

Six Steps to Leaving Sins

By *Shaykh Mustafa Kamal Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi*

We live in a day and age where hearts are plagued by depression and worries that are the direct result of our sins and constant disobedience to Allah (swt). It is because of our sins, that our hearts are devoid of tranquillity and peace.

When we sin, our heart becomes enveloped in darkness. If we do not stop sinning, this darkness will spread like spiritual cancer and our heart will feel the effect of sinning, which is that the heart will become worried. No matter how much a person tries to hide his sins, sins will never allow his heart to experience tranquillity and peace. In some way or the other, sins will always create anxiety in the heart. A person may successfully hide his sins from others, but will never be at peace in his heart.

An easy way to fill our heart with inner peace is to immediately leave sins. The Companions of the Prophet (saws) learned this secret to inner peace directly from the Prophet (saws). It has been narrated from *Sayyidna Abu Bakr* (may Allah be pleased with him) that it is obligatory to repent (*taubah*) from sins but it is even more important that one stays away from sins.

If you want to excel in worship, leave sins!

Nowadays, many people have the desire to become great worshippers of Allah (swt). It is narrated in *Sunan al-Tirmidhi* that *Sayyidna Abu Hurayrah* (may Allah be pleased with him) narrates from the Prophet (peace be upon him), that practice *taqwa* in relation to those things which are prohibited by Allah (swt) and you will become the greatest worshipper of Allah (swt). So in order to become great worshippers of Allah (swt), we must live a life free from sins. Allah (swt) has made it so easy for us to excel in our worship (*'ibadah*).

Spend a day loving the Prophet (peace be upon him)

Many people claim to love the Prophet (peace be upon him). The great *shaykh Khwaja UbaidUllah Abrar* (may Allah be merciful to him) said that spending a day without sinning is like spending that day in the love of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Why did *Khwaja UbaidUllah Abrar* (may Allah be merciful to him) say this? This is because love without actions is mere words and feelings. True love has to be acted upon – how? By following the *sunnah* of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and one of the greatest *sunnahs* of the Prophet (peace be upon him) was that he led a life which was completely free of sins. So let us revive this great *sunnah* of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and spend our day without sinning against Allah (swt)!

Have all your *doas* accepted by Allah (swt)!

Know that a person who leaves sinning knowingly and intentionally, Allah (swt) will stop rejecting his or her *doas*. So if you wish to become a *wali* of Allah (swt) whose *doas* are not rejected (*mustajab ud da'waat*), then leave sins immediately!

We once heard our spiritual guide *Shaykh Zulfiqar Ahmad Naqshbandi Mujaddidi* (may his *barakah* ever endure) say to someone: "It is very easy to become a *wali* of Allah (swt). Make a firm commitment today that you will never sin again against Allah (swt) and tomorrow you will be a *wali* of Allah (swt)."

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How should we leave sinning? The following six steps will help in leaving sins:

1. Understand that sins are poison!

Firstly, understand the deceptive danger in sinning.

No matter how beautiful a snake's skin looks with its dazzling colours, you would never touch a snake. Sinning often appears to be deceptively beautiful, just like a poisonous snake. But the snake's bite and poison will lead you to your physical death and the sin's bite and poison will lead you to your spiritual death!

Sometimes, we tell ourselves: let me sin just this one time, and then I will give it up. If you were told that there is an electrical wire outside, would you touch it even once? Never! Because you know that touching the wire will lead to electrocution and death. Similarly, the touch of sin will lead to your spiritual death!

Sins can be pleasing! If you were given a box of chocolates and told that all are fine except one piece, which has poison in it, would you eat even one chocolate from the box? Would you take that risk? Never, because you might mistakenly swallow the one poisonous piece of chocolate and die. Know that if you take spiritual risks and indulge in sins that appear to be pleasing, this will lead to your spiritual death!

2. Don't lie to yourself: sins are sins!

One of the greatest diseases of our modern age is that we lie to ourselves and do not admit that we are committing sins. For example, instead of being honest with ourselves and admitting that we lied, we will say that "I just made an excuse." Instead of admitting that we were backbiting, we will say that "I was just discussing her situation."

If a person considers sins to be sins, it becomes easy to leave the sins but unfortunately nowadays we do not recognize our sins to be sins. Instead, we make excuses and use stratagems in order to convince ourselves and others of the lawfulness of our heinous sins.

In order to free our lives of sins, we need to be honest with ourselves. Sinning is sinning and we need to make a firm intention to leave all sins, big or small. Our *Mashaikh* say that if a person considers a sin to be a sin and still commits it, then the person will feel remorseful. And because of the *barakah* of this remorse, Allah (swt) will give this person the opportunity to repent sincerely.

But if sins are taken lightly, or worse, if we use excuses and stratagems to consider them to be lawful, then often the opportunity to be forgiven is also taken away.

3. Know what action are sins!

If you don't know which actions are sins, how will you avoid them? Therefore, connect yourself with '*Ulema* and *Mashaikh* so that you can learn what is and is not sinning. This is why our *Mashaikh* recommend that any person who wants to leave a life of sin completely must also seek knowledge of the *deen*. *Imam Ghazali* (may Allah be merciful to him) said "The biggest '*aalim* is one who is best aware of the harmful effects of sins upon himself." If you connect yourself with *Mashaikh*, they will pinpoint to you which sins you are committing and how to eradicate sins

from your life in an easy manner because *Mashaikh* are specialists in diagnosing spiritual diseases, identifying sins, and recommending cures for the condition of our hearts.

4. Ask Allah (swt) for help!

It is our experience that if someone asks Allah (swt) for refuge from a sin, he or she is saved from the sin. When *Nabi Yusuf* (peace be upon him) was given an invitation for sinning, he immediately sought refuge in Allah (swt) and was saved from sinning. "She bolted the doors and said: Come! He said: I seek refuge in Allah!" (*Surah al-Yusuf*: 23) Even today if someone seeks refuge in Allah (swt) with sincerity as did *Nabi Yusuf* (peace be upon him), Allah swt will protect them from falling into sin.

If you have to go to the house of a loved one for dinner, and outside their house is a dog that runs towards and tries to bite visitors, you have three options:

- (1) First, that you see the dog and turn back;
- (2) Second, that you jump on the dog and wrestle the dog in an attempt to overcome it; and
- (3) Third, that you call upon the master of the house to control the dog.

Always remember that *Shaytan* is nothing but a dog. If you want to be saved from *Shaytan*, just call upon Allah (swt) and He will protect you from its evil whisperings and incitement towards sin.

Rabia Basriyyah (may Allah be merciful to her) used to make this *doa* in *tabajjud*: "Oh Allah, just as you have held back the heavens from falling on the earth, so save me so that *Shaytan*'s effect does not fall on me!" So make this *doa* in *tabajjud* and then every morning when you start your new day, make it your heart's desire to spend that day free of sin. Then see for yourself the help of Allah (swt) descend upon you.

If you ever feel like sinning, pray two *rakats* and make *doa* that "Oh Allah, it is very difficult for me to leave sins, I am giving myself over to you. You are the only one who can save me." Because you place your trust in Allah (swt) in this manner, Allah (swt) will save you from sins.

5. Leave outwards sins first!

Allah (swt) commands us in the Holy Qur'an: "Leave sinning, be they outward sins or inward sins. Those who sin will get due recompense for their earnings." (*Surah al-An'aam*: 120).

In this verse of the Holy Qur'an, Allah (swt) commands us to leave both outward and inward sins but He (swt) mentions outward (*ẓāhirī*) sins first. Therefore, we must first leave outward sins. If we leave outward sins first, it will become easy for us to leave inward sins.

Outward sins are those sins which a person is able to see with his or her eyes, e.g. stealing. Inward sins are those which are only known to Allah (swt) and to the person committing the sin, e.g. fantasizing about a non-*mabram* of the opposite gender..

6. Do not differentiate between big and small sins

Do not consider any sin to be small. *Hafiz Ibn al-Qayyim* (may Allah be merciful to him) wrote, that don't look at whether the sin is big or small, rather look at the greatness of the Lord

(swt) against whom you are sinning. A small sin is like a small scorpion and a big sin is like a big scorpion. The poison of both types of scorpions is fatal.

Let us make an intention that from this day onwards, we will leave sins. If we break the rules of Allah (swt) due to our weakness, we will ask for forgiveness right away. We should, through our tears, convince Allah (swt) to forgive us right away.

Sayyidna Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) narrates: I heard the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) say:

"Allah the Almighty said: 'O son of Adam, so long as you call upon Me and ask of Me, I shall forgive you for what you have done, and I shall not mind. O son of Adam, were your sins to reach the clouds of the sky and were you then to ask forgiveness of Me, I would forgive you. O son of Adam, were you to come to Me with sins nearly as great as the earth and were you then to face Me, ascribing no partner to Me, I would bring you forgiveness nearly as great as it.'" (*Al-Tirmidhi*).

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