67617 - Refraining From Doing Good Deeds for Fear of Showing Off

the question

What are the guidelines on refraining from doing good deeds for fear of showing off?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

It should be noted that the Shaytaan is keen to make the Muslim fall into one of two things: either to make him do a good deed in order to show off and for the sake of his reputation, and not sincerely for the sake of Allaah, or to make him refrain from doing the good deed altogether.

The Muslim who is sincere in his intention will not pay any attention to the whispers that the Shaytaan tries to impart to him concerning his action, or his suggestion that it is not for the sake of Allaah. He will not pay attention to the whispers of the Shaytaan suggesting that he should refrain from doing the good deed for fear of showing off. The sincere heart is equally at ease both when doing good deeds in secret and when doing good deeds openly.

Shaykh Ibn Baaz (may Allaah have mercy on him) was asked:

A woman is asking: I am so afraid of showing off that I cannot advise some people or tell them not to do certain things such as backbiting, gossiping, and so on. I am afraid that that will be showing off on my part, and I am afraid that people will think that I am showing off. So I do not give them any advice (naseehah). I tell myself: They are educated people, they do not need any advice. What do you suggest?

He replied:

This is one of the traps of the Shaytaan, by means of which he prevents people from calling others to Allaah and from enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil. One of the ways in which he does this is to make them think that this is showing off, or that people will think that it is showing

off. You should not pay any attention to that, rather what you should do is go ahead and advise your sisters and brothers in faith, if you see them falling short in any duty or committing haraam (impermissible) actions such as gossiping, setting people against one another, or not covering in front of men. Do not be afraid of showing off, rather do it solely for the sake of Allaah, be sincere in your intention and receive glad tiding of goodness. Ignore the tricks and whispers of the Shaytaan. Allaah knows what is in your heart, your intention and your sincerity towards Him and your sincerity towards His slaves. Undoubtedly showing off is shirk (a form of disbelief)and is not permissible, but it is not permissible for a believing man or woman to refrain from doing something that Allaah has enjoined, such as calling people to Him or enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil, for fear of showing off, so they should beware of that. They should do what they are obliged to do among men and women, and men and women are equal in this regard. Allaah has stated that in His Holy Book where He says (interpretation of the meaning):

“The believers, men and women, are Awliyaa’ (helpers, supporters, friends, protectors) of one another; they enjoin (on the people) Al-Ma‘roof (i.e. Islamic Monotheism and all that Islam orders one to do), and forbid (people) from Al-Munkar (i.e. polytheism and disbelief of all kinds, and all that Islam has forbidden); they perform As-Salaah (establish prayers), and give the Zakaah (poor-due), and obey Allaah and His Messenger. Allaah will have His Mercy on them. Surely, Allaah is All-Mighty, All-Wise”

[al-Tawbah 9:71]

Fataawa Ibn Baaz, 6/403

It was narrated that Husayn ibn ‘Abd al-Rahmaan said: I was with Sa’eed ibn Jubayr and he said: “Which of you saw the star that fell last night?” I said, “I did.” Then I said: “I wasn’t praying, but I had been stung…”

Narrated by Muslim, 220.

Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen said:

He said this (may Allaah have mercy on him) lest anyone think that he was praying qiyaam (voluntary night prayer)and praise him for something that he had not done. This is unlike what some people do, when they are happy that the people think that they were praying qiyaam, but that is contrary to Tawheed(maintaining pure sincerity to Allah).

What Husayn said does not come under the heading of showing off, rather it comes under the heading of good deeds. It is not like one who refrains from doing good deeds for fear of showing off, because the Shaytaan may toy with a man and make the idea of refraining from doing good for fear of showing off appear attractive to him. Rather you should do the good deed, and try to avoid showing off to people.

Majmoo' Fataawa al-Shaykh Ibn 'Uthaymeen, 9/85, 86.

And Allaah knows best.