



# Tazkiyyah al-Nafs | Actions of the Heart

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The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said: **"Wondrous are the believer's affairs. For him there is good in all his affairs, and this is so only for the believer. When something pleasing happens to him, he is grateful, and that is good for him; and when something displeasing happens to him, he is enduring (ṣabr), and that is good for him."** ( Muslim )

Ṣabr is one of half of faith, the other is Shukr.

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## Introduction

وَالْعِلْمُ يَزْكُو عَلَى الْإِنْفَاقِ

**Knowledge increases the more you give**

Ali ibn Abi Talib

Tazkiyah comes from the arabic verb **zakaa** - **yazkuu** which has two main meanings;

1. anything that increases,
2. to be pure.

It is said of a man that he was **in a state of abundance** of the comforts of life and also that **he became righteous and pure from sin**.

Tazkiyyah has the meaning **to make something pure**. In the Quran and Sunnah, the agent is sometimes Allah, as in the Prophetic Du'a: **O Allah, grant my soul its piety and purify it, You are the Best to purify it, You are its Guardian and Master**. Sometimes it is the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, as in the verse: **Take sadaqah from their wealth by which you cleanse them and purify them**. Sometimes it is man, as in the verse: **He who purifies his soul prospers**.

So as is evident, the word Tazkiyyah as it relates to worshippers, means **becoming righteous and the soul's purification from sin**. The worshipper sins and then he is forgiven for his sin through istighfar, seeking Allah's forgiveness and repentance.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said: **There is a piece of flesh in the body if it becomes good (reformed) the whole body becomes good but if it gets spoilt the whole body gets spoilt and that is the heart**.

This bitesize booklet on the actions of the heart is a compilation of benefits from '*Tazkiyyah al-Nufus*' by Ahmed Fareed, '*Mukhtasir Minhaj Al-Qasideen*' by Ibn Qudamah and Lane's *Lexicon*. I ask Allah to make it a source of benefit for myself and the reader, in this life and the hereafter.

## Tazkiyah Al-nafs - Purification of the Soul

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا  
[Ash-Shams:9]

**Successful indeed will be the one who purifies it [the soul]**

- The heart to the body is like the king to the people - he leads and they follow
- Purification of the heart and its rectification is through the actions of the heart
- Actions of the heart is the worshippers path to attaining Allah's love.

These include;

- **Patience**
- **Gratitude**
- **Reliance**
- **Repentance**
- **Seeking forgiveness**

### **Dua for Tazkiyah Al-Nafs**

كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ يَقُولُ: اللَّهُمَّ آتِ نَفْسِي تَقْوَاهَا، وَزَكِّهَا أَنْتَ خَيْرُ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا، أَنْتَ وَلِيِّهَا وَمَوْلَاهَا.

The Prophet ﷺ used to say: Allāhumma Āti Nafsī Taqwāhā wa Zakkihā Anta Khayru man Zakkāhā Anta Waliyyuhā wa Mawlāhā

**O Allah, grant my soul its piety and purify it, You are the Best to purify it, You are its Guardian and Master. Sahih Muslim**

- The worshipper is the one who seeks to master his nafs and not be enslaved by it. He is seeking to make it subservient to Allah, so he can be successful in this life and the hereafter.

## Tawbah - Repentance

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ  
[Al-Baqara:222]

**Truly, God loves those who repent and He loves those who purify themselves**

- Tawbah is the worshipper returning to Allah and departing from the path of the lost, astray ones and those earning the displeasure of Allah

**Tawbah has three requirements;**

1. Nadm - Remorse for committing the sin
2. Iqlaa' - Give up the sin
3. 'Adam al-rujoo' - Not to return to the sin

If the sin is against somebody, there is a fourth requirement, which is to rectify and repair any damage done because of the sin, as in the following examples;

- Gheebah and Namimah - in the same crowd, undo the damage by speaking well of the person
- Theft - return the money if possible. If not, give it in charity on their behalf.
- Haram income mixed with halal income - estimate the haram amount and give in charity

**How does the worshipper of Allah see his sin?**

1. Looking at Allah's commands and prohibitions he acknowledges his sin and mistake so he can now rectify it
2. Looking at the rewards and punishments he feels in awe and fear of Allah which leads to tawbah
3. Looking at the sin as being from Allah's decree cultivates knowledge of Allah's names and attributes, wisdom in the creation, mercy and kindness and leads to increased servitude and worship, seeking Allah's forgiveness and protection from sin and punishment

## Dhikr - Remembrance

أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ  
[Ar-Ra'd:28]

### Verily by God's remembrance are hearts reassured

- The most beneficial thing for the worshipper is Dhikr of Allah
- The tongue is either occupied with Dhikr or it is occupied with mundane speech.
- Being consistent in Dhikr occupies a person from useless and harmful speech, like backbiting and slander
- Easiest act of 'ibadah and the one with the most virtue
- A man came to one of the salaf and complained of a hard heart. He replied 'Soften it with the Dhikr of Allah'

### The best Dhikr is the recitation of the Book of Allah

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَتْلُونَ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنْفَقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً يَرْجُونَ تِجَارَةً لَّن تَبُورَ  
[Fatir:29]

**Indeed those who recite the Book of God and observe prayer, and spend of what We have provided them secretly and openly, [to give as charity and otherwise], anticipate a commerce that will never be ruined**

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said: **The example of the one who remembers his Lord and the one who does not remember his Lord, is like the example of the living and the dead.** Bukhari and Muslim.

## Shukr - Gratitude

وَقَلِيلٌ مِّنْ عِبَادِيَ الشَّاكِرُونَ  
[Saba:13]

**And few indeed of My servants are thankful.**

- Allah describes his worshippers as being gratitude.
- A man shows either gratitude or ingratitude.
- Half of Eman is sabr, patience and the other half is shukr, gratitude.
- Appreciation and gratitude has no limits, as the favours and blessings of Allah are limitless.

### **Shukr centres on three pillars;**

1. Inner, which is the connection of the heart with love and awe.
2. Outer, which is the connection of the tongue with glorification and praise.
3. Continuity in Obedience to Allah, which is the connection of the limbs by doing good and abstaining from evil.

One of the salaf was asked: How was your morning? To which he replied: I woke up between two blessings, not knowing which one is better;

1. Sins, which Allah concealed from the people so they have no blame on me.
2. Affection, that Allah hurled in the hearts of worshippers but which my actions are undeserving of.

## Sabr - Patience

وَاصْبِرُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ  
[Al-Anfal:46]

### **Be patient. Surely God is with the patient**

- Sabr is said to be contentment facing calamity by not complaining
- Sabr is repeated over 90 times in the Qur'an. This teaches us how important it is in the life of every worshipper
- Half of Eman is sabr, patience and the other half is shukr, gratitude.
- Sabr refraining from committing sins, is easier than sabr with the punishment of Allah.

### **Sabr is classified in three types;**

1. Sabr in time of afflictions, that is; to bear the bitterness of misfortunes.
2. Sabr in obedience of Allah, that is; to bear the difficulty of performing what we are commanded.
3. Sabr in guarding against sins, that is; to stop and refrain from committing sins despite their attraction.

It is said: the worshipper must face ritual obligations that he must fulfil patiently, prohibitions he must refrain from steadfastly, and the divine decree he must accept patiently.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, "**No one had ever been given anything better than ṣabr**" Sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim.

## Istighfar - Seeking Forgiveness

وَاسْتَغْفِرُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ  
[Al-Muzzammil:20]

**And seek forgiveness from God; assuredly God is Forgiving, Merciful.**

- Istighfar, the act of seeking forgiveness from Allah, is one of the essential parts of worship.
- Istighfar, when mentioned alongside tawbah, means to utterance of the tongue and tawbah means the heart and the limbs stopping sinning.
- The treatment and medication for sinning, is to seek forgiveness. Sin is the sickness and istighfar is the cure.
- Istighfar is like du'a - Allah answers and forgives if He wills, especially if it comes from the heart, and at one of the specific times when du'a is more likely to be answered such as at the end of prayer and in the last third of the night when people are asleep.

One of the Salaf said to his son: train your tongue to always say O Allah forgive me' because there are specific hours where Allah does not refuse the supplicant.

Ibn 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) said: **We used to count when the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said in one sitting one hundred times: Rabb ighfir li wa tubb 'alayya, innaka anta al-tawab al-raheem, My Lord, forgive me and accept my repentance, for You are the Acceptor of repentance and the Most Merciful** [Sunan Abu Dawood].

## 'Ilm - Knowledge

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ  
[Al-'Alaq: 1]

**Recite: In the Name of your Lord Who created [all creatures]**

- Allah began revelation with the command to read, highlighting the significance and importance of knowledge.
- Knowledge is by the pen, writing, reading, memorising and reviewing.
- Knowledge is what is built on and supported by evidence: meaning it is knowledge of the Quran, Sunnah and narrations of the Salaf.

**The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ informed us that whoever follows a path of knowledge, Allah makes the path to paradise easy for him.**

- The path is an actual path, meaning he goes to the circles of knowledge where the scholars teach Aqidah, Fiqh, Seerah, Tafsir and the sciences of Islam.
- It's also an abstract path, means he adopts the methodology of seeking knowledge through memorising and reviewing knowledge.
- Knowledge is the short path and the direct road to paradise that avoids diversions and delays.
- Knowledge is the shining light that helps to guide a person through the darkness of the night, which is why Allah describes his final revelation as Nur - a light.

**Knowledge is on the tongue and in the heart;** Knowledge on the tongue is either a proof for you or against you. It is often taken lightly, professed by many and practiced by few. Knowledge in the heart is beneficial knowledge. When knowledge of Allah, His names, attributes and actions cultivate in the heart awe, love, hope and reliance, and other actions of the heart.

## Sunnah - The Prophet's Way

وقد رَوَى البخاريُّ رحمه الله عن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: ((كل أمتي يدخلون الجنة إلا من أبي))، قيل: ومن يأبى يا رسول الله؟ قال: ((من أطاعني دخل الجنة، ومن عصاني فقد أبى))

**Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with him) reported the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, "Everyone of my Ummah will enter Jannah except those who refuse". He was asked: "Who will refuse?" He (ﷺ) said, "Whoever obeys me, shall enter Jannah, and whosoever disobeys me, refuses to (enter Jannah)" [Al- Bukhari]**

- The Sunnah is one of the two sources of revelation and guidance for all muslims.
- It is the way of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. When A'isha, the wife of the Prophet ﷺ was asked about his character she replied: **His character was the Quran**
- Following the sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is the way to attain purification and guidance.

One of the requirements for worship to be correct, valid and accepted by Allah is that it must follow the Prophet's Sunnah.

One of the Salaf said: **Utterances will not be accepted without actions. Actions and utterances will not be accepted without intention. Utterances, actions and intentions will not be accepted without following the Sunnah.**

## Ikhlas - Sincerity

وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ حُنَفَاءَ وَيُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَذَلِكَ دِينُ الْقِيَمَةِ  
[Al-Bayyina:5]

**And they were only commanded to worship God devoting religion purely to Him, [free] of any idolatry, as hanīfs, upright, and to establish prayer and pay the alms. That is the upright religion.**

- It is said that Ikhlas is being unconscious and unaware of the gaze and attention of the people by being constantly conscious and focused on the Creator.
- The opposite of Ikhlas is Riyaa - showing off your actions of ibadah for the approval of the people.
- Actions and ‘ibadah with riyaa will not be accepted by Allah.
- The salaf used to hide their good deeds as much as they hid their sins because they were afraid of ruining their actions with riyaa.
- How different was back then to today, with social media promoting a culture of seeking people acceptance for actions of ‘ibadah through likes, follows and subscribes.
- It is recommended to show your good deeds in some instances, such as teaching, setting a good example and leading the way for others follow.

**One of the Salaf used to pray in the first row all the time. Then one day he was late and only made it to the second row. It caused him to feel embarrassed from the people as a result of being in the second row. At that point, he realised that his happiness to offer his prayer in the first row was for the people.**

Beware of **‘ujub bil-nafs** - self-amazement. If you see ikhlas in your actions, then your action is lacking ikhlas.

**The salaf used to consider purifying their intentions in their actions of ‘ibaadah, harder than the action of ‘ibaadah itself.**