness of faith. It is a blameworthy characteristic which gives rise to other negative characteristics, such as failing to act on one's knowledge, fearing others, placing the obedience of people above the obedience to Allah, the Exalted, having hope in forgiveness without striving for it and other undesired characteristics. The greatest affliction of weakness of faith is that it allows one to commit sins, such as neglecting the obligatory duties. The root cause of weakness of faith is ignorance of Islam.

One should strive to gain knowledge in order to strengthen their faith. With time they will eventually reach certainty of faith which is so strong that it safeguards a person through all tests and trials and ensures they fulfil their duties both religious and worldly. This knowledge is obtained when one studies the teachings of the Holy Quran and the Hadiths of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Specifically, those teachings which discuss the promises of reward for those who are obedient and the punishment for those who are disobedient to Allah, the Exalted. This creates fear of punishment and hope of reward in a muslim's heart which acts like a pull and push mechanism towards the obedience of Allah, the Exalted.

One can strengthen their faith by reflecting on the creations within the Heavens and the Earth. When done correctly this clearly indicates the

Oneness of Allah, the Exalted, and His infinite power. Chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 53:

“We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth...”

For example, if a muslim ponders over the night and day and how perfectly in sync they are and the other things linked to them they will truly believe that this is not a random thing meaning, there is a force which ensures everything runs like clockwork. This is the infinite power of Allah, the Exalted. In addition, if one ponders over the perfect timing of the night and day they will realise it clearly indicates that there is only one God namely, Allah, the Exalted. If there were more than one God each god would desire the night and day to occur according to their own desires. This would lead to utter chaos as one God might desire the Sun to rise whereas the other God might desire the night to continue. The perfect uninterrupted system found within the universe proves there is only one God namely, Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 21 Al Anbiya, verse 22:

“Had there been within them [i.e., the heavens and earth] gods besides Allah, they both would have been ruined...”

Another thing which can strengthen one's faith is to persist in righteous deeds and abstain from all sins. As faith is belief supported by actions it

weakens when sins are committed and strengthens when good deeds are performed. For example, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, once warned in a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 5662, that a muslim is not a believer when they drink alcohol.

Strengthening Faith - 85

A great obstacle to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, is earning and using unlawful wealth. This is a major sin and must be avoided at all costs. It is clear from the Holy Quran and the Hadiths of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, that Allah, the Exalted, does not accept any righteous deed which has a foundation in the unlawful. For example, the one who earns unlawful wealth and then uses it to perform the Holy Pilgrimage will find that they have wasted their time and apart from sins they have gained nothing. This attitude completely contradicts possessing the fear of Allah, the Exalted. He only accepts things from those who fear Him. Chapter 5 Al Ma'idah, verse 27:

“...Indeed, Allah only accepts from the righteous [who fear Him].”

A Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1410, warns that Allah, the Exalted, only accepts lawful wealth which is spent to please Him. In fact, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, clearly warned in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 2346, that even the supplication of the one who earns and uses unlawful wealth is rejected by Allah, the Exalted.

In reality, a person only needs a little to survive in this world. It is clear from the righteous predecessors that it is possible to completely abstain from

unlawful or doubtful wealth by leading a moderate life which is far from extravagance. It is obvious one only leans towards unlawful wealth because of their unnecessary desires and wishes.

To conclude, it is important for muslims to avoid the four major obstacles to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, which have been discussed in this short book. The first step is to obtain correct Islamic knowledge from a reliable source. Then one must strive to act on it by fulfilling their obligatory duties, the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and their worldly responsibilities all sincerely for the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted. This attitude will lead one around the obstacles to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, and safely guide them to the gates of Paradise.

Strengthening Faith - 86

In a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 2141, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that wealth is not bad as long as the one who possesses it has piety. He added that good health was better than wealth and concluded that being cheerful is a blessing.

The muslim who possesses piety will always spend their wealth in the correct way namely, in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. So for them it will become a blessing in both worlds. It is important to note, spending in the correct way goes beyond charity and includes all types of lawful useful spending which is void of excessiveness, wasting or extravagance, such as spending on one's necessities and the necessities of their dependents. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 4006.

Piety is only achieved by learning and acting on Islamic knowledge.
Chapter 35 Fatir, verse 28:

"...Only those fear Allāh, from among His servants, who have knowledge..."

This knowledge will ensure a Muslim understands how to use their wealth, and their other worldly blessings, correctly. They will understand that using these blessings correctly leads to peace and success in both worlds whereas misusing them leads to stress and difficulties in both worlds. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

Even though this type of wealth is a great blessing but having good health whereby one fulfills all their practical duties to Allah, the Exalted, and the creation independently, is a greater blessing. This is obvious as the rich happily spend their wealth in order to remain healthy and avoid sickness. One should therefore make use of their good health by striving in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by performing voluntary righteous deeds, such as offering their obligatory prayers at the Mosque with congregation and by performing voluntary fasts, before a day comes when they lose their good health and are left with regrets.

Finally, it is important for muslims to adopt positive characteristics, such as cheerfulness, as this is not only the tradition of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, but also helps to tackle the different difficulties and tests one will face during their life. The one who adopts a positive mindset will more easily be patient during these times.

Whereas, those who adopt a general negative and pessimistic mentality will become more easily impatient and disobedient to Allah, the Exalted, during times of difficulties. A muslim should regularly review the countless blessings they were granted in order to maintain a positive mindset. In addition, they must gain and act on Islamic knowledge, as this will encourage them to understand the reality that Allah, the Exalted, only decrees what is best for people, even if this is not obvious to them. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

Strengthening Faith - 87

I had a thought which I wanted to share. I was pondering over the countless people in this world and the countless different paths they are journeying down. This in itself is an indication of the infinite power of Allah, the Exalted. Even though, there are billions of people yet no two people walk the exact same path in life. Understanding these signs strengthens one's faith but this chapter will discuss something else.

Whenever a Muslim finds themselves on a lawful path they should firstly show true gratitude to Allah, the Exalted, by using the blessings He alone granted them in the way prescribed by Islam. The other important thing is that a Muslim should never look down on others believing that their path is somehow superior to the path of others especially those who are on a lawful path also. This only leads to pride which will lead one to Hell. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 266. Instead, they should firstly understand that they are unaware of the final outcome of their life or the lives of others. Someone on an unlawful path can easily sincerely repent and be saved before death.

Secondly, in the case of others on a lawful path a Muslim should understand that each person has been granted the best path for them which differs from the best possible path of others. For example, one Muslim may spend most of their time in a Mosque and another Muslim may spend most of their time on lawful worldly things, such as an occupation. The first Muslim is not better than the second as each person is on the best

path for them. If they swapped places it would most likely lead them to destruction. For example, if they swapped the one who now spends time in a Mosque could adopt pride and thus be destroyed. So it is better for them to be involved in lawful worldly things. On the other hand, the other Muslim who now dedicates most of their time to the material world could get lost in it and head towards the unlawful. So it would be better for this Muslim to spend most of their time in a Mosque.

Therefore, Muslims should never be jealous nor look down upon each other as each person is on the best possible path for them, as long as this path is lawful. This attitude will always lead to humility and mutual love for each other and according to a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2510, sincerely loving each other for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, is a characteristic which leads one to Paradise. It is important to note, this discussion does not mean one should not try to improve themselves by acting on the teachings of Islam. It means they should be happy for others who are journeying down a lawful path.

Strengthening Faith - 88

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. One of the powerful weapons the Devil uses in order to misguide people is to beautify an element of this world in order to create a fantasy which looks appealing. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 63:

"By Allāh, We did certainly send [messengers] to nations before you, but Satan made their deeds attractive to them..."

When a person observes others, the Devil will take a snapshot of that moment and beautify it in such a way that the person creates a whole fantasy world from it in their mind. For example, a person will observe a family who took a selfie while on holiday and this single moment is taken out of context by the person so that it distracts from obeying Allah, the Exalted, which involves using the blessings He has granted them in ways pleasing to Him. For example, they might get jealous of the family and their moment of happiness on their holiday. Jealousy always leads to other negative traits such as bitterness. It may also cause them to belittle the good things Allah, the Exalted, has granted them. The one who behaves in this manner can never be grateful to Allah, the Exalted. The beautification process can also encourage them to strive to adopt the lifestyle which has been created in their imagination. This often causes one to misuse the blessings they have been granted. It causes them to strive for the material world beyond their needs and causes them to neglect their responsibilities and duties. This always leads to stress and even sins. This in turn, will

prevent one from preparing adequately for the Day of Judgement, which involves fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

These are just some examples of what occurs when one falls for the Devil's trick. A Muslim should always remember that as they are looking at a moment from another person's life, they can never understand the difficulties and stresses they are facing. They merely see a small, narrow and exterior aspect of a situation which is very often misleading. For example, the family taking the selfie may well be hating their holiday and spending time with each other and only smile for the photo they have taken. A photo does not reveal the difficulties of family life. A Muslim must always remember that Allah, the Exalted, gives each person what is best for them, even if this is not obvious to them. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

They should therefore concentrate on using the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as their peace and success in both worlds lies in this. It does not lie in pursuing a fantasy concocted by the Devil from a single moment of someone else's life. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

Strengthening Faith - 89

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. The Companions of the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, clearly stand out as the best group of people that have ever existed, second only to the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them. One of the things which made them great was their high aims and aspirations. In everything they did and said they always aimed for the hereafter instead of aiming for the material world. Even if one removes their abundant worship and only observes their daily activities, they will clearly see a group of people who truly believed in the hereafter, as the majority of their daily efforts were dedicated to the hereafter, as they always used the blessings they were granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, and avoided using them in vain and sinful ways. On the other hand, if one removes the obligatory prayers from a modern Muslim's daily life they will not be able to differentiate them by their daily activities from a non-Muslim. This is only because of their low aspirations and aims. Meaning, the vast majority of their efforts are dedicated to this material world, just like a non-Muslim. One should not fool themselves into believing that they are doing the same thing as the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, did. Yes, the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, took part in business and raised families but the way they did these things were totally rooted in the teachings of Islam. They earned and spent only in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, and avoided anything which would not benefit them in the hereafter. How many Muslims can claim they behave in this way? The Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, got married but they chose a spouse based completely on the teachings of Islam and strived hard to fulfill the rights of their spouse according to the teachings of Islam instead of according to their own desires. How many Muslims can claim they behave in this manner? The Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, raised

children by teaching them the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and taught them to prioritize preparing for the hereafter over this world, by using the blessings they were granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. Whereas, most Muslim parents today, only teach their children how to recite the Holy Quran without understanding it and acting on it and put their full effort in encouraging them to succeed in earning lots of wealth and buying lots of properties.

Modern Muslims do copy the actions of the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, but as their aims and aspirations are focused on the material world they are very apart from the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them.

One must live their life in a way so that it becomes apparent to someone observing their day to day activities that they truly believe in the hereafter, as their aims and aspirations are all pointing towards the hereafter. This is achieved when one uses the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. One cannot behave like this only during the five obligatory prayers, which takes less than an hour of a day, and instead show this attitude in every action and word. This was the attitude of the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, and is one of the reasons behind their greatness.

Strengthening Faith - 90

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. One of the main delusions of this world and a weapon of the Devil is when one convinces themselves that they are different from others and will therefore not share the fate of the vast majority of people who adopted a certain way of life and path. For example, many people who are not rich and famous, observe celebrities who are drowned in mental disorders, such as anxiety, stress and substance addiction, as a consequence of their way of life, and they falsely believe that if they were granted fame and fortune their outcome would somehow be different. How many Muslims claim that if they were granted abundant wealth, like the billionaires of this world, they would eradicate world poverty? This particular attitude has even been mentioned in the Holy Quran. Chapter 9 At Tawbah, verses 75-76:

"And among them are those who made a covenant with Allāh, [saying], "If He should give us from His bounty, we will surely spend in charity, and we will surely be among the righteous." But when He gave them from His bounty, they were stingy with it and turned away while they refused."

Another common example is when one chooses a person of bad character to marry, even though their relatives and friends warn them against it. But they foolishly believe that unlike the vast majority of people who married someone of bad character and suffered as a result, they will not meet this

fate and instead somehow reform their spouse so they become a model Muslim and citizen.

A final common example, similar to the one mentioned earlier, is that even though Islam recommends and encourages Muslims to only earn the lawful wealth they need to fulfill their necessities and responsibilities, as the majority of people who earn more than this only become greedy or wasteful and extravagant, yet many Muslims ignore the outcome of the majority and claim that they will be different and will only spend their excessive wealth in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. If this was true they would be no poverty in the world.

The truth is that even though people possess different characteristics, yet people are still people. If the majority of people failed to sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, when adopting a certain way of life, in most cases, the one who follows them will fail also.

A Muslim must use the perception Allah, the Exalted, granted them in order to make the right choices in life. They must observe the choices made by others and the outcome they encountered and not assume they themselves will somehow encounter a different result if they choose the same path as them. One should not think they are special and different from the majority of other people. This attitude prevents one from using their perception correctly and can therefore lead to a disastrous outcome. The wise person chooses a path where the majority of people who journeyed down it succeeded in both worlds. This is the path of learning and acting on the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet

Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. All other paths should be avoided, even if one believes they can transverse it safely, as this is nothing but a deception and a trick from the Devil.

Strengthening Faith - 91

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. One of the most powerful signs which indicates the Oneness of Allah, the Exalted, and His supreme power and authority over the creation is experienced by most people irrespective of their faith or lack of it. When a person faces a genuine difficulty, which cannot be resolved by the means they possess or have access to, they often supplicate to One god, Allah, the Exalted. They do not even appeal to multiple gods as their soul prevents them from doing so during their time of desperation. This is a reality which is often shown in movies and television shows, where a character, who does not even believe in a God, appeals to One God in their moment of need. As hard as movie producers have tried to belittle religion, this reality is still shown quite often in the movie industry.

This innate desire to call on One god, Allah, the Exalted, in desperate times originates from one's soul. The soul which was once in the company of Allah, the Exalted, and testified to His Lordship, Oneness and absolute control and power over all things. Chapter 7 Al A'raf, verse 172:

"And [mention] when your Lord took from the children of Adam - from their loins - their descendants and made them testify of themselves, [saying to them], "Am I not your Lord?" They said, "Yes, we have testified."..."

One should take heed of these moments, as it is clear sign of the Oneness of Allah, the Exalted. This heedfulness will encourage them to believe in Him, if they do not already, and it will encourage them to sincerely obey Him, by using the blessings He has granted them in ways pleasing to Him, as peace and a successful outcome lies in this. This is something one's soul testifies to, especially during times of difficulties. Chapter 10 Yunus, verse 22:

"It is He who enables you to travel on land and sea until, when you are in ships and they sail with them¹ by a good wind and they rejoice therein, there comes a storm wind and the waves come upon them from every place and they expect to be engulfed, they supplicate Allāh, sincere to Him in religion, "If You should save us from this, we will surely be among the thankful.""

And chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 53:

"We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth..."

Strengthening Faith - 92

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. One of the main reasons why many Muslims in the modern world turn away from seeking peace of mind from learning and acting on the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, is because they falsely believe that the teachings of Islam do not cater for their modern stresses, difficulties and problems. They wrongly believe that the teachings of Islam only caters for desert and village dwellers who were living in a bygone era. As a result, they only take the rituals and practices of Islam from Islamic teachings but abandon the day to day living advice that is found in Islamic teachings. This is a foolish mentality, as no matter what era a people belong to, humans are still humans. Meaning, the aims, hopes, aspirations, fears, anxieties and stresses faced by people over the generations have always been the same. Technology has advanced over time but the essence and nature of humans has always been the same. Humans have not evolved into a different species so that their emotions, feelings, desires, aims and wishes are completely different from the people that came in earlier generations. Just like the older generations had the desire to gain fame, fortune, authority, family, friends and a career, so do the modern day people.

As the teachings of Islam target the essence and nature of humans it is therefore timeless and applies to all humans till the Day of Judgement. It will only cease to apply if humans evolve into a different species, which is not going to occur.

In addition, as the knowledge of Islam comes from Allah, the Exalted, the Creator of humans, the advice is accurate and encompasses every aspect of a person's mental and physical makeup. This knowledge lies only with Allah, the Exalted, and no amount of research can ever fully reveal all aspects of a human. Just like an inventor is the best person to seek advice in respect to their invention, Allah, the Exalted, alone is the best One to seek advice regarding the mental and physical wellbeing of a human. Finally, as Allah, the Exalted, controls the hearts of people, the station of emotions, He alone has control over whether one achieves peace of mind and body in this world and the next. Chapter 53 An Najm, verse 43:

"And that it is He who makes [one] laugh and weep."

Allah, the Exalted, has made it clear that with His remembrance and obedience lies good mental and physical health in both worlds. This involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

Whereas, the one who forgets Allah, the Exalted, and instead misuses the blessings they have been granted, will find no peace of mind, irrespective of how many worldly things they own. Chapter 20 Taha, verse 124:

"And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed [i.e., difficult] life..."

To conclude, as long as a person remains human, the timeless teachings of Islam will always apply to them, irrespective of the age they belong to. As long as they remain a creation of Allah, the Exalted, only He can give them the solution to mental and physical wellbeing. Seeking this elsewhere will only lead to poor mental and physical health, which is obvious if one observes social media and the news.

Strengthening Faith - 93

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. One of the difficult realities Muslims are facing in this day and age, is the doubts in Islam caused by the behaviour of other Muslims. This is a reality which every nation has faced and has therefore been discussed in the Holy Quran. Chapter 11 Hud, verse 110:

"And We had certainly given Moses the Scripture, but it came under disagreement. And if not for a word that preceded from your Lord, it would have been judged between them. And indeed they are, concerning it in disquieting doubt."

When the scholars and religious people misused divine teachings for the sake of gaining worldly things, such as wealth and authority, the general population were put off from faith when they observed their bad behaviour. The same reality has also affected Muslims. They observe supposedly religious people who intentionally misinterpret divine teachings thereby failing to implement the correct teachings of Islam. For example, some Muslim nations prevent women from receiving an education, even though it is obligatory for every man and woman to gain knowledge, according to the teachings of Islam, such as the Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224. Another widespread example, is when religious personalities spend all their time, energy and efforts in insulting, criticizing and defaming other Muslims. When the general population observes these types of behaviour they are put off from Islam, even if they do not outwardly show it.

First of all, all Muslims need to represent Islam correctly so that they fulfill their role as the ambassadors of Islam, in order to show the true face of Islam to the world. The root of this is possessing a good intention, to please Allah, the Exalted, and gaining and acting on correct Islamic knowledge, which is rooted in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

Secondly, even though this reality exists, none the less, a Muslim is not excused from turning away from Islam because of the behaviour of others. They must instead gain the correct knowledge of Islam in order to verify for themselves what Islam teaches. There is no excuse in failing to do this, as the correct Islamic knowledge is widely available and accessible to the general public. Only through this method will one eliminate any potential doubts that can arise from observing the incorrect behaviour of other Muslims and prevent these doubts from infecting the coming generations of Muslims.

Strengthening Faith - 94

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. It is obvious when one observes social media that Muslims have become a nation of supplicators. Countless posts and videos can be observed which reference supplications found within Islamic teachings. Even though supplicating to Allah, the Exalted, plays an important role in Islam yet many have overlooked the fact that for supplications to be effective they must be coupled with sincere actions. The supplications in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, are always coupled with sincere actions. For example, chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verses 127-129:

"And [mention] when Abraham was raising the foundations of the House and [with him] Ishmael, [saying], "Our Lord, accept [this] from us. Indeed, You are the Hearing, the Knowing. Our Lord, and make us Muslims [in submission] to You and from our descendants a Muslim nation [in submission] to You. And show us our rites [of worship] and accept our repentance. Indeed, You are the Accepting of Repentance, the Merciful. Our Lord, and send among them a messenger from themselves who will recite to them Your verses and teach them the Book and wisdom and purify them. Indeed, You are the Exalted in Might, the Wise.""

The Holy Prophets Ibrahim and Ismaeel, peace be upon them, were practically building the house of Allah, the Exalted, when they made this supplication. Meaning, their supplication was coupled with sincere good actions.

Another example is chapter 27 An Naml, verses 18-19:

"Until, when they came upon the valley of the ants, an ant said, "O ants, enter your dwellings that you not be crushed by Solomon and his soldiers while they perceive not." So [Solomon] smiled, amused at her speech, and said, "My Lord, enable me to be grateful for Your favor which You have bestowed upon me and upon my parents and to do righteousness of which You approve. And admit me by Your mercy into [the ranks of] Your righteous servants.""

It is obvious that the Holy Prophet Suleiman, peace be upon him, lived up to this supplication by showing gratitude to Allah, the Exalted, by using the blessings he was granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. He did not simply supplicate and fail to couple it with actions.

In addition, even the timings recommended for supplicating to Allah, the Exalted, are closely linked to physical actions. For example, a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3499, advises that Allah, the Exalted, readily accepts the supplication made after the obligatory prayers and in the last part of the night. Both of these times for supplications are connected to physical actions: the obligatory prayers and the night voluntary prayer.

There are many Hadiths which warn against certain actions which prevent the acceptance of a supplication. For example, a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2989, clearly warns that the supplication of a person who earns and consumes the unlawful will never be accepted. It is obvious that supplicating for certain things while performing actions which contradict the supplication is futile. For example, the one who supplicates for protection from Hell, yet persistently commits the sins which lead to Hell. Or the one who supplicates for Paradise yet fails to establish the righteous deeds which lead to Paradise, such as the obligatory prayers.

In addition, Islam makes it clear that a person cannot simply supplicate for success without actively striving for it. For example, Allah, the Exalted, commands the believers to take their precautions during fighting, He does not simply tell them to only supplicate to Him for success. Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 71:

"O you who have believed, take your precaution and [either] go forth in companies or go forth all together."

Even when a married couple have issues, Allah, the Exalted, does not simply tell them to supplicate to Him. He instead urges them to take practical steps to fix the issues. Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 35:

"And if you fear dissension between the two, send an arbitrator from his people and an arbitrator from her people. If they both desire reconciliation, Allāh will cause it between them. Indeed, Allāh is ever Knowing and Aware."

Even the greatest and most recited supplication is actively recited during every cycle of the prayer, thereby indicating that supplications must be coupled with sincere actions in order to be effective. Chapter 1 Al Fatihah, verses 5-7:

"It is You we worship and You we ask for help. Guide us to the straight path. The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favor, not of those who have earned [Your] anger or of those who are astray."

This discussion so far makes it clear that supplication by itself is not effective unless it is coupled with sincere actions. This is clear when one observes the attitude and behaviour of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and his Companions, may Allah be pleased with them.

Therefore, one should utilize supplications correctly by supporting them with sincere and righteous actions. If one faces a difficulty, they must use the resources they have been granted in order to solve the issue practically, such as difficulties amongst relatives, and then supplicate for

relief. One without the other is not the Islamic way. A sick person should seek medical advice and take medicine according to the teachings of Islam and also supplicate for relief. A person desiring a child, must get married first and try having a child with their spouse and then supplicate for it to occur. A person who desires to pass their exam must study and then supplicate for success. One must practically aid others in difficulty according to their means, such as financial support, and also supplicate to Allah, the Exalted, on their behalf. One must adhere to the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by using the blessings He has granted them in ways pleasing to Him, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, then supplicate for good things in both worlds.

Unfortunately, becoming a lazy nation of supplicators who fail to couple their supplications with sincere and righteous actions is one of the major reasons why the Islamic nation as a whole and the faith of the individual Muslims has dramatically weakened over time.

Strengthening Faith - 95

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. Chapter 57 Al Hadid, verse 16:

"Has the time not come for those who have believed that their hearts should become humbly submissive at the remembrance of Allāh and what has come down of the truth? And let them not be like those who were given the Scripture before, and a long period passed over them, so their hearts hardened..."

This verse indicates that as time progressed, the people of the book treated their faith as a bunch of empty practices, just like one fulfils cultural practices. The issue with treating faith like a cultural practice is that with the passing of time people give up cultural practices. For example, one will often observe a father who dresses according to his culture and heritage yet their child will dress according to a different culture. Therefore, as time passed for the people of the book, they eventually abandoned practicing on their faith, as they were nothing but empty practices to them, and their faith became just an empty shell whereby people claimed to believe yet failed to practice their religion. This is quite evident when one observes people today who claim to follow certain religions yet do not act upon their teachings at all. Once upon a time their religious institutions were always full of devoted learners and worshippers, now they are empty.

Unfortunately, the same thing has occurred with Muslims who, with the passing of time, observed their religion as a few empty practices, which eventually the coming generations abandoned.

The earlier generation of Muslims were devoted to Islam and therefore it was a way of life for them, not just practices and rituals. They dedicated themselves to learning and acting on the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and therefore Islam influenced their every word and action and every sphere of their lives, such as their personal, social, financial and work life. To them, Islam had fused with their blood and became inseparable from their daily activities. Practices can be abandoned, whereas something which is a way of life cannot be. For example, someone can give up a hobby because they do not feel like doing it but they cannot give up food or breathing oxygen for prolonged periods, as the latter is a way and means for life whereas the former is only a practice.

This attitude of the righteous predecessors has, in most cases, been abandoned, just like the people from other religions abandoned the teachings of their faith, as Islam is now observed as a set of practices and rituals with no real effect on one's day to day activities or conduct. This is the reason why the Mosques, which were always full during the five daily congregational prayers, are now practically empty. Only the practice of the Friday congregational prayer remains, but if things continue as they are, even that will be abandoned by the coming generations.

In addition, blind imitation of others is not good enough, as it prevents one from appreciating that Islam is a way of life and instead convinces them and those who observe them, such as the next generation, that Islam is only a few empty rituals and practices, which can be abandoned, just like cultural practices can be abandoned.

The way to avoid this outcome is to understand that Islam is not a bunch of practices, rather, it is a way of life which affects every moment of a Muslim. This understanding only comes when one learns and acts upon the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, as this ensures that every aspect of a person's life is connected to Islam. This ensures one uses the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. This in turn leads to peace and success in both worlds. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

Strengthening Faith - 96

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. In this time of widespread oppression of innocent people all around the world, it is a duty of a Muslim to object to evil according to their capacity and within the laws of Islam. Many Muslims carry out this important duty, especially on social media, by quoting verses of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, which mention the threats given to oppressors. But it is important to note that these verses and traditions apply to all people, including oneself. When one observes mass oppression of people, such as mass killings, it is easy for a Muslim to belittle their own disobedience of Allah, the Exalted, and their own oppression of the rights of others by comparing it to the mass oppression carried out by others. For example, a Muslim who persistently behaves in a rude manner towards their spouse will belittle this act of oppression by observing the mass oppression of people in the news. They then concentrate on hurling verses of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, which threaten oppressors to the people they observe in the news but forget to apply these Islamic teachings to themselves and their behaviour. Even though some types of oppression are worse than others, none the less, oppression is still oppression, and all forms of it will lead to darkness for the oppressor. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 2447.

This discussion does not mean one should not object to evil according to their strength and within the bounds of Islamic law, but it means they should not forget the acts of disobedience and oppression they commit by belittling them when comparing them to the mass oppression caused by others. One must continue objecting to evil but also constantly assess their

own actions in light of Islamic teachings so that they remove any aspect of oppression they commit through failing to fulfill the rights of Allah, the Exalted, or wronging people. Otherwise, they may well find that on Judgement Day they are raised with the very oppressors they objected to, during their life on Earth. Chapter 14 Ibrahim, verse 42:

"And never think that Allāh is unaware of what the wrongdoers do. He only delays them [i.e., their account] for a Day when eyes will stare [in horror]."

Strengthening Faith - 97

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. Every Muslim, irrespective of the strength of their faith, believes in the reality of Judgement Day, as this is one of the main pillars of faith. But the strength of one's belief in Judgement Day varies between Muslims. Even though assessing someone's exact level of belief in Judgement Day is beyond the capability of humans, as this is a hidden matter, yet there are some signs which do indicate the strength of one's belief. One of these signs is how much or little a Muslim is dedicated to learning and acting upon the two sources of guidance: the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. The stronger one's belief in Judgement Day, the more they will practically prepare for it. This is only possible when one learns and acts on the two sources of guidance, which in turn shows them how to use the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. So the stronger one's belief in Judgement Day, the more they will practice on the two sources of guidance and the weaker one's belief, the less they will practice on the two sources of guidance. This is why the one who does not believe in Judgement Day will not bother with the two sources of guidance, as they have no need to prepare for something they do not believe in. From this, one can assess how much they truly believe in the Day of Judgement. If they hardly learn and act on the two sources of guidance, it indicates that they hardly believe in Judgement Day, even if they claim otherwise. Every Muslim must regularly conduct this self-assessment so that they ensure they do not fool themselves into believing they possess strong faith in Judgement Day, even though, practically speaking, they hardly believe in it.

Strengthening Faith - 98

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. It is important for Muslims to regularly judge and assess the strength of their faith in order to ensure they are heading in the right direction in life and improving themselves step by step. One of the best ways one can do this is by observing their condition in between the five daily obligatory prayers. Even though offering the five daily obligatory prayers is an excellent start but one must bear in mind that even the hypocrites in the time of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, would even pray. One must instead observe their condition in between the five daily obligatory prayers. They should assess their aims, desires, hopes and fears in order to evaluate whether they are living in the right way. All of these things influences how one uses the blessings they have been granted by Allah, the Exalted. The more one focuses their aims, desires, hopes and fears on the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, and preparing for the hereafter, the more they will use the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Him. This has been outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

If one finds that they are using the blessings they have been granted in ways which are vain or sinful, then they are failing to fulfil the purpose of their creation and have forgotten Allah, the Exalted, for the vast majority of their day, even if they pray. This will lead to stress and trouble in both worlds. Chapter 20 Taha, verse 124:

"And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed [i.e., difficult] life..."

A Muslim must improve the strength of their faith by firstly minimizing using the blessings they have been granted in sinful ways. Then they must strive to minimize using these blessings in vain ways. They should assess each blessing and apply this model until they find that they are using all the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. This is the path to peace of mind and success in both worlds, as the Controller of the hearts will not allow this Muslim to suffer a dark and constricted life in either this world or the next. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

Strengthening Faith - 99

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. With the increased social media presence in the lives of all people and the ease with which one can socialize with others, it is important for Muslims to understand a key aspect of useful self-reflection. Self-reflection is needed to correctly assess a situation in order to make a sound and good judgement on how to deal with it. This is true in both worldly and religious matters. This self-reflection is only possible when one turns inwards and temporarily cuts off from external communication, such as talking to others. This is because a situation a person is experiencing can never be fully understood by another person, irrespective of how well they know each other. As every situation one faces creates different emotions and feelings which cannot be experienced by another, even if they experience a similar situation, as each person is different and therefore views and reacts to situations differently from others. This is why seeking advice from too many people only leads to confusion and making the wrong choices in life.

So even though seeking expert advice is recommended in both religious and worldly matters, one must still self-reflect over the situation in order to make the right decision according to their needs, character and ability.

In addition, it is not possible to multi task with self-reflection, just like a student cannot study correctly and surf on social media at the same time. But the one who is constantly drowned in socializing, whether they are listening and watching something, talking to someone or texting, will never

make the right judgement in respect to the situations they face, as they fail to truly self-reflect over them. It has become so bad that most people cannot even walk to a bus stop without socializing with others.

This self-reflection is important in all small religious and worldly matters, such as issues at work, and is important in respect to one's sense of direction and purpose in life. The one who over socializes, thereby failing to take regular time out to self-reflect, will lead a pointless and aimless life whereby they do not aim nor strive to fulfil their good aspirations, hopes and aims.

A Muslim must take time out to self-reflect so that they regularly question their purpose, the path they are on and whether they are heading in the right direction. It is through this one can correctly assess the worldly and religious situations they encounter and deal with them appropriately and ensure that they are heading in the right direction in life, so that they find peace and success in both worlds.

Strengthening Faith - 100

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. For most Muslims, believing that the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted, leads to Paradise is not much of a leap of faith. This is because this concept has been infused into their minds from a young age and is quite obvious to accept also. The real leap of faith actually involves believing that the one who uses the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, which is outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, will obtain peace of mind and body in this world. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

And chapter 13 Ar Ra'd, verse 28:

"...Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah do hearts find peace."

One of the reasons this reality is hard to accept is that it seems to outwardly contradict logic. Logic dictates that a person will only find peace and happiness when they fulfill their desires. In addition, when people observe social media, culture, fashion and the majority of other people, they all point towards and encourage one to obtain peace and happiness through fulfilling their desires. Even the Devil will not deny that the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, leads to Paradise but he scares Muslims from using their blessings in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, beyond the basic obligatory duties, by convincing them that if they did this they would experience a miserable life in this world.

All these reasons and more prevent one from using their blessings in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as they fear giving up their desires will prevent them from being happy and obtaining peace of mind. Instead, people unconsciously claim that if Allah, the Exalted, grants them peace then they will use their blessings correctly in order to obtain more. But Allah, the Exalted, has made it clear that a person will not gain peace until they use the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Him first. This leads to a person becoming inactive thereby preventing them from acting correctly and obtaining peace of mind and body.

One must study, learn and act on the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in order to strengthen their faith, which will encourage them to take this leap of faith so that they obtain peace of mind and body in both worlds. For example, when one believes with certainty that the Controller of hearts is none but Allah, the Exalted, then they understand that no worldly desire will lead to peace of mind if one fails to use the worldly blessings they have been granted correctly. Whereas, no difficulty will prevent them from

obtaining peace of mind, as long as they use the blessings they have been granted correctly, just like the Holy Prophet Ibrahim, peace be upon him, obtaining peace and security in the midst of a fire. Chapter 21 An Anbiya, verses 68-69:

"They said, "Burn him [Prophet Ibrahim, peace be upon him] and support your gods - if you are to act." We [i.e., Allāh] said, "O fire, be coolness and safety upon Abraham.""

Strengthening Faith - 101

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. One of the main reasons why Muslims strive hard to obtain their worldly desires, at the cost of practically preparing for Judgement Day, is their fear of losing out on obtaining their desires in this world. This fear is an extremely powerful tool which the Devil manipulates in order to distract a Muslim from preparing for the hereafter, which involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. In order to avoid this outcome, a Muslim must always remember that as long as they internally believe in Islam and actively practice on its teachings they will never face losing out on anything they hoped to gain. This is because a Muslim who genuinely strives hard to obey Allah, the Exalted, has been promised Paradise in the hereafter. Therefore, whatever they desired in this world and were fearful of losing out on obtaining it, they can have in Paradise. They will be able to enjoy the thing they wanted permanently and in it's perfect form. Whereas, even if they obtained what they desire in this world, it would never be permanent or perfect. So in reality, there is no such thing as losing out on anything for a Muslim, as they will either obtain the thing they desire in this world or in the next. Therefore, if they do not obtain it in this world, it will only be a short delay before they obtain it in the hereafter. One only needs to reflect on how fast their life has gone by so far to understand that the hereafter is only a moment away. Chapter 10 Yunus, verse 45:

"And on the Day when He will gather them, [it will be] as if they had not remained [in the world] but an hour of the day..."

Remembering the important reality that for a sincere Muslim, every good desire will be fulfilled, sooner or later, will prevent them from excessively chasing its fulfillment at the loss of preparing for their hereafter. There is no losing out for a sincere Muslim, only a delay.

Strengthening Faith - 102

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. Islam teaches people to be mindful of everything which occurs within their lives and the lives of others, as one can learn valuable lessons from them. For example, witnessing a sick person is a powerful reminder for a Muslim to make use of their good health before they lose it. Similarly, a Muslim should be mindful of their speech and the speech of others, as one can learn important lessons from them. People often experience slip of the tongue moments whereby they say something which may well reflect their inward state even if that is hidden from them and others. For example, when discussing the importance of family to someone, they may well state that the most important thing to a person should be their family. But when one correctly points out to them that the most important one in a Muslim's is Allah, the Exalted, the speaker quickly retracts their statement or replies that, that is what they meant, even though they did not say it. In these slip of the tongue moments, whether it occurs to oneself or others, one must reflect deeply on what was said and assess their own belief and actions to ensure they remain on the right course and continue to sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, and avoid deceiving themselves, even subconsciously.

Similarly, when others joke about something, there is often a layer of truth embedded in their joke. Meaning, a part of them does mean what they say, to a certain degree. One should be mindful of these things as they can learn deeper truths about their own psyche and behaviour, which is always important to monitor and if necessary, to adjust so that it runs in line with the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

Strengthening Faith - 103

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. In reality, there are only two standards a person can live by in this world. The correct standard comes from the Creator and Sustainer of all things, Allah, the Exalted. These standards are discussed in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. The other standard is what the world dictates through social media, culture and fashion. This standard is fickle and changes with time and the one who adheres to them will adopt a fickle mental and physical state. When a Muslim abandons the standard set by Allah, the Exalted, they will inevitably follow the standard set by the world. One of the major issues this leads to is being influenced by normalization. This is when a particular attitude, behaviour or belief becomes acceptable to people as the wider society has accepted it and practices it. This can become a dangerous path to follow as it leads to sins and misguidance. For example, over time backbiting became normalized in society, as it occurs so much in society. As a result, many Muslims indulge in this major sin and dismissively state that everyone does it, whenever they are warned against it. Similarly, many Muslims incorrectly believe that it is enough to internally believe in Islam even if they do not practice on its teachings. As this attitude has become normalized in society, Muslims use the fact that many others behave in this manner to justify them adopting this deviant behaviour. A Muslim must always remember that using normalization in society as justification to commit sins is something Allah, the Exalted, will never accept. If everyone commits a specific sin, He will hold all of them accountable for it, even if it means He punishes them all.

Being negatively influenced by normalization in society can only truly be avoided when one chooses to learn and act on the standard set by Allah, the Exalted. This will ensure they use the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Him. This leads to peace of mind and success in both worlds. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

And chapter 13 Ar Ra'd, verse 28:

"...Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah do hearts find peace."

If one turns away from this standard, then they will inevitably follow the standard of life set by the world. This will cause one to forget Allah, the Exalted, and misuse the blessings they have been granted by Him. This only leads to a difficult life in this world and one's excuse of following what was considered normal in society will not be accepted on Judgement Day either. Chapter 20 Taha, verses 124-126:

"And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed [i.e., difficult] life, and We will gather [i.e., raise] him on the Day of Resurrection blind." He will say, "My Lord, why have you raised me blind while I was [once] seeing?" [Allāh] will say, "Thus did Our signs come to you, and you forgot [i.e., disregarded] them; and thus will you this Day be forgotten.""

Strengthening Faith - 104

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. Muslims often complain that even though they are aware of the consequences they will face in the hereafter by disobeying Allah, the Exalted, namely, entering Hell, and many of them know the details about Hell and its horrors, yet they are not deterred from disobeying Allah, the Exalted. Similarly, even though they have some knowledge about the consequences of sincerely obeying Allah, the Exalted, such as peace of mind in this world and Paradise in the next, yet their knowledge is often not enough to motivate them to sincerely obey Him, which involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Him, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. One of the major causes of this attitude is weakness of faith. This can be understood by an example. When one is shown a scary picture or video, such as a cobra attacking someone, even though the person feels some apprehension, as they imagine being in that scary situation, yet this attitude is not enough to change their behaviour. For example, after seeing the scary picture or video, they do not flee out of fear. Whereas, if a person directly experiences something scary, such as being confronted by a cobra, it will create a greater level of fear in them than the first scenario and they will be motivated to act in order to save themselves from harm, such as fleeing the scene. The same principle applies for observing a beautiful picture/video compared to experiencing a beautiful event. Witnessing the event will always cause a more practical effect on the person than simply viewing it. This is the difference between weak and strong faith. The one who has weak faith will feel fear when they think or hear about the consequences of disobeying Allah, the Exalted, and feel joy when thinking and hearing about the consequences of sincerely obeying Allah, the Exalted. But this fear and joy is not enough to affect their practical behaviour. It is similar to viewing a photo/video of something scary or beautiful. On the other hand, the one who possesses strong faith is blessed with an inner vision so that it is like

they can physically observe the consequences of disobeying and obeying Allah, the Exalted. This inner vision is so powerful that it affects them practically and therefore encourages them to sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, and avoid His disobedience. This inner vision has been discussed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 99.

One must strive to obtain strong faith and adopt this inner vision so that their behaviour towards Allah, the Exalted, and people improves. This is achieved by sincerely gaining and acting on the knowledge of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Without this knowledge and action, one will live without this inner vision and as a result of their weak faith, any reminders of the consequences of sincerely obeying or disobeying Allah, the Exalted, will have little or no effect on their behaviour.

Strengthening Faith - 105

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. One of the main causes of people failing to show patience from the onset of a difficulty is when they lose focus on the bigger picture of life. Every situation a person faces is like only a single jigsaw piece compared to the whole jigsaw puzzle. But when one focuses completely on that single piece, which often represents a difficulty, they lose focus on the whole jigsaw puzzle and as a result, the difficulty appears much more serious than it truly is and its negative consequences seem more severe than they actually are. This hinders one from demonstrating patience, which involves avoiding complaining about the situation through speech or actions while maintaining one's sincere obedience to Allah, the Exalted. One of the best ways to avoid this outcome is to constantly focus on the Day of Judgement. This will help them to understand that their problem or difficulty is not such a big deal, as no Earthly difficulty compares to the difficulties of Judgement Day. Nor are the negative consequences of Earthly difficulties more severe than those of Judgement Day. One must remember that this is a Day when the Sun will be brought within two miles of the creation and each person will sweat according to their deeds. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2421. A Day when the same relatives one stressed about and desperately tried to please, will flee from them. Chapter 80 Abasa, verses 33-37:

"But when there comes the Deafening Blast. On the Day a man will flee from his brother. And his mother and his father. And his wife and his children. For every man, that Day, will be a matter adequate for him."

A Day when one will reflect over their deeds, after they witness Hell.
Chapter 89 Al Fajr, verse 23:

“And brought [within view], that Day, is Hell - that Day, man will remember, but how [i.e., what good] to him will be the remembrance?”

When one focuses on this Day, their worldly problem and difficulty will not seem like a big deal. This attitude will aid them in demonstrating patience from the onset of the difficulty and to evaluate and deal with it in an appropriate manner which minimizes their stress.

In addition, keeping one's focus on Judgement Day will also ensure they turn away, ignore and belittle anything which will not seem important on the Day of Judgement, which includes the difficulties and stresses one faces during their life. Instead, they will focus on the things which will be relevant on the Day of Judgement, such as demonstrating patience in the face of difficulties. Chapter 39 Az Zumar, verse 10:

“...Indeed, the patient will be given their reward without account [i.e., limit].”

Perhaps this correct attitude was part of the reason why the magicians of Pharaoh, who after accepting faith, were not fazed or put off by the threats of physical torture given by Pharaoh, as they were focused on Judgement Day. Chapter 26 Ash Shu'ara, verses 49-50:

"[Pharaoh] said, "You believed him [i.e., Moses] before I gave you permission. Indeed, he is your leader who has taught you magic, but you are going to know. I will surely cut off your hands and your feet on opposite sides, and I will surely crucify you all." They said, "No harm. Indeed, to our Lord we will return.""

Strengthening Faith - 106

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. When one observes the teachings of Islam and the life of others, they can clearly see that there are three ways people can use each blessing they have been granted by Allah, the Exalted, and the consequences of each choice. The first way is to use the blessings one has been granted in sinful ways. This will lead to a potential punishment in both worlds. In this world, their blessings will become a curse for them and a cause of their difficulties and misery. For example, the one who raises their child on the unlawful, will find that their child becomes a source of misery and difficulty for them. Chapter 20 Taha, verse 124:

"And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed [i.e., difficult] life..."

The second way of using the blessings one has been granted is in ways which are considered vain by Islam. This involves using the blessings in ways which are not sinful and nor do they result in a good deed. Behaving in this manner will be a great regret for people in the hereafter, especially when they observe the reward given to those who used their blessings correctly. In addition, using one's blessings in vain ways may well prevent the scales of Judgement Day tipping in their favour. Using the blessings one has been granted in vain ways also results in stress and anxiety in this world. For example, the one who uses their time in vain ways often encounters more stress, such as arguments, than those who avoid using their time in vain ways. Those who seek more wealth than they need to

fulfill their responsibilities often stress more than those who only seek and utilise according to their needs.

The final way a person can use the worldly blessings they have been granted is in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. This is in fact showing gratitude to Him and therefore leads to an increase in blessings. Chapter 14 Ibrahim, verse 7:

“And [remember] when your Lord proclaimed, 'If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favor]...”

In addition, behaving in this manner is remembering Allah, the Exalted, and therefore leads to peace of mind and body. Chapter 13 Ar Ra'd, verse 28:

“...Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah do hearts find peace.”

The one who behaves in this manner has fulfilled the purpose of their creation and will therefore lead a good, purposeful and meaningful life in both worlds. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

Finally, even when this person faces difficulties they will be rightly guided to respond with patience and receive further blessings and reward. They will be like the patient under anesthesia who does not feel the pain of treatment they are being administered. Meaning, they may face difficulties but their heart will always be at peace.

To conclude, these are the three ways and consequences one can use the blessings they have been granted. It does not take a scholar to conclude which way a person should act upon.

Strengthening Faith - 107

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. People often confuse the things which they have no power over with the things they have control over and are responsible for. As a result of this confusion, they fail to adopt the correct mentality and behaviour thereby missing out on obtaining the peace of mind which Islam offers. Instead, their confusion causes them to adopt an unbalanced mental and physical state which causes them to swing from one extreme mood to another in a short space of time, which results in mental disorders, such stress, anxiety and depression.

One must understand certain things in order to avoid this outcome. There are two elements in one's life. The first are the things which are external and they have no control over them, such as falling sick. These things are connected to destiny and the divine will and cannot be averted or avoided. The second element is internal and is linked to one's behaviour. This element a person has complete control over and is what they will be judged on by Allah, the Exalted.

The confusion occurs when one fails to understand that they have control over their behaviour and are responsible for it, and as a result they fail to adopt a balanced state of mind whereby they do not become overly happy meaning, exultant, in times of ease and overly sad, meaning, grief, in times of difficulties. Instead, they fail to adopt control over their behaviour and instead treat it as if it is out of their control and a part of destiny, just like the external situations they face. As a result of failing to control themselves,

they become exultant over insignificant things and extremely upset over insignificant and petty issues. Whenever they recover from their extreme behaviour they simply shrug their shoulders and comment that such is life and that is the way it is. As a result, they do not improve their behaviour with time, nor learn from their experiences, as they do not take responsibility for their behaviour and instead place it with the things they have no control over. This is an incredibly rude and foolish attitude to adopt as one blames Allah, the Exalted, the One who decides destiny, for their bad behaviour and attitude, even though their behaviour is fully under their control.

When one adopts this attitude they will come to believe that swinging from one extreme mood to another is simply a norm in this world and that is how life was supposed to be lived. This is closer to a mentally unstable person's lifestyle than a balanced Muslim's life, a balance which Islam teaches.

To conclude, one must avoid confusing what they do not have control over with what they have full control over i.e. their behaviour and attitude. By differentiating between the two, a Muslim can and will learn from their experiences and with the support of Islamic knowledge, they will adopt a balanced state of mind whereby they avoid extreme moods. This leads to peace and mind in this world. Chapter 57 Al Hadid, verses 22-23:

"No disaster strikes upon the earth or among yourselves except that it is in a register, before We bring it into being - indeed that, for Allāh, is easy. In order that you not despair over what has eluded you and not exult over what He has given you..."

Strengthening Faith - 108

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. It is important for Muslims to differentiate between being steadfast in Islam and adopting stubbornness in Islam. Even though they can outwardly appear similar yet they are very different. Stubbornness in faith is the result of blind imitation and not learning and acting on Islamic knowledge. Blind imitation is disliked in Islam, as people have been created with a high mental ability and should therefore not act like cattle, who blindly follow each other. A Muslim must follow the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, who strived to gain and act on Islamic knowledge. Chapter 12 Yusuf, verse 108:

"Say, "This is my way; I invite to Allāh with insight, I and those who follow me..."

Stubbornness in faith therefore does not lead to strong faith. This prevents one from remaining firm on the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in every situation, which involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. A stubborn Muslim may obey Allah, the Exalted, in certain cases but will ultimately fail to obey Him in others, as they do not possess the strong faith required to achieve this.

In addition, stubbornness in faith prevents one from improving their obedience to Allah, the Exalted, as they will not change for the better, if it means contradicting their habits. Whereas, steadfastness in Islam will encourage one to change and improve their behaviour every time they learn something new. For example, the stubborn Muslim will continue to offer their voluntary prayers at the Mosque even after they have been told that it is an established tradition of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, to offer one's voluntary prayers at home with the exception of the two cycles of prayer offered when entering the Mosque. This has been confirmed in many Hadiths, such as the one found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6113. A stubborn Muslim will even hold firmly on to practices which are not taken from the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, even if they have to sacrifice acting on his traditions.

Steadfastness in faith on the other hand, is rooted in gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge. This attitude encourages one to change and improve their behaviour constantly, as they increase their knowledge. It leads to strong faith, which ensures they remain sincerely obedient to Allah, the Exalted, in all situations. This is therefore, the attitude a Muslim must adopt if they desire to achieve peace and success in both worlds. Chapter 46 Al Ahqaf, verse 13:

“Indeed, those who have said, “Our Lord is Allah,” and then remained on a right course - there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve.”

Strengthening Faith - 109

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. Allah, the Exalted, guides those who sincerely try to obey Him. This involves using the blessings He has granted them in ways pleasing to Him, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. But those who persistently disobey Him are left to wander blindly in misguidance. Therefore, it is vital for Muslims to sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, as persistent disobedience leads to corruption of the spiritual heart and one's actions.

This is similar to a person who is warned by a judge not to behave in an unlawful way but after the person persists on this behaviour the judge gives the order for them to be locked up in prison. Therefore, Allah, the Exalted, has not wronged them they have only wronged themselves.

But it is important to note that as being abandoned in misguidance is a spiritual thing and therefore hidden to mankind, it is important for Muslims not to assume certain people have reached this point. Instead they should think positively about all people and therefore sincerely practically aid them in reforming their belief and behaviour.

Allah, the Exalted, has created human beings with the best possible capabilities. He gave them knowledge and power to differentiate between

good and evil and even placed in them an innate inclination to like what is good and to dislike and avoid what is evil. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2389. Allah, the Exalted, has also granted mankind free will to choose between good and evil. This choice plays a role in enhancing or diminishing a person's natural faculties of reason. Chapter 91 Ash Shams, verses 9-10:

“He has succeeded who purifies it [the spiritual heart – the greatest faculty of reason]. And he has failed who instills it [with corruption].”

When a person chooses a path of goodness their natural potential develops and Allah, the Exalted, grants them further support in their efforts. Chapter 29 Al Ankabut, verse 69:

“And those who strive for Us - We will surely guide them to Our ways...”

But if one follows their evil desires and chooses the evil path gradually their spiritual hearts will become engrossed with darkness and no good will remain therein. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3334. If a person fails to repent then the main verse under discussion comes into effect. This person becomes so engrossed in evil that they find joy in their evil mentality and actions. They absolutely hate anything good.

Strengthening Faith - 110

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. The Holy Quran possesses an uncountable amount of qualities which separates it from any other worldly book. This aspect of the Holy Quran is so intense that it cannot even be explained or discussed over countless lifetimes. But a few of these qualities will be mentioned here. First of all, in the Holy Quran, Allah, the Exalted, has given an open challenge to the entire universe (not just people) and not only a challenge to those who were present when this divine revelation was revealed but to all of creation till the end of time. The challenge being if the people believed the Holy Quran was not a divine revelation from Allah, the Exalted, then they should produce a chapter that can rival a chapter of the Holy Quran. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 23:

“And if you are in some doubt, concerning what We sent down upon Our special devotee, then bring one chapter like it, and call upon all your helpers beside Allah, if you are truthful.”

There is no book on the entire planet that can and has given this type of open challenge. But over 1400 years ago the Holy Quran gave this challenge to the entire universe and to this day this challenge has not been won by the non-Muslims nor will it ever be God willing.

Another quality of the Holy Quran is that it stated the outcome of future events. But the more amazing thing about these statements is that the outcomes seemed impossible at the time. For example chapter 48 Al Fath, verse 28:

“It is He Who sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth that he may make it prevail over all other religions And Sufficient is Allah as witness.”

When this verse was revealed the entire city of Mecca was Islam so when the people of Mecca heard this verse, unfortunately for them, they believed that Islam was too feeble and would therefore not survive long and certainly would not spread beyond the borders of Mecca let alone the entire world. But within a some years Allah, the Exalted, fulfilled this promise.

Another example of how the Holy Quran prophesied a future event which was unimaginable at the time is found in chapter 30 Ar Rum, verses 2-5:

“The Romans have been subdued. In the nearby land and after their subjugation they will soon overcome. In a few years. The command is of Allah only before and after. And on that day the believers shall rejoice. With the help of Allah, He helps whom He pleases. And He is the Might, and Merciful.”

These verses of the Holy Quran were revealed during a time where the Romans (Christians) were at war with the Persians (Fire worshippers). This war has been confirmed by many authentic historic books. At this particular time the Persians were on the verge of winning the war. At one point Rome itself was surrounded by the Persians. But Allah, the Exalted, stated that the Romans would eventually reign victorious. The non-Muslims of Mecca who themselves were idol worshippers favoured the Persians and agreed with the majority that it was impossible for the Romans to win. But Allah, the Exalted, as always proved these verses true and allowed the Romans victory.

A final example which appeals to the scientists of the world is seen in chapter 21 Al Anbiya, verse 33:

“And it is He Who created the night and the day and the sun and the moon. Each one is floating in a circumference.”

For centuries scientists have fought over theories on how exactly the solar system is arranged e.g. whether the sun remains still and the Earth rotates around or vice versa. Only relatively recently it has been proven by scientists from all different faiths and backgrounds that each object; sun, moon and the Earth all rotate on their own axes and rotate around each other in a set orbit. But Allah, the Exalted, declared this over 1400 years ago. All the science related verses of the Holy Quran are slowly being proven by scientists today. This is a huge piece of evidence that proves

that the Holy Quran are the words of the One and only true God, Allah, the Exalted, who has created this universe and everything in it, because only a Creator can truly explain his creations.

Even though many commands of the Holy Quran may not be understood by people does not mean they are incorrect. Certain verses of the Holy Quran whose wisdom was hidden to man became apparent when society reached a certain level of development. As the whole Holy Quran is a book of wisdom and guidance it must be accepted irrespective if one understands its commands or not. This situation is just like a child who is suffering from a cold and desires ice cream but is not given it by their parent. The child will continue to cry without understanding the wisdom behind but those that possess knowledge will agree with the parent even though outwardly it appears as if the decision of the parent is wronging the child.

When studying the Holy Quran one will realize that it contains different levels of superiority through both obvious and subtle meanings that it discusses. Chapter 11 Hud, verse 1:

“...[This is] a Book whose verses are perfected and then presented in detail from [one who is] Wise and Aware.”

The expressions in it are unparalleled and its meanings are explained in a simple straight forward way. Its verses are extremely eloquent and no other text can surpass it. The Holy Quran also mentioned the stories of the previous nations in detail even though the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, was not educated in history. It commanded every type of good and forbade every type of evil, those that affect an individual and those that affect an entire society so that peace and security can spread throughout homes and society. The Holy Quran is free from exaggerations, lies or falsehood unlike poems and stories. All the verses, whether short or long, in the Holy Quran are beneficial. Even when the same story is repeated in the Holy Quran different important lessons can be learned from it. Unlike all other books the Holy Quran does not become boring when it is repeatedly recited and a seeker of truth never gets fed up of studying it. The Holy Quran not only provides warnings and promises but supports them with unshakeable and clear proofs. When the Holy Quran discusses anything which can seem abstract, such as adopting patience, it always provides an easy and practical way of implementing it. It encourages one to fulfil the purpose of their creation and prepare for the eternal hereafter in a simple yet profound way. It makes the straight path clear and appealing to the one who desires true success in both worlds. The knowledge within it is timeless and can be applied to every society and age. It is a healing for every emotional, economical and physical difficulty when it is understood and applied correctly. It is the cure for every problem an individual or an entire society can ever encounter. One only needs to turn the pages of history to observe the societies which implemented the teachings of the Holy Quran correctly in order to understand its all encompassing benefits. Centuries have passed yet not even a single letter has been edited in the Holy Quran as Allah, the Exalted, promised to safeguard it. No other book in history possesses this quality. Chapter 15 Al Hijr, verse 9:

“Indeed, it is We who sent down the message [i.e., the Quran], and indeed, We will be its guardian.”

This is undoubtedly the greatest and timeless miracle of Allah, the Exalted, granted to His final Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. But the only one who will benefit from it is the one who seeks the truth whereas the seekers of their desires will only find it difficult to hear and follow. Chapter 17 Al Isra, verse 82:

“And We send down of the Quran that which is healing and mercy for the believers, but it does not increase the wrongdoers except in loss.”

Strengthening Faith - 111

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. There are two types of divine revelation. One are the exact words of Allah, the Exalted, which is represented by the Holy Quran. The other is the inspiration given to the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, by Allah, the Exalted. This is called Hadith or narrations, as the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, did not speak out of his own desire. Chapter 53 An Najm, verse 3:

“Nor does he speak from [his own] inclination.”

The Holy Quran cannot be understood correctly without the Hadiths/traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, as the Hadith explain the verses in their proper context e.g. why they were revealed, what are they referring to, etc. This is why it is obligatory to follow the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 59 Al Hashr, verse 7:

“...And whatever the Messenger has given you - take; and what he has forbidden you - refrain from...”

And chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 31:

“Say, [Prophet], "If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins...”

And chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 59:

“O you who have believed, obey Allah and obey the Messenger...”

And chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 80:

“Whoever obeys the Messenger has truly obeyed Allah...”

Another reason why Hadiths are needed is that the Holy Quran does not explain everything so therefore one is forced to turn to the Hadiths of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. For example, the three pillars of Islam: Obligatory charity, the Holy Pilgrimage and the obligatory prayers. The obligatory prayers, which is the central pillar of Islam, is not explained in the Holy Quran in detail, such as the way to offer

the prayer is not mentioned at all in the Holy Quran. The timings are vaguely indicated but not explained in detail.

The exact amount of the obligatory charity which is due is not clarified in the Holy Quran, only the groups which are entitled to it are. But even then one must turn to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, to fully understand the different groups.

Only some parts of the Holy Pilgrimage are very briefly mentioned in the Holy Quran. But the precise order of activities or what to do at each place is not mentioned in the Holy Quran.

Without the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, these three out of five pillars of Islam cannot be completed correctly.

It is important to understand that Allah, the Exalted, preserved the Holy Quran and the established traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 15 Al Hijr, verse 9:

“It is certainly We Who have revealed the Reminder, and it is certainly We Who will preserve it.”

The word Quran is not mentioned in this verse. Instead, reminder is mentioned, which includes both types of divine revelation: the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

The very people who transmitted the Holy Quran to the following generations, the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, are the same people who transmitted the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. If a person rejects one then it casts doubt on the other.

Finally, the people who understood Islam the best are the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, and they made it clear that the Holy Quran cannot be correctly implemented without the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Without these traditions it becomes easy to misinterpret and take the verses of the Holy Quran out of their proper context. It is the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, which clarify the verses in order to show what they really mean. This is why the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, is the practical model of the Holy Quran.

Strengthening Faith - 112

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. People have often conceived Allah, the Exalted, to be similar to those worldly rulers who immerse themselves in a life of ease in their grand palaces. Such rulers are normally far removed from their subjects. To all intents and purposes they are well beyond the direct access of their subjects. The only way for their subjects to reach them is through the chosen and favourite courtiers. And even if a subject succeeds in conveying their pleadings through a courtier these rulers are often too arrogant to directly respond to such pleadings. This is one aspect of the function of a courtier - to communicate to a ruler the pleadings of his subjects and also to communicate to the subjects the response of the ruler.

Since Allah, the Exalted, was often conceived in the image of such worldly rulers many people fell prey to the false belief that Allah, the Exalted, is above the reach of ordinary human beings. This belief spread further because many evil people found it profitable to propagate such a notion. Because of this the general public felt Allah, the Exalted, could only be approached through powerful intermediaries and intercessors. The only way that a person's prayer could reach Allah, the Exalted, and be answered by Him was to approach Him through one of these holy people. It was therefore, considered necessary to bestow gifts to these religious personalities who supposedly enjoyed the privilege of conveying a person's prayers to Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 11 Hud, verse 61:

“And to Thamūd [We sent] their brother Ṣāliḥ. He said, "O my people, worship Allāh; you have no deity other than Him. He has produced you from the earth and settled you in it, so ask forgiveness of Him and then repent to Him. Indeed, my Lord is near and responsive.””

The Holy Prophet Salih, peace be upon him, struck at the root of this ignorant system. This he achieved by emphasizing two facts: that Allah, the Exalted, is extremely close to His creatures and that He answers their prayers. Thus, he refuted many misconceptions about Allah, the Exalted: that He is far away, withdrawn from human beings and that He does not answer their prayers if they are to directly approach Him. Allah, the Exalted, no doubt, is transcendent and yet He is extremely close to every person. Everyone will find Him just beside themselves. Everyone can whisper to Him the innermost desires of their heart. Everyone can address their prayers to Allah, the Exalted, both in public and in private, verbally or secretly. Moreover, Allah, the Exalted, answers the prayers of all His creatures directly. The purpose of spiritual guides is to teach their students how to understand and act on the teachings of Islam and because of this they deserve respect. But their role is not to stand in between their students and Allah, the Exalted, by claiming that the only way to reach Him and get His attention is to go through them. This attitude completely contradicts the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

Strengthening Faith - 113

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. The obligatory prayers, which are central pillar of Islam, are more than a few movements. They are in fact a representation of Judgement Day. Each position of the prayer reflects a specific state on Judgement Day. Standing upright during the prayer is how people will stand when they are being judged by Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 83 Al Mutaffifin, verses 4-6:

“Do they not think that they will be resurrected. For a tremendous Day The Day when mankind will stand before the Lord of the worlds?”

Therefore, the one who is upright with Allah, the Exalted, by using the blessings He has granted them in ways pleasing to Him, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and are upright to people, by treating them in ways they themselves desire to be treated by people, will find standing in front of Allah, the Exalted, on Judgement Day easy.

Bowing in the prayer will ensure a person is not labelled on Judgement Day as one of those who did not bow during their life on Earth when they were commanded to bow. Chapter 77 Al Mursalat, verse 48:

“And when it is said to them, “Bow [in prayer],” they do not bow.”

This bowing includes one’s internal, verbal and practical submission to Allah, the Exalted, during every situation and moment. The one who fails to behave in this manner may well be accused of failing to bow to Allah, the Exalted, on Judgement Day.

The sitting position is how people will kneel before Allah, the Exalted, on Judgement Day, out of extreme fear. Chapter 45 Al Jathiyah, verse 28:

“And you will see every nation kneeling [from fear]. Every nation will be called to its record [and told], “Today you will be recompensed for what you used to do.””

The one who kneels before the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in this world will find the kneeling on Judgement Day easy.

Finally, those who failed to prostrate themselves to Allah, the Exalted, in this world, in the prayer and in every aspect of their practical life, by using the blessings they were granted in ways pleasing to Him, will not be able to

prostrate to Allah, the Exalted, on Judgement Day. Chapter 68 Al Qalam, verses 42-43:

"On the Day when matters become dire, they will be invited to prostrate themselves but will be prevented from doing so. Their eyes humbled, humiliation will cover them. And they used to be invited to prostration while they were sound."

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 4919, that on Judgement Day those who used to prostrate in prayer for the sake of showing off will not be able to prostrate on Judgement Day, as their backs will become too stiff.

When one prays while bearing all this in mind, then they will return to their everyday activities with an intention to sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, by using the worldly blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Him, so that they obtain peace of mind and body in both worlds and successfully overcome the difficulties of Judgement Day. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

Finally, the five obligatory prayers being spread over the day, ensures that whenever one forgets Judgement Day, the next prayer will remind them of it and the importance of practically preparing for it.

When one take these things, and more, into context, then the prayer has a much deeper meaning than simply completing a few acts of motion, a few times a day.

Strengthening Faith - 114

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. One of the major reasons the faith of Muslims has weakened over time is due to how they perceive faith and Islam. The righteous predecessors understood that Islam was a complete code of conduct which directly influenced every aspect of one's life, every situation they face and every blessing they were granted by Allah, the Exalted. They therefore learnt and implemented this code of conduct from the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. As a result, they obtained peace of mind and body despite the tests and difficulties they faced. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

But with the passing of time, Muslims began to perceive Islam as nothing but a few daily, weekly and annual rituals and acts of worship. This encouraged them to deal with every situation they faced and every blessing they were granted according to the standards set by culture, fashion and society. This caused them to reduce the Holy Quran to a pleasant melody which does not need to be understood or acted upon. And they reduced it to something which is recited in order to obtain worldly things, such as a spouse and child. This attitude also encouraged them to misuse the

blessings they were granted. As a result, their faith became nothing but an empty shell, which is adorned by acts of worship but has no practical effect on their lives. This attitude is one of the main reasons why Muslims, who fulfill the basic duties of Islam, still fail to obtain peace of mind and body.

If this attitude persists, then just like the former nations who eventually abandoned their few acts of worship, as they were nothing but empty practices, so will the Muslim nation. Then they will call themselves non-practicing Muslims. This only leads to difficulties in both worlds. Chapter 20 Taha, verses 124-126:

"And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed [i.e., difficult] life, and We will gather [i.e., raise] him on the Day of Resurrection blind." He will say, "My Lord, why have you raised me blind while I was [once] seeing?" [Allāh] will say, "Thus did Our signs come to you, and you forgot [i.e., disregarded] them; and thus will you this Day be forgotten.""

A Muslim must therefore avoid this attitude and outcome by learning and acting on the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, so that they adopt the correct attitude and code of conduct in every aspect of their life. Only through this, will one find peace of mind and body in both worlds. Chapter 13 Ar Ra'd, verse 28:

“...Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah do hearts find peace.”

Strengthening Faith - 115

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. It is important for Muslims to avoid falling into a mentality which prevents one from sincerely obeying Allah, the Exalted, which involves using the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Him, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This mentality involves comparing oneself to other people who appear worse than them in obeying Allah, the Exalted. This mentality only encourages one to belittle their own disobedience to Allah, the Exalted, as they observe the greater sins of others. This attitude also encourages laziness, as one will not urge themselves to improve their obedience to Allah, the Exalted, and their behaviour towards the creation, when they observe the sins of others. They will believe they are doing a good job, even though they are barely fulfilling the basic duties of Islam towards Allah, the Exalted, and people, as they constantly observe people who appear worse than them. One must never forget that one's judgement on the Day of Judgement will not be based on a comparison with other people. The benchmark for all people on the Day of Judgement is the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Meaning, the actions of each person will be compared to these sources of guidance, not the actions of other people. So a thief will not escape punishment on Judgement Day by claiming they never killed anyone, just like the many killers who will be present on the Day of Judgement. As the benchmark on Judgement Day is the two sources of guidance, similarly, the benchmark in this world is also these two sources of guidance. A Muslim must therefore avoid the foolish attitude of comparing themselves to people who appear worse than them and instead compare their actions to the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in order to correct themselves if they desire peace and success in both worlds, as comparing oneself to worse people may make them feel better but it will only lead to

difficulties in this world and a difficult accountability and a potential punishment in the hereafter. Chapter 20 Taha, verses 124-126:

"And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed [i.e., difficult] life, and We will gather [i.e., raise] him on the Day of Resurrection blind." He will say, "My Lord, why have you raised me blind while I was [once] seeing?" [Allāh] will say, "Thus did Our signs come to you, and you forgot [i.e., disregarded] them; and thus will you this Day be forgotten.""

Strengthening Faith - 116

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. Some Muslims have adopted a lazy attitude which is important to avoid. It is to refrain from striving in the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted, which involves using the blessings He has granted them in ways pleasing to Him, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and instead rely on others to supplicate on their behalf while they are alive and after they have died. This was not the attitude of those who understood Islam better than anyone else; the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them. None of them resorted to laziness by asking the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, to supplicate on their behalf. They instead strove hard in the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted, and then requested the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, to supplicate on their behalf. If supplication from a righteous elder was only enough, the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, would not have sacrificed everything they were granted for the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 9 At Tawbah, verse 99:

"But among the bedouins are some who believe in Allāh and the Last Day and consider what they spend as means of nearness to Allāh and of [obtaining] invocations of the Messenger. Unquestionably, it is a means of nearness for them. Allāh will admit them to His mercy. Indeed, Allāh is Forgiving and Merciful."

Even if one asks others, who appear pious to supplicate on their behalf, it will not benefit them until they strive to sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, first. Adopting this lazy attitude mocks the concept of supplication and mocking any aspect of Islam will not lead to a good outcome.

Just like a sane person does not expect to achieve worldly success through someone's supplication, such as passing an exam, without putting in practical effort, neither will they achieve religious blessings, such as peace of mind and body in both worlds, without striving in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, even if everyone supplicates on their behalf to Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 53 An Najm, verse 39:

"And that there is not for man except that [good] for which he strives."

Strengthening Faith - 117

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. In this time of open tribulations which Muslims are constantly bombarded with, some often state that the key to escaping them is to move away, such as moving to an Islamic nation, or to self-isolate oneself and their family, such as homeschooling. Even though these possible solutions are not bad, as they can help to a certain degree in escaping the temptations and tribulations of this world, but they are not the main solution. The issue with adopting an escape type mentality is that unless one moves into an isolated cave with their family and never emerges, it is not possible to constantly escape these temptations and tribulations. Sooner or later, a Muslim will have to face them in some shape or form. For example, there is no doubt that single gender schools do better in their results than mix schools, yet a day will certainly come when a student will encounter the opposite gender during their life. In this day and age of social media, one does not even need to leave their bedroom in order to fall into evil temptations and tribulations. Even if a family moves to an Islamic country, which seems impossible to find nowadays, none the less, they will still face these tribulations and temptations, as every country and city has their own kind. Does the pilgrim and traveler not see the injustice and unfairness that even occurs in Mecca and Medina?

It is often observed that when Muslims who come from more traditional countries travel to the west, they often fall deeper into sinful temptations and tribulations than the Muslims who were born and raised in the west. This is because when these foreign Muslims, who have lived a more restricted and traditional life, enter the west, the tribulations and temptations hit them like a tidal wave and as a result they slip up more

easily than those who are born and raised amongst these tribulations and temptations. Therefore, adopting the escape type mentality is simply not practical in this day and age.

The main key to successfully overcoming these tribulations and temptations, as indicated by Islam, is adopting strong faith through learning and acting on Islamic knowledge and teaching this attitude to the next generation. Strong faith will ensure a Muslim remains firm in the face of all temptations and tribulations, irrespective of where they are, by continuing to use the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

This education will teach the young Muslims the wisdoms behind the prohibitions found in Islam. Adopting an escape type mentality will not provide this education, it will only provide some restriction from accessing these temptations and tribulations. Similar to a criminal who is temporarily restricted in prison. The moment the criminal is released, they will return to their life of crime until they are educated against it. Similarly, a young Muslim will have natural desires which are fueled by these worldly temptations and tribulations, and without this education they will most likely fail, when they are tested.

When a person is simply told of a prohibition without the wisdoms behind it, they are less likely to adhere to the prohibition and are more likely to be tricked into it. Whereas, the one who is aware of the wisdoms behind the prohibition is more likely to adhere to it. For example, the one who has the

knowledge of the negative aspects of alcohol, such as the damage down to one's physical and mental health, it's strong connection with crimes, arguments, fights and assaults, it's financial effect on people and the other negative consequences of becoming an addict, such as destroying one's relationships and life, is more likely to stay away from it than the one who knows the prohibition but does not know the wisdoms behind it.

To conclude, a Muslim should take practical steps so that they and their family avoid tribulations and evil temptations but they should know that the main step to achieve this is education; learning and acting on the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, so that one understands the wisdoms behind avoiding the prohibitions of Islam and so that they strengthen their faith. This will ensure they continue to obey Allah, the Exalted, under all circumstances, which involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Him. Chapter 15 Al Hijr, verses 39-40:

"[Iblees] said, "My Lord, because You have put me in error, I will surely make [disobedience] attractive to them [i.e., mankind] on earth, and I will mislead them all. Except, among them, Your sincere servants.""

Strengthening Faith - 118

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. One of the main reasons people struggle to obtain peace of mind and body in this world is due to incorrectly evaluating the value of worldly things, as their definition of good and bad, success and failure is incorrect. A business owner will become bankrupt if they cannot correctly evaluate the value of the merchandise they buy and sell. Similarly, the person who incorrectly evaluates the value of worldly things will misplace their efforts and prioritize things incorrectly, thereby causing themselves stress and anxiety in both worlds. Most people define success and failure, good and bad, based on definitions given by culture, fashion and social media and as a result they incorrectly determine the value of things. For example, according to these standards, having many properties is a good thing whereas having a few worldly possessions is a bad thing, even though this is not true at all. Those who possess many worldly things, such as properties, are often the most stressed and anxiety ridden people in the world. A classic example of this is Pharaoh, one of the richest and most influential men to ever exist, as opposed to the one who did not possess many worldly things: the Holy Prophet Musa, peace be upon him. It does not take a genius to figure out who was granted peace of mind and body in both worlds.

Incorrectly evaluating things causes one to allow culture, fashion and social media to drive their life. If one allows the wrong person in the driver seat of their car, they will not take them to the correct destination: peace of mind and body in both worlds. As a result, a Muslim places their faith in the backseat or even in the boot of the car, and only turns to it during their few acts of worship and rituals.

But if one desires peace of mind and body in both worlds, they must choose the correct driver so that they reach the correct destination: peace of mind and body in both worlds. The correct driver is Islam. When one lives by the definitions of success and failure, good and bad, given by Islam, they will correctly evaluate the real value of worldly things and therefore place their efforts in the correct place and use the resources they have been granted correctly, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Allah, the Exalted, the Controller of hearts, which is the abode of peace, will then grant them peace of mind and body in both worlds. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

Strengthening Faith - 119

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. The Devil tries to misguide people in countless different ways. Knowing about his traps can aid a person to avoid them. Chapter 35 Fatir, verse 6:

"Indeed, Satan is an enemy to you; so take him as an enemy. He only invites his party to be among the companions of the Blaze."

One of his biggest aims is to put one off from remembering their death, grave and their Final Judgement. He knows remembering death encourages one to prepare for it, which involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This is why the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, encouraged Muslims to often remember death, as it is the destroyer of pleasures. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4258. Therefore, the Devil tries to prevent one from remembering death by reminding them of their never-ending worldly preoccupations so that they fail to prepare for it adequately.

If one happens to remember their death, then he diverts them to thinking about it from the perspective of other people. Meaning, a person will think about the effects of their death on other people, such as their children.

Even though worrying about the future of one's children is not a bad thing, nonetheless, a Muslim should never forget that the Provider and Sustainer of their children is none other than Allah, the Exalted. He simply uses the parent for this process and He can easily replace the parent with some other means. Secondly, thinking about death from other people's perspective, diverts a person's attention from preparing for their death. Instead, they will be encouraged to work harder in this world in order to obtain and hoard more wealth and properties for their dependents, out of fear of leaving them poor and needy, if they happen to die. This again distracts them from practically preparing for their own death. One must note, there is a big difference between reasonably saving wealth for one's children and going overboard, which most Muslims do.

One must push past these distractions set up by the Devil and instead truly reflect on their death from their own point of view, so that they practically prepare for it, their lonely and dark grave, where all their relatives, friends and worldly possessions will abandon them, and for their Final Judgement, when they will face the consequences of their actions, alone. Chapter 80 Abasa, verses 34-37:

"On the Day a man will flee from his brother. And his mother and his father. And his wife and his children. For every man, that Day, will be a matter adequate for him."

Perhaps through this reflection one will avoid this particular trap of the Devil and practically prepare for these inevitable stages of existence.

Strengthening Faith - 120

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. It is commonly observed around the world how many people, such as politicians, criticize Islam and its different aspects in order to put off Muslims from acting on it and non-Muslims from accepting it. The truth of the matter is that their problem is not with Islam or a part of it, such as the dress code of women and men. Their issue with Islam is the fact that it is not merely a set of rituals and practices but a complete code of life which affects every aspect of one's life, such as their personal, social, financial, family and work life. But as these people desire to live according to their desires, the life of animals, and not a higher moral code of conduct, it pains them to observe Muslims adhering to the code of conduct set by Islam, as the practicing Muslims make them look like nothing except animals, that only live to fulfil their desires. In order to mask their animalistic behaviour, they attempt to punch holes into the code of conduct Islam advocates, even though anyone with a little common sense sees straight through their poor attempt, as Islam is a logical, flawless and upright way of life. For example, these people often criticise the dress code Islam commands women to adhere to. Even though countless women, especially those living in the west, desire to dress according to the standard set by Islam out of their own free will, yet these people insist they must band Islamic dress code, as it oppresses women. Anyone with common sense can clearly see that preventing a Muslim woman who desires to dress according to Islamic teachings is oppression in itself. So they seek to rescue an oppressed person by oppressing them further. These people also claim these women have been brainwashed, which is highly insulting, as they are claiming women are weak minded. Finally, it is strange how these people have an issue with the Islamic dress code yet they have no problem or objection to any other dress code. There is no institution, major business or organisation that does not have a dress code, such as educational institutions, hospitals, the army, the police force, the retail sector, businesses and even the political buildings, which these

politicians who criticise Islam work at. They never criticize the dress code of all these places, which encompasses the majority of the world. This makes it clear that they only target Islam and its different aspects in order to shield themselves from being labelled animals, as they only wish to fulfill their own desires and not live by a superior code of conduct.

A Muslim must never be fooled by people like this. They should instead strengthen their faith through learning and acting on the teachings of Islam so that they remain firm on sincerely obeying Allah, the Exalted, in the face of foolish criticism. Obedience involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

Strengthening Faith - 121

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. It is commonly understood that a person will receive in this world according to their efforts. For example, the student who does not study so hard might pass their exams, yet they will probably not obtain as much worldly success, like a good job, as the student who studied harder and therefore obtained a better grade. Similarly, Allah, the Exalted, rewards people according to their efforts, not just their verbal declaration of faith and good intention. For example, when describing those who are brought near to Allah, the Exalted, in the hereafter, the first blessing mentioned in the following verse is not high ranks in Paradise or huge palaces, it is instead rest. Chapter 56 Al Waqi'ah, verses 88-89:

"And if he was of those brought near [to Allāh]. Then [for him is] rest and bounty and a garden of pleasure."

Those who are brought near to Allah, the Exalted, are granted rest before anything else because they tired themselves in His obedience in this world. This involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

Therefore, just like one typically receives worldly success according to their efforts in this world, similarly they will receive spiritual success in this world and in the next according to their efforts and intentions. Therefore, each Muslim must decide how much spiritual success they desire to obtain in this world and in the next and strive in the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted, accordingly.

Strengthening Faith - 122

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. One of the major things which prevents a Muslim from sincerely obeying Allah, the Exalted, which involves using the blessings He has granted them in ways pleasing to Him, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, is the passive and active criticism and ridicule they face from those who do not believe in Allah, the Exalted, or from the Muslims who possess weak faith. These two groups belittle the devotion and obedience of the devoted Muslims who choose to use the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, instead of using them in ways pleasing to themselves. They overcome their desires and choose to follow the code of conduct set out by Islam, instead of living according to their desires. Those who fail to appreciate the value of obeying Allah, the Exalted, which involves peace of mind and body in both worlds, believe these devoted Muslims are insane and as a result of their attitude, they are losing out from enjoying the luxuries of the world. Their example is like two people who are presented with a meal which appears delicious. But only one of them, the one who possesses insight, realizes the food is poisoned. They warn the other person not to eat the poisoned food but as they are intoxicated with the love of worldly things, they ignore this advice and eat the food while believing the advisor is a fool for not enjoying the delicious food.

The one who fails to gain this insight will be put off from practically obeying Allah, the Exalted, when they are passively or actively criticized by others.

A Muslim must always remember that peace of mind and body in both worlds lies only in obeying. Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

Whereas, disobeying Him, by misusing the blessings they have been granted, only leads to trouble in both worlds. This is quite evident when one observes those drowned in worldly desires and lusts. Chapter 20 Taha, verses 124-126:

"And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed [i.e., difficult] life, and We will gather [i.e., raise] him on the Day of Resurrection blind." He will say, "My Lord, why have you raised me blind while I was [once] seeing?" [Allāh] will say, "Thus did Our signs come to you, and you forgot [i.e., disregarded] them; and thus will you this Day be forgotten.""

Secondly, A Muslim must strive to gain the insight which convinces them of this truth. This is obtained when one learns and acts on the teachings of Islam and when they observe the consequences of the choices made by

others, such as how those who drown themselves in worldly luxuries often face anxiety, stress, depression and suicidal tendencies. This insight will ensure one maintains their sincere obedience to Allah, the Exalted, at all times. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 212:

"Beautified for those who disbelieve is the life of this world, and they ridicule those who believe. But those who fear Allāh are above them on the Day of Resurrection. And Allāh gives provision to whom He wills without account."

Strengthening Faith - 123

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. A part of faith, which is a test in itself, is that when one obeys Allah, the Exalted, which involves using the blessings He has granted them in ways pleasing to Him, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, they are not guaranteed to receive tangible benefits, such as an obvious increase in wealth. The benefits associated with obeying Allah, the Exalted, are often more subtle and experienced in one's spiritual heart, such as obtaining peace of mind. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

The one who possesses weak faith often seeks tangible benefits from Allah, the Exalted, such as good health, a nice house and a good career. As Islam does not guarantee these things, the Devil often puts off people from faith entirely or from at least acting on their faith, as outlined earlier. This reality is a test which a Muslim must pass successfully by obtaining strong faith. This involves learning and acting on Islamic knowledge, so that one becomes sure of the countless benefits one obtains in both worlds through obeying Allah, the Exalted.

In addition, one should always use their common sense by understanding that real benefit is often not tangible, such as a positive change in one's mental health and wellbeing. A person who has the world at their feet will happily give it up for this intangible benefit. A Muslim must therefore not be fooled into seeking tangible benefits from Allah, the Exalted, as they have not been guaranteed. Doing so can even push one further away from His obedience, when one does not receive the tangible benefit they desired. This leads to a loss in both worlds. Chapter 22 Al Hajj, verse 11:

“And of the people is he who worships Allah on an edge. If he is touched by good, he is reassured by it; but if he is struck by trial, he turns on his face. He has lost [this] world and the Hereafter. That is what is the manifest loss.”

Strengthening Faith - 124

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. The Holy Quran describes two types of signs which point out the truthfulness of Islam. One type of signs are the verses of the Holy Quran and the other types of signs are found within the creation. Every person is urged to reflect on both of these types of signs in order to deduce for themselves the truthful nature of Islam. For example, when one reflects on the multiple perfect systems within the universe, such as the perfect distance the Earth is from the Sun, the perfect density of the oceans, which allow ships to sail on them and sea life to thrive within them, the water cycle, and many more, they will deduce the Oneness of Allah, the Exalted. All of these signs, when recognized, strengthen one's faith in the different aspects of Islam, such as the Oneness of Allah, the Exalted, the resurrection, etc.

Often, these signs within the universe are collaborated by science, which further strengthens one's belief in them. Even though Islam does not need to be proven through science, none the less, one can appreciate when this occurs.

For example, scientists have proven that when a star reaches the end of its life, it expands and becomes red. Interestingly, on Judgement Day, which is the end of the universe, the colour of the sky will appear reddish, which would occur if the Sun became red in colour. Chapter 55 Ar Rahman, verse 37:

"When the sky is torn apart and turns crimson, like red hide."

In addition, on Judgement Day the Sun will be brought within two miles of the creation. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 2864. This movement of the Sun can occur when it expands in size, during the end of its life.

Scientists have also deduced that the universe is constantly expanding. One can imagine that when an object continues to be stretched and eventually reaches its breaking point, the object will be torn apart and whatever is within it will be scattered in different directions. This is how the end of the universe has been described in the Holy Quran. Chapter 82 Al Infitar, verses 1-2:

"When the sky will be cleft asunder. And when the stars have fallen and scattered."

It is amazing how science has agreed on the teachings of Islam which was revealed over 1400 years ago.

A Muslim must pay attention to both types of signs so that they strengthen their faith. This will ensure they remain firm on the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted, which involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This leads to peace of mind and body in both worlds. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

Ignoring these signs only leads to weak faith and misusing the blessings one has been granted. Chapter 12 Yusuf, verse 105:

"How many a sign there are in the heavens and the Earth, which they pass by and they are heedless to them."

This leads to difficulties in both worlds. Chapter 20 Taha, verse 124:

"And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed [i.e., difficult] life, and We will gather [i.e., raise] him on the Day of Resurrection blind."

Strengthening Faith - 125

I had a thought which I wanted to share. I was pondering over the different types of Muslims in this world and their behaviour. According to this thought Muslims can be split into three groups. The first group are the best and consist of the Muslims who hand their lives and possessions over to Allah, the Exalted, thereby fulfilling the purpose of their creation. They only take from the material world in order to fulfil their necessities and responsibilities and dedicate the rest of their efforts in gaining and acting on knowledge so that they can strengthen their faith and gain the proximity of Allah, the Exalted, in both worlds. Outwardly they may seem as if they do not enjoy life in this world but in reality they obtain more peace in it than the other types of Muslims. Their reckoning on Judgment Day will be easy through the mercy of Allah, the Exalted.

The second group consists of those Muslims who fulfil their obligatory duties and whatever traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, they come across without putting extra effort in obtaining or acting on Islamic knowledge. They dedicate the majority of their efforts to gaining and enjoying the lawful pleasures of this world. As they avoid the unlawful it is hoped they will gain the forgiveness of Allah, the Exalted, in the next world. But as they indulged in the material world their accountability will be long. And as warned by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6536, whoever has their deeds scrutinised will be punished. Standing and witnessing the horrors of the Day of Judgment for an extremely long time because of one's enjoyment in the world is a form of punishment.

The final group of Muslims are the worse type as they do not dedicate their lives to Allah, the Exalted, like the best group but neither do they enjoy the lawful pleasures of the material world like the second group. These people instead hoard the worldly things they obtain without fulfilling their lawful desires. This attitude causes them to stand between the two other groups meaning, they will not enjoy the lawful things of this world nor will they have an easy reckoning on the Day of Judgment because of the worldly things they obtained.

It is therefore important for Muslims not to belong to this final group as this is a clear loss. A Muslim should try to belong to the best group but if they really cannot manage this then they should at least join the second group by fulfilling their obligatory duties, enjoy only the lawful pleasures of this world and hope for the forgiveness and mercy of Allah, the Exalted.

Strengthening Faith - 126

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. When one observes the blessed life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, they will clearly see that he was tested every step of his life, even though he was the most beloved creation of Allah, the Exalted. Therefore, a test and difficulty is not a curse or a sign of a wretched life. It is in fact an opportunity for a person to shine and accumulate an abundant reward. Chapter 39 Az Zumar, verse 10:

"...the patient will be given their reward without account [i.e., limit]."

One must bear this in mind whenever they face tests and difficulties so that they can remain patient and grateful, like he did.

Furthermore, even though the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, faced continuous difficulties and tests yet throughout every stage his heart was at peace. This peace was obtained as he persistently used the blessings he was granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 13 Ar Ra'd, verse 28:

"...Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah do hearts find peace."

And chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

But the one who fails to imitate him will find nothing but a dark and suffocating life, even if they have the world at their feet. Chapter 20 Taha, verse 124:

"But whoever turns away from My Reminder will certainly have a miserable life..."

Therefore, using the blessings one has been granted correctly is the difference between obtaining peace of mind and a miserable life, even if one faces difficulties or times of ease.

In addition, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon

him, dedicated his life to guiding mankind towards the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted. It is important for Muslims to follow in the footsteps of his Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, who remained steadfast on his teachings after his passing. All Muslims desire his company in the hereafter but they will only receive it if they follow his path. A person will not end up with their companion who journeyed along a specific path if they journey down a different path. Similarly, Muslims will not join the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in the hereafter if they walk a path other than his. This is only achieved by learning and acting on his blessed life and teachings. This is the reason why none of his Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, simply declared belief with their words and refrained from practically following him, as they knew this attitude would prevent them from joining him in the hereafter. This was in fact the attitude of the other nations who claim to love their Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, yet fail to practically follow them. This is why they will not join their Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, in the hereafter.

Also, when observing the blessed life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and by extension the lives of his Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, one understands that the only way a person can have a meaningful, valuable and purposeful existence is by fulfilling the purpose of their creation. Chapter 51 Adh Dhariyat, verse 56:

“And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me.”

This is only achieved when one practically obeys Allah, the Exalted, by using the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Him, which is explained by the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Simply declaring faith verbally without supporting it with physical actions is like a vase which looks beautiful outwardly but is hollow inside. This will not lead to a meaningful existence in this life, even if one ends up in Paradise in the hereafter. This is hinted in a Hadith found in At Tabarani's, Al Mu'jam Al Kabir, Hadith 182, Volume 20, which warns that the only thing a person will regret in Paradise are the times during their life on Earth when they did not remember Allah, the Exalted. Meaning, the times during their life they did not fulfil their purpose of creation by correctly using the blessings they were granted. This is the reason why many Muslims, who only fulfill the basic obligatory duties, still feel a void in their lives, a void that nothing can fulfill except embracing one's purpose completely and practically.

In addition, generally speaking, people become pleased when they inherit worldly things, such as wealth from others. But the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, did not leave behind wealth for people to inherit. He, like the other Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, left behind knowledge. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 223. Therefore, Muslims must take a share of this inheritance if they desire to be his true heirs.

Finally, the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, is the perfect example of how a Muslim must fulfil their duties to Allah, the Exalted, and to the creation. He is the practical representation of the Holy Quran.

Therefore, Muslims must study and act on his blessed life in order to fulfil their duties correctly. Success is not possible without this. Chapter 33 Al Ahzab, verse 21:

“There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Last Day and [who] remembers Allah often.”

And chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 31:

“Say, [Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him], “If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins...””

And chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 80:

“He who obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah...”

And chapter 59 Al Hashr, verse 7:

"...And whatever the Messenger has given you - take; and what he has forbidden you - refrain from..."

Strengthening Faith - 127

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. Countless lessons which effects a Muslim's religious and worldly life can be learned from the Holy Quran. But the first thing to note is that it will only benefit someone who fulfils its three aspects with sincerity. The first aspect is sincerely reciting it correctly and regularly. The second aspect is to understand it. And the final aspect is to sincerely act on its teachings according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

One of the main teachings of the Holy Quran is for people to understand and strive to fulfil the purpose of their creation namely, to prepare for their meeting with Allah, the Exalted on Judgment Day.

In respect to a non-Muslim, when one fails to recognize this purpose they will not understand why they were created and placed on this Earth. This will cause them to incorrectly prioritize the things and people in their life. They will give importance to things which are not so important. They will end up dedicating their lives to things, which in respect to the bigger picture, are pointless. Their eating, drinking, happiness and sadness will revolve around these things. Some will reach such a low level that even other non-Muslims will declare that their life is aimless and has no real purpose or meaning. For example, many dedicate their lives and their efforts to drama, entertainment, sports, animals, plants and their careers. Even though dedicating one's efforts towards a lawful career is a good thing yet it must never become one's ultimate aim in life. This type of

person will not fulfil their purpose and instead lead an aimless and empty life. They will misuse the blessings they have been granted which prevents them from obtaining peace of mind and body. This is one of the main reasons why people who have obtained much worldly success end up depressed and suicidal. The one who believes their life is valuable and has meaning will never contemplate suicide. This contemplation in itself is proof that the lives of these types of people are aimless, even if they obtained much worldly success, as they did not understand nor fulfil the purpose of their creation. Chapter 59 Al Hashr, verse 19:

“And be not like those who forgot Allāh, so He made them forget themselves. Those are the defiantly disobedient.”

And chapter 20 Taha, Verse 124:

“But whoever turns away from My Remembrance will certainly have a miserable life...”

In respect, to Muslims who only fulfil the basic obligatory duties of Islam without dedicating any effort towards studying and acting on the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, they will fail to truly understand their purpose of creation and their purpose on this Earth, as this cannot be understood through the basic obligatory duties. As a result they will dedicate less than

an hour of a day to preparing for their meeting with Allah, the Exalted, as the obligatory duties do not take long to complete. Even this, in most cases, is based on blind imitation of others such as their family. They will not truly understand why they fulfil these duties because of a lack of knowledge and weakness of faith.

Without the Holy Quran and traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, their focus will be solely on this world and enjoying its blessings, as they see nothing except this world. Then in this respect, there is not much difference between them and non-Muslims as their aspirations, hopes, fears, desires, aims and purpose will be the same. This is obvious when one observes these types of Muslims and their activities in between their obligatory duties. This does not mean they will go to Hell. In fact, as they fulfilled their obligatory duties and avoided the major sins it is hoped they will obtain Paradise. But because of this attitude, meaning, failing to understand and work towards their purpose, they will never find true peace in this world as they will not use their worldly blessings in the correct way, even if they use them in lawful ways, as their whole focus is solely on this world and its enjoyments, as they see nothing except this world. Chapter 20 Taha, Verse 124:

“But whoever turns away from My Remembrance will certainly have a miserable life...”

This remembrance involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. This is only possible when one

understands their own purpose and the purpose of the worldly blessings they have been granted.

Failing to behave in this manner is the main reason why many Muslims who fulfil their obligatory duties often complain about mental problems such as depression, as they have not remembered Allah, the Exalted, in the correct way, which leads to peace in both worlds. Chapter 13 Ar Ra'd, verse 28:

“...Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah do hearts find peace.”

Even if these Muslims end up in Paradise, because of their behaviour they completely missed the point of why they were put on this Earth. Their example is that of students who are set a mock exam by their teacher. Some students work diligently to prepare for it, whereas other students do not take it seriously and barely revise for it. Even if both types of students pass the exam the teacher will only be pleased with those who prepared for it, as they alone have understood the purpose of the mock exam. Its purpose was to put the students in the right frame of mind so that they are ready to tackle their real exams. Those who failed to prepare for their mock exams might have passed but they completely missed the point and purpose of the mock exam. This is the example of the Muslims who fail to understand the purpose of being on this Earth but through blind imitation of others they end up in Paradise. They are like a beautifully decorated vase which is hollow inside. Due to their lowly worldly aspirations they do not achieve the great station and purpose they were granted by Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 95 At Tin, verses 4-6:

“We have certainly created man in the best of stature. Then We return him to the lowest of the low. Except for those who believe and do righteous deeds...”

This prevents them from obtaining peace in this world, as the one who possesses lowly aspirations will stress over petty and unimportant things. They will dedicate most of their efforts to worldly gain, which will not benefit them in either this world or the next. Chapter 18 Al Kahf, verses 103-104:

“Say, “Shall we inform you of the greatest losers as to [their] deeds? [They are] those whose effort is lost in worldly life, while they think that they are doing well in work.””

In respect to those who strive to study and act on the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. They will be granted a special perception in which to look at the world and their existence in it. This perception will allow them to see the purpose of their creation and their purpose on this Earth. Namely, to prepare for their meeting with Allah, the Exalted, on Judgment Day. This perception will make them understand that this world and the blessings in it are only a means to which they can reach the hereafter safely. Meaning, the world and the things in it are not an end in itself. This will encourage them to use every blessing they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the

Exalted, as they understand that peace and success in both worlds lies only in this. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

“Whoever does good, whether male or female, and is a believer, We will surely bless them with a good life...”

They will prioritize everything and everyone within their life correctly according to Islamic teachings. They will give value to what is valuable and disregard what should be disregarded. Their example is of a librarian who organizes their great library of books in the correct order so that they can easily find the book they desire without any stress. Whereas, the one who does not prioritize things and people in their life correctly, according to the teachings of Islam, is like the librarian who arranges their large collection of books in a random order. As a result finding a single book becomes a nightmare and source of stress for them, as they misplaced all their books. Similarly, the one who misplaces the worldly blessings, such as wealth and people, they have been granted will find nothing but stress from them. This is the one who does not understand the purpose of their creation and their purpose on this Earth. This is the one who does not perceive the hereafter, even if they fulfil the basic obligatory duties.

As mentioned earlier, the perception the Holy Quran grants a person will make them understand that all the worldly blessings they have been granted are a means to an end and not an end in itself. Therefore, they will never be adversely affected by what they gain, lose or fail to obtain in this world, as all things are only a means. The means are not important, only the end is. Unlike those who fail to adopt the correct perception, through

understanding and acting on the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, they will not be bothered with the things they do not obtain in this world as they understand that anything they do not obtain in this world will be granted to them in the hereafter in a perfect and permanent way. This perception will allow them to observe the world as if it is a drop compared to the endless ocean of the hereafter, just like the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4108. Therefore, they will not care if they lose the drop as they are literally standing at the shore of an ocean, meaning, the hereafter. Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 77:

“...Say, "The enjoyment of this world is little, and the Hereafter is better for he who fears Allāh...”

This does not mean that this type of person abandons the world. Rather, they use the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, thereby obtaining peace and success in both worlds.

In reality, it is this perception, which is rooted in gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge, that made the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, and the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, the best of all creation, as they understood why Allah, the Exalted, created them and worked hard to fulfil it. The great Companion Abdullah Bin Mas'ud, may Allah be pleased with him, confirmed that the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, were the best because they were more detached from the material world

than anyone else and they desired the hereafter more than anyone else. This has been discussed in Imam Abu Na'im Al-Asfahani's, Hilyat Ul Awliya Wa Tabaqat Al Asfiya, Narration 278. This attitude was due to the perception they were granted.

Through this perception and understanding their lives became complete, purposeful and meaningful. Through their perception their aspirations touched the highest Heavens and as a result they became great as they understood and strived to fulfil the purpose of their creation. Chapter 6 Al An'am, verse 162:

“Say, “Indeed, my prayer, my rites of sacrifice, my living and my dying are for Allāh, Lord of the worlds.””

Whereas, those whose vision was restricted to this lowly world became lowly, even if they obtained it all. Chapter 10 Yunus, verse 24:

“The example of [this] worldly life is but like rain which We have sent down from the sky that the plants of the earth absorb - [those] from which men and livestock eat - until, when the earth has taken on its adornment and is beautified and its people suppose that they have capability over it, there comes to it Our command by night or by day, and We make it as a harvest, as if it had not flourished yesterday. Thus do We explain in detail the signs for a people who give thought.”

It is this perception and understanding the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, grants the one who sincerely strives to understand and act on them. The one who misses out on this has failed to understand the purpose of their creation and the purpose of being on this Earth, even if they obtain Paradise in the Hereafter.

The three types of people discussed above has been summarized in the Holy Quran as well. Chapter 56 Al Waqi'ah, verses 1-11:

“When the Occurrence occurs...And you become [of] three kinds. Then the companions of the right - what are the companions of the right? And the companions of the left - what are companions of the left? And the forerunners, the forerunners. Those are the ones brought near [to Allāh].”

Finally, one should always bear in mind that the teachings of the Holy Quran are summarized in chapter 1 Fatihah. And the summary of chapter 1 Al Fatihah is that each person has been given blessings by Allah, the Exalted. The one who uses these blessings in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, will obtain peace and success in both worlds. Whereas, the one who misuses them will obtain divine anger and ultimately lose in both worlds. When one adopts the correct perception through the Islamic teachings this lesson becomes clear. Chapter 1 Al Fatihah, verses 6-7:

“Guide us to the straight path. The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favor, not of those who have earned [Your] anger or of those who are astray.”

So strive to catchup to the forerunners through adopting this perception and understanding by learning and acting on the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, for time in this world is limited and the call to depart is at hand. Chapter 10 Yunus, verse 45:

“And on the Day when He will gather them, [it will be] as if they had not remained [in the world] but an hour of the day...”

And chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 185:

“Every soul will taste death, and you will only be given your [full] compensation on the Day of Resurrection. So he who is drawn away from the Fire and admitted to Paradise has attained [his desire]. And what is the life of this world except the enjoyment of delusion.”

Independence - 1

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6470, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that whoever holds back from asking others will be granted independence.

There is no harm in asking for help from others when one is in need but a muslim should not get into this habit as it can lead to a loss of self-respect. This can be dangerous as the one who loses self-respect is more likely to commit sins as they stop caring what Allah, the Exalted, and others think about them. The one who unnecessarily asks others will also begin to rely on others to aid them instead of trusting in Allah, the Exalted, to aid them. Trusting in Allah, the Exalted, involves using the means one has been granted in lawful ways and then believing the outcome, which Allah, the Exalted, alone chooses, will be best for everyone involved. Therefore, a muslim should strive to utilize all the means they have been granted before turning to others for help. The one who behaves in this manner will be granted independence of people by Allah, the Exalted.

Independence - 2

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 7432, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that Allah, the Exalted, loves the servant who is independent of the creation. This means that a muslim should fully utilize the means they have been provided by Allah, the Exalted, such as their physical strength, in order to fulfill their duties and responsibilities. They should not behave lazily and seek things from people unnecessarily, as this habit leads to dependence on them and it reduces one's trust in Allah, the Exalted. One should firmly believe that no matter what happens, whatever is destined to be their provision was allocated to them over fifty thousand years before the creation of the Heavens and the Earth. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6748. A muslim should focus on using their resources, such as their physical strength, and trust that Allah, the Exalted, will grant them what is best for them. From a religious point of view, one can become incorrectly dependent on others when they believe that a person, such as a religious and spiritual teacher, will suffice them in gaining success in both worlds through their supplications and intercession. This attitude only encourages laziness, as one believes they are free to behave how they wish and will still achieve success in both worlds through their spiritual teacher. A Muslim must avoid this misguidance and instead follow in the footsteps of the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, who had the companionship of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, yet worked hard in sincerely obeying Allah, the Exalted, by using the blessings they had been granted in ways pleasing to Him. This is the correct attitude which must be adopted.

Independence - 3

I had a thought which I wanted to share. It is quite common for people to become dependent on others, such as their family. Even though, having hope in people is not a sin but as they are imperfect a Muslim always runs the risk of being let down, in fact it is inevitable. They should instead strive to rely on Allah, the Exalted. This is only achieved through his obedience by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience as a Muslim who is disobedient will not depend on Allah, the Exalted. They should then fulfil their duties in respect of the creation without expecting or hoping in anything in return from them. This will aid in eliminating their dependency on them. Allah, the Exalted, has made it crystal clear that whoever correctly depends on Him through His sincere obedience will be sufficed from all issues they might face in both worlds. Chapter 65 At Talaq, verse 3:

“...And whoever relies upon Allah - then He is sufficient for him...”

As Allah, the Exalted, is firm on His promises when one depends on Him they too will become steadfast and firm when facing difficulties. But if they rely on people who are prone to change with the passing of time they will become fickle and fail to remain steadfast.

The stronger one's helper and refuge the stronger they will become. If a Muslim seeks refuge with Allah, the Exalted, who has power over all things, through sincere obedience, they will become empowered to overcome all difficulties. But if they seek refuge and depend on people, who by their nature are weak, they too will become weak in the face of difficulties. This is like a person who seeks refuge in a strong fortified castle during a storm and another who seeks refuge in a straw hut. It does not take a genius to determine who is more likely to overcome the difficulty of the storm successfully.

Religion of Ease - 1

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 39, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that religion is simple and straight forward. And a muslim should not over burden themselves, as they will not be able to keep up with it.

This means that a muslim should always lead a simple religious and worldly life. Islam does not demand muslims to overburden themselves in performing righteous deeds. But it in fact teaches simplicity, which is the most beloved religion to Allah, the Exalted, according to a Hadith found in Imam Bukhari's, Adab Al Mufrad, number 287. A muslim should firstly strive to fulfil their obligatory duties, which are undoubtedly within their strength to fulfil as Allah, the Exalted, does not burden a muslim with more than they can bear. This is confirmed in chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 286 of the Holy Quran:

“Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity...”

Next, they should take some time out of their day to study Islamic teachings so that they can act on the Holy Quran and the established traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, according to their strength. This attracts the love of Allah, the Exalted, according to the Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6502.

If a muslim persists on this behaviour they will be provided with such mercy that they will fulfil all their duties towards Allah, the Exalted, and people and find time to enjoy the lawful pleasures of this world without excess, waste or extravagance.

This is how a muslim makes things easier for themselves. And if they possess dependents, such as children, they should teach them the same, thereby making things easier for them also. Overburdening oneself makes things hard and can push one to completely quit. And relaxing too much will make things hard as one will lose out on the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, in both worlds through laziness. A balance is therefore best, which Islam always encourages.

As Islam is simple, the lawful and unlawful are clear, easy to understand and easy to comply with. One must therefore not complicate things for themselves or their dependents by researching and acting on religious knowledge that is not rooted in the two sources of guidance meaning, the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. When one adheres strictly to these two sources, they will find Islam easy to understand and implement.

Finally, by extension one should strive to keep their worldly life simple. This is achieved when one strives for the material world, such as lawful wealth, according to their needs and responsibilities while avoiding extravagance and waste. The more one adheres to this the more relaxed their worldly life will become. When this is coupled with their simple religion, it leads to peace of mind and success in both worlds.

Religion of Ease - 2

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6125, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised to make things easy for others, instead of making things difficult. And to give glad tidings to others and not scare them.

A muslim should always make things easy, firstly for themselves by learning and acting on Islamic knowledge, so that they can fulfill their obligatory duties, act on the established traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and fulfill their needs and the needs of their dependents. This will provide them with plenty of time to enjoy lawful things without being wasteful or extravagant. A muslim should act according to their strength in respect to voluntary righteous deeds and not overburden themselves, as this is disliked in Islam. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6465. A balanced approach is always best.

In addition, muslims should make things easy for others, especially in religious matters, so that people do not grow averse to Islam, believing it is a burdensome religion while it is a simple and easy religion. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Imam Bukhari's, Adab Al Mufrad, number 287. This is important to teach others, especially children. If children wrongfully believe Islam is a difficult religion they will turn away from it when they get older. Children should be taught that Islam has some

obligations which do not take much time to fulfill and leaves plenty of time for them to have fun in good and healthy ways.

But it is important to note, making things easy for oneself or others in religious matters does not mean a muslim should be lazy and teach others to be lazy, as the minimum obligations must be fulfilled at all times, unless one is exempt by Islam. The one who acts lazily is not obeying Allah, the Exalted, only their own desires.

Another aspect of making things easy for others includes a muslim not demanding their full rights from others. Instead, they should use the means they have been granted, such as their physical or financial strength, to help themselves and make things easy for others. In some cases, failing to fulfill the rights of others can lead to punishment. In order to make things easy for others a muslim should therefore only demand their rights in some cases. This does not mean a muslim should not strive to fulfill the rights of others but it means they should try to overlook and excuse the people they have rights over. For example, a parent can excuse their adult child from a particular house chore and do it themselves, if they possess the means to do so without trouble, especially if their child returns home from work exhausted. This leniency and mercy will not only cause Allah, the Exalted, to be more merciful to them but it will also increase the love and respect people have for them. The one who always demands their full rights is not a sinner but they will lose out on this reward and outcome if they behave in this manner.

Muslims should make things easy for others and hope Allah, the Exalted, will make things easy for them in this world and in the next. But those who make things difficult for others may find that Allah, the Exalted, makes things difficult for them in both worlds.

A muslim must remind themselves and others of the countless blessings of Allah, the Exalted, and the great reward He bestows on muslims in this world and in the next on those who obey Him by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This approach, in most cases, is more effective in encouraging people towards the obedience of Allah, the Exalted. Only in some cases when someone is indulging in wishful thinking and disobeying Allah, the Exalted, while expecting they will succeed, should a muslim warn them of the consequences of their actions thereby, inspiring the fear of Allah, the Exalted, in them.

A balance is best whereby one uses hope in Allah, the Exalted, to encourage His obedience and fear of Him in order to prevent sins. And whenever one feels imbalanced or observes others who have become imbalanced, a muslim should act appropriately in order to adjust themselves and others back to the correct middle path.

Religion of Ease - 3

A Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 7129, advises that the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, would choose the right time when discussing religious issues with his Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, as he did not want to over burden or bore them.

Even though, a muslim has no excuses but to fulfill their obligatory duties and learn and act on the established traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, as this is the practical proof of one's claim to faith, none the less, each muslim should act according to their mental and physical strength and treat others according to their mental and physical strength in order to ensure they themselves do not get fed up nor cause others to become fed up of Islam either.

It is important to understand each person has been created unique and given different blessings and gifts. For example, some have the strength to perform much voluntary fasts while others do not. Some have the mental strength to spend the day studying the Holy Quran and the Hadiths of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, whereas others do not. Some can happily discuss religious issues all day with others, while others just do not have the attention or mental strength to do so. This does not mean those who do not possess the strength to do these things are bad muslims as Allah, the Exalted, will judge each person according to their potential, strength, intention and the deeds they performed. This discussion means that muslims should not be too hard on

themselves or others when it comes to striving on voluntary religious matters. A muslim should strive to improve bit by bit to ensure they do not get fed up and give up completely. If a muslim has been granted the strength to strive in voluntary religious matters, they should praise Allah, the Exalted, as none but Him as granted this to them. Understanding this will prevent the deadly sin of pride, an atom's worth of which is enough to take one to Hell. This is warned in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 265.

One must make things easy for others, especially children, so that they understand that Islam is a simple and easy religion, with a few obligations, all aimed to aid them in achieving success and peace in both worlds.

Religion of Ease - 4

I saw a news report a while ago, which will be briefly discussed. It reported on a successful non-muslim businessman. It discussed how he struggled at the start of his business and how many years of effort, stress and sacrifice led to a successful multi-million pound business. It reminded me of a verse of the Holy Quran which declares that Allah, the Exalted, never wastes the efforts of people. Chapter 11 Hud, verse 115:

“...Allah does not allow to be lost the reward of those who do good.”

This verse provides hope that as long as one strives to do something lawful and beneficial their efforts will not be wasted. If Allah, the Exalted, does not waste the efforts of people who do not even believe in Him, why would He not support the muslims who believe in His Oneness and Lordship? If Allah, the Exalted, does not waste the efforts of people when they strive for the material world, how can He then waste the efforts of those who strive to achieve good in the hereafter?

People should therefore, never give up striving to achieve good in both this world and in the next. Unfortunately, some muslims have given up struggling to earn a lawful income after facing some hardship. They instead opt to receive social benefits and become a burden on society. Those who are rightly entitled to receive benefits should continue to utilise them, as it is

their right. But those who have the ability to earn for themselves should do so and contribute to the society.

This verse also encourages muslims to continue doing good to others, even if they do not appreciate their efforts. If one acts with sincerity meaning, for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, they should be confident their efforts have been recorded and will be rewarded in both worlds.

To conclude, whatever lawful action a muslim performs, whether it is worldly, such as a business opportunity, or whether they perform a religious deed, they should put full effort into it, knowing that Allah, the Exalted, will support them and grant them success, sooner or later.

All praise is due to Allah, Lord of the worlds and may peace and blessings be upon His final Messenger, Muhammad, his noble Family and Companions.

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