

The Effects of our Deeds:

Knowingly or unknowingly, we all sin and make mistakes. This is something from our nature as human beings that we will never be able to completely overcome. We all fall into that second look or say a white lie or miss a salah (prayer). While we may repent from the sin after, an aspect that is generally forgotten are the very real effects sins have in our lives.

It is from the sunnah (tradition) of Allah ﷻ that He establishes balance and justice. When we sin, we're transgressing against ourselves, and transgression by definition is an imbalance. This is why in the famous ayah (verse) in Surah Zumar where Allah ﷻ tells us not to despair of His Mercy, He doesn't say, 'O My slaves who have committed many sins,' but rather He says,

قُلْ يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِن رَّحْمَةِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ

'O My servants who have transgressed against themselves (souls), Do not despair of Allah's Mercy, For Allah forgives all sins. It is He Who is the Forgiving, the Merciful' (Qur'an 39:53)-highlighting that sin is a transgression and it is against one's own self.

In order to rectify the imbalance caused by sins, harm may affect a person as a consequence. This is alluded to many times in the Qur'an; for example, Allah ﷻ says,

وَمَا أَصَابَكُمْ مِّنْ مُّصِيبَةٍ فَبِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَيَعْفُو عَن كَثِيرٍ

"And whatever strikes you of disaster - it is for what your hands have earned; but He pardons much," (Qur'an 42:30).

And He says,

مَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ حَسَنَةٍ فَمِنَ اللَّهِ وَمَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ سَيِّئَةٍ فَمِنْ نَفْسِكَ وَأَرْسَلْنَاكَ لِلنَّاسِ رَسُولًا وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا

**".Whatever benefit comes to you O people , it is by Allah's grace..but what comes to you of evil, [O man], is from you own doings-----
(Qur'an 4:79).**

The Messenger ﷺ also indicated the cause and effect relationship between sinning and harm in the following narration, "A man is deprived of provision because of the sins that he commits," (Ibn Maajah, Hasan).

It is important to realize this relationship between sins and the problems in our lives because a lot of times as humans we tend to deflect the cause of something harmful to someone or something other than ourselves. True, it may be that the harm originated from a source other than us, but it may be that the reason it originated in the first place was the sin we committed. We forget that whatever is happening to us may in fact be a result of a sin that we regarded as insignificant. It is rare that we attribute something evil befalling us as a consequence of our own disobedience to Allah ﷻ. The Companions and the early Muslims had this understanding of the effects of sin and would actively engage in seeking tawbah (repentance) in order to wipe them out. They understood the reality of actions and the way they affected one's life.

This is highlighted in their statements and actions. For example, in the famous poem of Imam Shafi'i where he complains to his teacher about bad memory in seeking knowledge, he is advised to cease sin.

And Imam Abu Hanifa, when he would be confronted by a fiqh (jurisprudence) issue that he was unable to conclude, would attribute his inability to decipher it to a sin that he had committed and would consequently get up and pray two units of prayer in repentance. In fact, the understanding of this reality was so deep with the early Muslims that they would say that if they disobeyed Allah ﷻ, they would see the result of their disobedience in the attitudes of their spouses. This understanding of the effects of sin is elaborated further by Abdullah ibn Abbas رضي الله عنه who said,

"Good deeds make the face light, give light to the heart and bring about ample provision, physical strength, and love in people's hearts. Evil deeds make the face dark, give darkness to the heart, and bring about physical weakness, lack of provision and hatred in people's hearts."

This statement is interesting because he draws a parallel between the effects of sins and the effects of good deeds. Good deeds result in good whereas evil deeds beget evil. This is a Qur'anic principle as Allah ﷻ says,

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّن ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهٗ حَيَاةً طَيِّبَةً وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

"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 certainly reward such people according to the noblest of their deeds in the hereafter." (Qur'an 16:97)

And He says:

وَمَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَن ذِكْرِي فَإِنَّ لَهُ مَعِيشَةً ضَنْكًا وَنَحْشُرُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَعْمَىٰ

"And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a meager/depressed life and We shall raise him back to life as a blind person on the Day of Resurrection. " (Qur'an 20:124).

If we engage in deep self-reflection and self-audit and analyze the problems in our lives, we will definitely find that most of them are a result of our sins. It is important that we try and instill this understanding of the effects of sins within ourselves so that we can actively try to cease from them. It can be asked though, why allow harm to result from sin in this life? Allah informs us of the wisdom behind this,

ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُمْ بَعْضَ
الَّذِي عَمِلُوا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

"Corruption has appeared throughout the land and sea by [reason of] what the hands of people have earned so He may let them taste part of [the consequence of] what they have done that perhaps they will return [to righteousness]." (Qur'an [30:41](#))

The profound truth is that the reason we are harmed by sins in our lives is that it is in fact a Mercy from Allah ﷻ. Why? To get us to return back to Him in repentance. Would it be better that He allowed us to continue sinning inconsequently and then took us to account altogether on the Day of Judgment? Or is it better that He ﷻ gives us some problems as a result of our sins so that we can reflect and return to Him by making tawbah? Going back to the earlier point about balance, it is important to understand as well that the harms that come to us as a result of our sins are the very expiation of our sins. Aisha ؓ narrated that the Messenger ﷺ said,

"No trouble comes to a believer even if it is the pricking of a thorn that it becomes (the means) whereby his sins are effaced or his sins are obliterated." [Muslim]

Taking all this into account, we can understand that our sins (and our good deeds) have a spiritual consequence that translates into our

daily lives even if it is not apparent. The benefit of this is that it will allow us to

- 1) put in more effort to stop sinning;
- 2) to accurately analyze the problems and harms that befall us so that we can see if it is because of our sins and react accordingly;
- 3) to actively engage in tawbah and istighfaar (seeking forgiveness) to return to Allah ﷻ; and iv) to increase in good deeds.

Instilling this into ourselves will help us think twice before committing a sin and remove hesitation in doing good deeds. This will, in shaa Allah (God willing), allow us to have a closer relationship with Allah ﷻ as well as make us more aware and conscious of our actions.