

Striving Against The Nafs

Reminder From

Shaykh Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani
رحمه الله

Translation & Lesson Benefits

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Shaykh Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani رحمه الله said:

Shaytan does not advise his enemies/opponents (man) with good. Therefore, it is obligatory upon every Muslim to strive against his own self (nafs) and his desires. For that reason, he ﷺ said: **“And the mujahid is the one who strives against his own self in obedience to Allah.”** (Sunan al-Tirmidhi, 1621 — Hasan Sahih) And it is not permissible for him to surrender/submit to the desires of the soul, because this surrender will lead him to destruction.

Therefore, the Muslim should always remember the outcome/end result — he should remember the (abode of the) Hereafter. **“And indeed the Hereafter is better for you than the first (life) of this world.”** (93:4) And the Hereafter, as you know, contains bliss, and it contains Hellfire. And this Hellfire contains types of punishment that the human mind/intellect cannot even imagine. From that is, for example, his ﷺ saying: **“This fire of yours which the son of Adam kindles is one part out of seventy parts of the heat of Hell.”** (Sahih al-Bukhari, 3265; Sahih Muslim, 2843)

Therefore, he (man) lives watchful of Allah, Mighty and Majestic (Allah is always watching him) and through that he gains the determination not to incline right or left, and not to be toyed/manipulated with by desires and lusts. And he ﷺ said: **“Paradise is surrounded by hardships, and the Fire is surrounded by desires.”** (Sahih al-Bukhari, 6487; Sahih Muslim, 2822) So whoever truly wishes to be among the people of Paradise must strive against his own self (nafs).

Benefit #1

“Shaytan never sincerely guides or advises man for his good.”

Shaytan’s whispers are not advice — they are deception leading to destruction

This is from the clearest realities Allah taught us about the enemy of mankind: that Shaytan is not a “neutral voice,” and he is not a friend, and he is not a well-wisher. Rather, he is a sworn enemy who calls only to evil, misguidance, and ruin — and he beautifies falsehood until the servant accepts it.

So the أصل (foundation) is that the believer must treat Shaytan’s suggestions as plots against him not as guidance, and must respond to him with rejection upon eman, sincerely in obedience to Allah.

And Allah made this reality explicit, commanding the believer to view Shaytan as an enemy:

إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ فَاتَّخِذُوهُ عَدُوًّا ۚ إِنَّمَا يَدْعُو حِزْبَهُ لِيَكُونُوا مِنْ أَصْحَابِ السَّعِيرِ

“Indeed, Shaytan is an enemy to you; so take him as an enemy. He only invites his party to be among the companions of the Blaze.” (Surah al-Fatir 35:6)

And Allah said:

وَإِذْ قَالَ الشَّيْطَانُ لَمَّا قُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَعَدَكُمْ وَعْدَ الْحَقِّ وَوَعَدْتُكُمْ فَأَخْلَفْتُكُمْ وَمَا كَانَ لِي عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ إِلَّا أَنْ دَعَوْتُكُمْ فَاسْتَجَبْتُمْ لِي فَلَا تَلُومُونِي وَلُومُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ مَا أَنَا بِمُصْرِخِكُمْ وَمَا أَنَا بِمُصْرِخِيَّ إِنِّي كَفَرْتُ بِمَا أَشْرَكْتُمُونِ مِنْ قَبْلُ إِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

“And Shaytan will say when the matter has been concluded: ‘Indeed, Allah had promised you the promise of truth. And I promised you, but I betrayed you. But I had no authority over you except that I invited you, and you responded to me. So do not blame me; but blame yourselves. I cannot help you, nor can you help me. Indeed, I deny your association of me [with Allah] before. Indeed, for the wrongdoers is a painful punishment.’” (Surah Ibrahim 14:22)

Shaytan's method is not to "force" a person — but to invite him, and to beautify, and to decorate, and to gradually pull him step by step until the heart is trapped. This is why Allah did not merely say Shaytan is an enemy, but said: "so take him as an enemy" — meaning: treat him with the mindset of war, not the mindset of tolerance.

And because the believer may sometimes be fooled, Allah clarified that Shaytan's path is always to command evil and indecency, and to push the believer to speak about Allah without knowledge:

إِنَّمَا يَأْمُرُكُم بِالسُّوءِ وَالْفَحْشَاءِ وَإِنْ تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

"He only commands you to evil and immorality and to say about Allah what you do not know." (Surah al-Baqarah 2:169) So the believer should understand: the whisper may arrive as a "suggestion," or as a "feeling," or as a "desire," or as a "reason," but it ends in one of these doors:

- evil (السوء)
- immorality (الفحشاء)
- speaking without knowledge about Allah

This is why the Shaykh said: Shaytan does not advise his enemy with good. Because his "advice" is a disguised command to evil. He consistently betrays the son of Adam until he listens and follows him.

As mentioned, Allah exposed Shaytan in The Qur'an and recorded his confession:

وَإِذْ قَالَ الشَّيْطَانُ لَمَّا قُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَعَدَكُمْ وَعْدَ الْحَقِّ وَوَعَدْتُكُمْ فَأَخْلَفْتُكُمْ وَمَا كَانَ لِي عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ إِلَّا أَنْ دَعَوْتُكُمْ فَاسْتَجَبْتُمْ لِي فَلَا تَلُمُونِي وَلُومُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ مَا أَنَا بِمُصْرِخِكُمْ وَمَا أَنَا بِمُصْرِخِي إِيَّيْكُمْ بَمَا أَشْرَكْتُمْ مِنْ قَبْلُ إِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

"And Shaytan will say when the matter has been concluded: 'Indeed, Allah had promised you the promise of truth. And I promised you, but I betrayed you. But I had no authority over you except that I invited you, and you responded to me. So do not blame me; but blame yourselves. I cannot help you, nor can you help me. Indeed, I deny your association of me [with Allah] before. Indeed, for the wrongdoers is a painful punishment.'" (Surah Ibrahim 14:22)

So Shaytan openly admits four realities:

1. He promised, then betrayed.
2. He had no سلطان (authority) — only invitation.
3. The servant responded willingly.
4. He abandons them completely.

So this is the real meaning of Shaytan not advising man with good: he “advises” in words, but his end is betrayal and destruction.

And the Messenger of Allah ﷺ made the believer understand that Shaytan’s influence is constant and close saying:

إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ يَجْرِي مِنَ الْإِنْسَانِ مَجْرَى الدَّمِ

“Indeed, Shaytan flows through the human being like blood flows.” (Sahih al-Bukhari 3281; Sahih Muslim 2175)

So the believer is not dealing with a distant enemy — rather, he is dealing with an enemy that comes to him in private, in thought, in desire, and in weakness.

Shaytan’s war is not only to make the son of Adam sin — but also:

- weaken his worship
- exhaust his heart
- make him delay good
- make him doubt and hesitate
- make him lose hope
- make him collapse from consistency
- make him love disobedience
- make him accept small compromises until big destruction arrives
- And much more!

And this is why the believer must understand: even when Shaytan comes through a “small door,” the end is serious.

So a believer combats Shaytan by cutting him off at the beginning, not entertaining or negotiating with him, for his nature is evil.

And this is from the strongest statements that closes the door on Shaytan: Allah reminding the servant that He sees him:

أَلَمْ يَعْلَم بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ يَرَى

“Does he not know that Allah sees?” (Surah al-Alaq 96:14)

So the believer’s protection begins when he replaces the whisper of Shaytan with the awareness of Allah’s sight — because the one who knows Allah sees him is not easily lured into shameful deeds and words.

And this shows that Shaytan’s entire method is da‘wah [invitation/calling] into misguidance — he calls, decorates/beautifies/adorns, and makes things seem “reasonable” or “harmless,” but he is only pulling the servant toward destruction. And once the servant falls, shaytan abandons him.

So when a person feels (for example):

1. sudden urges toward sin,
2. laziness from obedience,
3. excuses to delay prayer,
4. thoughts that make disobedience feel “small,”

he recognizes: this is an enemy calling him. This is why a believer must fight his nafs and hawa [desire] — because shaytan uses them as doors into the heart. Shaytan’s “advice” is always a trap, so a Muslim must oppose his invitations with obedience, remembrance, and steadfast resistance.

إِنَّمَا يَأْمُرُكُم بِالسُّوءِ وَالْفَحْشَاءِ وَأَنْ تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

“He only commands you to evil and immorality and to say about Allah what you do not know.” (Surah al-Baqarah 2:169)

Benefit #2

It is obligatory upon every Muslim to strive against his own nafs and desires, because surrendering to them is the beginning of destruction.

The believer is not left to follow desire, nor to obey every inclination, nor to submit to every impulse. Rather, he is commanded to restrain, discipline, and purify the soul to obey Allah and His Messenger ﷺ.

So the أصل (foundation) is that the Muslim does not accept the nafs as a leader. Rather, he makes revelation the leader, and he forces the nafs to follow.

And Allah made it clear that success is not for the one who surrenders to the nafs — but for the one who purifies it and disciplines it:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا
وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا

“He has succeeded who purifies it, And he has failed who instills it [with corruption].” (91:9–10)

So Allah tied true success (purification) — meaning: cleansing and correcting the soul and raising it upon obedience — and He tied loss to neglecting it and corrupting it.

And this directly proves the Shaykh’s point: that every Muslim must strive against his nafs. Because the nafs is either being purified and raised, or it is being buried and corrupted. There is no neutral position.

Then Allah clarified that guidance is not attained for the lazy and the negligent — rather it is tied to striving:

وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

“And those who strive for Us - We will surely guide them to Our ways. And indeed, Allah is with the doers of good.” (Surah Al-Ankaboot 29:69) So striving (جاهدوا) is a شرط (condition) for guidance, and whoever abandons striving abandons the سبب (cause) of being guided.

And from the greatest types of striving is striving against one's self — because the self is what holds a person back from prayer, holds him back from knowledge, pulls him to sin, beautifies laziness, and invites him to disobedience when he is alone.

This is why the Messenger of Allah ﷺ placed a defining description of the true mujahid in this exact battle — the battle of the soul:

وَالْمُجَاهِدُ مَنْ جَاهَدَ نَفْسَهُ فِي طَاعَةِ اللَّهِ

“And the mujahid is the one who strives against his own self in obedience to Allah.” (Sunan al-Tirmidhi 1621 — Hasan Sahih)

So this hadith is not merely encouragement — it is a معيار (measuring-stick) for truthfulness: that a person's jihad is shown by whether he can defeat his own nafs and make it submit to obedience.

And this is exactly why the Shaykh said: “it is obligatory upon every Muslim to strive against his nafs and desires.”

Because the nafs is the first battlefield. Whoever loses it cannot protect anything after it.

And Allah clarified that the one who surrenders to desire is not merely “weak” — rather he is astray and threatened with punishment:

وَلَا تَتَّبِعِ الْهَوَىٰ فَيُضِلَّكَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ الدِّينَ يَضِلُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ بِمَا نَسُوا يَوْمَ الْحِسَابِ

“And do not follow [your] desire, as it will lead you astray from the way of Allah. Indeed, those who go astray from the way of Allah will have a severe punishment for having forgotten the Day of Account.” (Surah Sad 38:26)

So following desire is not described as “personal freedom,” but as ضلال (misguidance), and it is tied to The Day of Account.

And this is why the Shaykh directly connects surrendering to desires with destruction — because the one who forgets accountability becomes easy prey for the nafs and Shaytan.

Then Allah made the road to Paradise itself based on this battle:

وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ وَنَهَى النَّفْسَ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ
فَإِنَّ الْجَنَّةَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَىٰ

“But as for he who feared the position of his Lord and prevented the soul from [unlawful] desire, Then indeed, Paradise will be [his] refuge.” (79:40–41)

So Jannah is tied to two matters:

- خوف (fear) of the standing before Allah
- stopping the soul from hawa (desire)

Meaning: whoever wants Paradise must oppose himself. Whoever obeys himself will obey his destruction.

And the Messenger of Allah ﷺ gave the believer a perfect description of why this struggle feels difficult:

حُفَّتِ الْجَنَّةُ بِالْمَكَارِهِ وَحُفَّتِ النَّارُ بِالشَّهَوَاتِ

“Paradise is surrounded by hardships, and the Fire is surrounded by desires.” (Sahih al-Bukhari 6487; Sahih Muslim 2822)

So the believer should understand something extremely important: when the nafs feels pain in obedience, that does not mean the path is wrong/hard or unattainable — rather it means you are touching the barrier that surrounds Jannah. And when the nafs feels ease in desire, that does not mean it is harmless — rather it means you are touching what surrounds the Fire.

This is how Shaytan and the nafs often drag a person downward step-by-step, starting with what seems light, until it can reach the worst outcomes:

- Virtuous action at expense of greater action
- Useless Mubah
- Minor Sins
- Major Sins
- Bid'ah

- Minor Kufr + Minor Shirk (Riyaa – showing off in action/speech)
- Major Kufr + Major Shirk

Because the nafs does not usually drop a person into the worst level immediately (except due to extremism) — rather it weakens him gradually through comfort, compromise, and repeated surrender, until the heart accepts what it once rejected. So the believer watches himself at the early levels, because small openings often become the entrance to greater destruction.

Benefit #3

The true mujahid is the one who strives against his own self (nafs) in obedience to Allah.

This benefit is from the most important corrections to people's understanding of jihad: that jihad is not only outward, and it is not merely a claim, nor a slogan — rather, it begins with the greatest battlefield inside the servant: the nafs.

So the Shaykh's statement here corrects a major misunderstanding: that many people may speak about striving and victory, but the one who cannot overcome his own soul will be defeated even if he appears strong outwardly. Because the nafs is the internal commander — if it is disciplined, it obeys Allah and His Messenger ﷺ; but if it is left loose, it drags a person to sin, laziness, and collapse.

This is why the Messenger of Allah ﷺ defined the true mujahid with the clearest definition:

وَالْمُجَاهِدُ مَنْ جَاهَدَ نَفْسَهُ فِي طَاعَةِ اللَّهِ

“And the mujahid is the one who strives against his own self in obedience to Allah.” (Sunan al-Tirmidhi 1621 — Hasan Sahih)

So this hadith is not secondary — it is a definition. It shows that a person is not truly a mujahid simply because he wishes, or because he talks, or because he has intensity — rather, he is a mujahid when he purifies and corrects his nafs to obey Allah and His Messenger ﷺ.

And Allah Himself described the successful believer as the one who restrains the nafs and prevents it from following hawa (desire):

وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ وَنَهَى النَّفْسَ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ
فَإِنَّ الْجَنَّةَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَىٰ

“But as for he who feared the position of his Lord and prevented the soul from [unlawful] desire, Then indeed, Paradise will be [his] refuge.” (Surah al-Nazi‘at 79:40–41)

And this is exactly what the Shaykh is calling to: that the servant must wage war against the nafs until it becomes obedient, and he does not surrender to desires. And the reason this is so central is because most sins do not begin with a major fall — they begin with surrender inside the heart:

- a glance that the servant does not cut off
- a desire that the servant follows
- a delay in obedience that becomes a habit
- a sin that becomes normalized
- a good deed that becomes heavy and disliked

So the mujahid is the one who stops the nafs at the beginning.

And Allah clarified that the one who obeys his desire is not simply making a “personal choice,” but is obeying something that becomes like an object of worship:

أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنِ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوَاهُ

“Have you seen he who has taken as his god his own desire?” (Surah al-Jathiyah 45:23)

Meaning: he obeys his desire like a master — it commands and he follows. So the mujahid is the opposite of this: he does not allow hawa to command him, rather he makes obedience command him.

And the Messenger of Allah ﷺ explained that strength is not the ability to overpower others, but to overpower the self when it boils with anger, desire, and reaction:

لَيْسَ الشَّدِيدُ بِالسُّرْعَةِ، إِنَّمَا الشَّدِيدُ الَّذِي يَمْلِكُ نَفْسَهُ عِنْدَ الْغَضَبِ

“The strong man is not the one who is strong in wrestling. Rather, the strong man is the one who controls himself at the time of anger.” (Sahih al-Bukhari 6114; Sahih Muslim 2609)

So whoever can restrain himself at the moment of غضب (anger) has proven that he can defeat his nafs, and this is from the clearest signs of true striving.

And because this struggle is constant, the Messenger ﷺ gave the believer the map of the two roads:

حُقِّتِ الْجَنَّةُ بِالْمَغَارِهِ وَحُقِّتِ النَّارُ بِالشَّهَوَاتِ

“Paradise is surrounded by hardships, and the Fire is surrounded by desires.” (Sahih al-Bukhari 6487; Sahih Muslim 2822)

So the believer should understand: the hardship you feel in obedience is not a sign of failure — it is the nature of the road. And the ease you feel in sin is not safety — it is the trap of desire. So the mujahid is the one who chooses hardship now to gain ease forever.

Benefit #4

It is not permissible to surrender to the desires of the nafs, because surrendering to them leads a person to destruction.

This benefit is a direct continuation of what the Shaykh is establishing: that the believer’s greatest danger is not merely an outside enemy — rather it is the inside surrender. Because Shaytan’s strongest weapon is not that he forces the servant, but that he convinces the servant to submit willingly.

So the أصل (foundation) here is that the nafs is not a safe guide, rather the opposite. If a person makes his desires his compass, he will not walk toward Allah upon the path of His Messenger ﷺ — he will walk toward destruction, even if he does not realize it until it is too late.

And the Qur’an repeatedly warns against obedience to hawa (desire), because desire does not lead to truth, but leads away from it.

Allah commanded Dawud alayhi salam:

وَيَا دَاوُودُ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاكَ خَلِيفَةً فِي الْأَرْضِ فَاحْكُم بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا تَتَّبِعِ الْهَوَىٰ فَيُضِلَّكَ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَضِلُّونَ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ بِمَا نَسُوا يَوْمَ الْحِسَابِ

“And We said, ‘O Dawud, indeed We have made you a successor upon the earth, so judge between the people in truth and do not follow [your] desire, as it will lead you astray from the way of Allah. Indeed, those who go astray from the way of Allah will have a severe punishment for having forgotten the Day of Account.’” (Surah Sad 38:26)

So this matches the Shaykh’s warning perfectly: surrender leads to destruction, because surrender is the cause of being led away from the way of Allah. And Allah clarified the end of the one who surrenders and prefers the worldly life:

فَأَمَّا مَنْ طَغَىٰ
وَأَثَرَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا
فَإِنَّ الْجَحِيمَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَىٰ

“So as for he who transgressed And preferred the life of the world, Then indeed, Hellfire will be [his] refuge.” (Surah al-Nazi’at 79:37–39)

So the destruction does not begin with the Fire immediately — rather it begins with a choice: “preferring the life of the world.” And what does that mean in reality? It means obeying the nafs when it calls to comfort, indulgence, lust, laziness, pride, and disobedience. So the Shaykh’s phrase “this surrender will lead him to destruction” is not a general motivational sentence — it is a Qur’anic reality: the one who continually gives preference to dunya and hawa ends at Jahim.

And Allah exposed the ugliest reality of surrender: that some people reach a point where they practically worship their own desires, because desire becomes their god — commanding them, controlling them, and being obeyed:

أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنِ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوَاهُ

“Have you seen he who has taken as his god his own desire?” (Surah al-Jathiyah 45:23)

So the believer should understand: surrendering to desire is not “just slipping.” It can become a type of servitude — where the servant is no longer steering his life by revelation, but by desire.

And once a person becomes enslaved to his desire, he becomes unstable:

- he wants to obey but finds it difficult or fails
- he plans righteousness but breaks it
- he repents but returns quickly
- he weakens and loses determination
- he becomes dragged left and right

This is why the Shaykh said: a believer should not surrender, because surrender does not stop at one place — it pulls deeper and further away!

Allah commanded the believer to actively protect himself — not passively hope:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ

“O you who have believed, protect yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is people and stones.” (Surah al-Tahrim 66:6)

So protection requires action: resisting, restraining, disciplining, and striving — not surrendering.

And from the clearest proofs that surrender leads to ruin is that Allah promised Paradise specifically for the one who restrains the nafs:

وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ وَنَهَى النَّفْسَ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ
فَإِنَّ الْجَنَّةَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَىٰ

“But as for he who feared the standing in front of his Lord and prevented the soul from [unlawful] desire, Then indeed, Paradise will be [his] refuge.” (Surah al-Nazi‘at 79:40–41)

Common Mistake (needed here): Thinking that surrendering “once” is harmless — while the danger is that repeated surrender becomes a habit, and habits become a path, and paths become destruction.

Benefit #5

The Muslim should always remember the end result and keep the Hereafter in his heart, because remembrance of the Hereafter restrains the nafs and breaks the deception of the dunya.

This benefit is one of the strongest weapons against Shaytan and the nafs, and it is one of the clearest reasons people fall into sin: not because they do not “know” what is right, but because the Hereafter becomes distant in the heart, and the dunya becomes large in the eyes.

So the Shaykh is directing the believer to the cure: that a Muslim must constantly remember the عاقبة (end result), and must remember the دار الآخرة (abode of the Hereafter). Because the servant does not become steady simply by having information — he becomes steady when the Hereafter becomes the scale by which he measures everything.

And Allah exposed the reality of most people: they prefer the dunya, even though the Hereafter is better and more lasting:

بَلْ تُؤْثِرُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا
وَالْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى

“But you prefer the worldly life, While the Hereafter is better and more enduring.” (Surah al-A‘la 87:16–17)

The heart begins to lean toward what is immediate, what is enjoyable, what is easy, and what is desired — and it forgets what is coming which is the wrong perspective while the heart perceives incorrectly.

And because the Hereafter is not seen with the eye, it requires constant remembrance for it to stay alive in the heart. Allah repeatedly commands reflection and preparation.

Allah said:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلْتَنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

“O you who have believed, fear Allah. And let every soul look to what it has put forth for tomorrow - and fear Allah. Indeed, Allah is Acquainted with what you do.” (Surah al-Hashr 59:18)

So Allah commanded every soul to look at what it is sending forward — meaning: not to live for the moment, but to live for tomorrow, meaning to look at the Ahera.

So the believer is not meant to be a servant of reaction, nor a servant of impulse. Rather, he is a servant who thinks: “What am I sending ahead to meet Allah?”

While he knows what Allah said regarding His created dunya: “Know that the life of this world is but amusement and diversion and adornment and boasting to one another and competition in increase of wealth and children...” (Surah al-Hadid 57:20)

- Amusement (لعب)
- Distraction (لهو)
- Adornment (زينة)
- Boasting (تفاخر)
- Rivalry in wealth and children (تكاثر)

These are all traps for the nafs. If you do not remember the Hereafter, you will may be pulled into these traps — and then desires will toy with you, and your worship will become heavy, and your heart will become weak.

the Messenger of Allah ﷺ gave the believer a direct command that cuts off this deception:

أَكْثِرُوا ذِكْرَ هَادِمِ اللَّذَاتِ

“Remember often the destroyer of pleasures.” (Sunan al-Tirmidhi 2307 — Hasan)

The one who remembers death does not surrender to desire nor does he take his sins lightly, nor is he not afraid of misguidance.

While remembrance of the Hereafter produces real آثار (effects):

- it restrains the tongue
- it restrains the eyes
- it restrains the hands
- it restrains the heart
- it breaks procrastination
- it makes repentance urgent
- it makes worship light
- it gives patience strength

This is why the Shaykh is telling the believer: remember the end result — because the person who remembers the end result does not sell his Hereafter for a moment.

And Allah emphasized this truth in the clearest summarizing ayah:

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ ۖ وَإِنَّمَا تُوَفَّقُونَ أُجُورَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ۚ فَمَن زُحْزِحَ عَنِ النَّارِ وَأُدْخِلَ الْجَنَّةَ فَقَدْ فَازَ ۗ وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْغُرُورِ

“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.” (Surah Al ‘Imran 3:185)

So Allah defined true الفوز (success) with two realities:

- being saved from the Fire
- entering Paradise

And He described the dunya as “enjoyment of delusion”. Meaning: it is enjoyment, but it deceives and vanishes. So whoever remembers the Hereafter is protected from غرور (delusion). But whoever forgets it becomes easy prey for it.

Benefit #6

The Hereafter is better than the worldly life.

Allah said:

وَلَاخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لَّكَ مِنَ الْأُولَى

“And indeed the Hereafter is better for you than the first (life).” (Surah al-Duha 93:4)

This ayah places the معيار (scale) in the heart: the believer does not measure choices by what is عاجل (immediate), but by what is آجل (delayed) and lasting in the Hereafter.

And Allah said:

وَالْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى

“And the Hereafter is better and more enduring.” (Surah al-A‘la 87:17)

So the believer who wants safety from surrendering to the nafs must keep this comparison alive within himself at all times: what vanishes versus what remains, what ends versus what endures, what deceives versus what is true. And this meaning is clarified perfectly in the Sunnah.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

وَاللَّهُ مَا الدُّنْيَا فِي الْآخِرَةِ إِلَّا مِثْلُ مَا يَجْعَلُ أَحَدُكُمْ إِصْبَعَهُ فِي الْيَمِّ، فَلْيَنْظُرْ بِمَ تَرْجِعُ

“By Allah, the world compared to the Hereafter is nothing except like one of you dipping his finger into the sea, then let him see what it returns with.” (Sahih Muslim 2858)

So when a person sells obedience for desire, he is trading what is vast and permanent for what is tiny and disappearing — a losing trade from the very beginning, even if the nafs beautifies it. Yet Allah clarified that most people naturally incline toward the worldly life, not merely by “liking” it, but by giving it preference when it clashes with obedience:

بَلْ تُؤْثِرُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا
وَالْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى

“But you prefer the worldly life, while the Hereafter is better and more enduring.” (Surah al-A‘la 87:16–17)

So the danger is not simply having enjoyment in the dunya — rather it is ايثار (preference): choosing it over the commands of Allah, and letting it dominate the heart. And Allah attached the correction immediately after, so that the believer is not deceived: the Hereafter is خير (better) and ابقى (more enduring).

And Allah explained the true reality of ownership and permanence:

وَمَا عِنْدَكُمْ يَنْفَدُ وَمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ بَاقٍ

“Whatever you have will end, but what Allah has is lasting.” (Surah al-Nahl 16:96)

So what is with the people, and what is in this world, will end — while what is with Allah remains. And when this becomes firm in the heart, then the عقل (sound reason) is to prefer what remains over what perishes. This is why the Salaf constantly warned against being deceived by the shortness and emptiness of the dunya, and why they trained themselves to live for what is coming.

It was narrated in Sahih al-Bukhari:

ارتحلت الدنيا مدبرة وارتحلت الآخرة مقبلة ولكل واحدة منهما بنون فكونوا من أبناء الآخرة ولا تكونوا من أبناء الدنيا فان اليوم عمل ولا حساب وغدا حساب ولا عمل

“The world has departed turning away, and the Hereafter has arrived turning toward you; each of them has children, so be among the children of the Hereafter and do not be among the children of the world; for today there is action and no reckoning, and tomorrow there is reckoning and no action.” (Sahih al-Bukhari, Kitab al-Riqaq)

So this worldly life is the time of عمل (deeds), and the Hereafter is the time of حساب (reckoning). Whoever lets the dunya dominate his heart will be dragged by the nafs, because the nafs lives for what is immediate. But

whoever magnifies the Hereafter in his heart will find the nafs becoming smaller, and obedience becoming easier, because the end result becomes clearer than the temptation.

And the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

كُنْ فِي الدُّنْيَا كَأَنَّكَ غَرِيبٌ أَوْ عَابِرُ سَبِيلٍ

“Be in this world as if you were a stranger or a traveler.” (Sahih al-Bukhari 6416)

So the believer is not meant to settle into the dunya as a permanent home, nor to become attached to it as though it will remain. Rather, he lives within it as a passerby, taking what he needs, preparing his provisions, and moving forward toward the real destination.

And Ibn Umar said:

وَكَانَ ابْنُ عُمَرَ يَقُولُ: إِذَا أَمْسَيْتَ فَلَا تَنْتَظِرِ الصُّبْحَ، وَإِذَا أَصْبَحْتَ فَلَا تَنْتَظِرِ الْمَسَاءَ، وَخُذْ مِنْ صِحَّتِكَ لِمَرَضِكَ، وَمِنْ حَيَاتِكَ لِمَوْتِكَ

“If you reach the evening, do not wait for the morning; and if you reach the morning, do not wait for the evening. Take from your health for your sickness, and from your life for your death.” (Reported with the hadith in Sahih al-Bukhari)

So the Salaf fought the nafs by shortening hope and cutting off delay, because when a person shortens his ‘long hope’, the nafs loses one of its strongest weapons: “later.” And when “later” is removed, obedience becomes urgent, repentance becomes immediate, and sin becomes terrifying.

And Malik ibn Dinar said:

لو كانت الدنيا من ذهب يفنى والاخرة من خزف يبقى لكان الواجب ان يؤثر خزف يبقى على ذهب يفنى

“If the world were made of gold that perishes, and the Hereafter were made of pottery that remains, it would be obligatory to prefer pottery that remains over gold that perishes.”

So the correct scale is ثابت (firm): the Hereafter is better, and it remains; while the dunya is smaller, and it ends. And whoever keeps this scale alive will not surrender easily to the nafs, because he sees the trade clearly: a passing desire is never worth losing what remains.

And Allah said:

وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْغُرُورِ

“And what is the life of this world except the enjoyment of delusion.” (Surah Al ‘Imran 3:185)

Benefit #7

The Hereafter contains Paradise and Hellfire, and true success is to be saved from the Fire and admitted into Paradise.

Allah said:

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ ۖ وَإِنَّمَا تُوَفَّقُونَ أُجُورَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ۚ فَمَنْ زُحْزِحَ عَنِ النَّارِ وَأُدْخِلَ الْجَنَّةَ فَقَدْ فَازَ ۚ وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْغُرُورِ

“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.” (Surah Al ‘Imran 3:185)

This ayah gathers the entire reality of life into a single conclusion: that death is certain, that recompense is certain, and that the final outcome is only one of two homes — Paradise or Hellfire. So the believer is not truly successful by wealth, comfort, status, or being praised by people, but by being saved from the Fire and entered into Paradise.

And Allah said:

فَأَمَّا مَنْ ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِينُهُ
فَهُوَ فِي عِيشَةٍ رَاضِيَةٍ
وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَفَّتْ مَوَازِينُهُ
فَأُمُّهُ هَاوِيَةٌ

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا هِيَهُ
نَارٌ حَامِيَةٌ

“As for the one whose scales are heavy, he will be in a pleasant life. But as for the one whose scales are light, his refuge will be an abyss. And what can make you know what that is? A burning Fire.” (Surah al-Qari‘ah 101:6–11)

So the Hereafter is a day of weighing and justice, and no one will enter Paradise except by Allah’s mercy and the deeds that He accepts, and no one will fall into the Fire except through disbelief or through sins that drag a person to destruction.

And Allah said:

فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ
وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ

“So whoever does an atom’s weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom’s weight of evil will see it.” (Surah al-Zalzalah 99:7–8)

So nothing is wasted, nothing is forgotten, and nothing is hidden from Allah. Every intention, every word, and every action is gathered for the Day in which Paradise and Hellfire are shown clearly and every soul is repaid.

And because people are often deceived by what they see in this world, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ clarified the true worth of Paradise compared to the dunya.

Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

مَوْضِعُ سَوْطٍ فِي الْجَنَّةِ خَيْرٌ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا وَمَا فِيهَا

“The space of a whip in Paradise is better than the world and whatever is in it.” (Sahih al-Bukhari 3250)

So if a single space in Paradise is better than the entire dunya, then how could a believer exchange his obedience for a desire, or exchange his Hereafter for a temporary pleasure that vanishes?

And the Messenger of Allah ﷺ also said:

دَخَلَ الْجَنَّةَ مَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

“Whoever says: La ilaha illAllah will enter Paradise.” (Sahih Muslim 26)

So the أصل (root) of salvation is Tawhid, and the أصل (root) of destruction is shirk. And within that, people will be raised upon their deeds, and judged upon what they sent forward. And this is why the Salaf would constantly remind themselves of the two homes, and they would treat the Hereafter as the true life. Al-Hasan al-Basri رحمه الله said:

الدُّنْيَا ثَلَاثَةُ أَيَّامٍ: أَمْسٌ ذَهَبَ بِمَا فِيهِ، وَغَدٌ لَعَلَّكَ لَا تُدْرِكُهُ، وَالْيَوْمُ لَكَ فَاَعْمَلْ فِيهِ

“The worldly life is three days: yesterday has gone with what it contained, tomorrow perhaps you will not reach it, and today is yours so work in it.”

So the believer who understands that Paradise and Hellfire are the end, does not live carelessly, and does not surrender to the nafs, because he knows he is walking toward one of two destinations.

And Allah said:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَمِنُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ

“O you who have believed, protect yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is people and stones.” (Surah al-Tahrim 66:6)

So the believer protects himself through obedience, repentance, and striving, and he protects his family through teaching, guiding, and cultivating them upon Tawhid and Sunnah.

The Hereafter is not distant, rather quite close — and it is the destination. And true success is not to be admired in this world, but to be saved from the Fire and entered into Paradise.

And the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ الْجَنَّةَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنَ النَّارِ

“O Allah, I ask You for Paradise and I seek refuge with You from the Fire.” (Sunan Abi Dawud 792)

Benefit #8

Hellfire is unimaginably severe, and its punishment is beyond what the human mind can truly bear.

Allah said:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِنَا سَوْفَ نُصْلِيهِمْ نَارًا كَمَا نَصَجَتْ جُلُودُهُمْ بَدَلْنَاهُمْ جُلُودًا غَيْرَهَا لِيَذُوقُوا
الْعَذَابَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا

“Indeed, those who disbelieve in Our verses - We will drive them into a Fire. Every time their skins are roasted through, We will replace them with other skins so they may taste the punishment. Indeed, Allah is ever Exalted in Might and Wise.” (Surah al-Nisa 4:56)

This ayah shows the terrifying reality of the Fire: that its punishment does not end, and that its torment is renewed so that the people of Hell can continuously taste the punishment. So Hellfire is not like the punishment of this world, where death ends suffering — rather, it is punishment that is renewed again and again, and the servant is left to face it with no escape.

And Allah said:

وَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِي وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارُ سُءِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ

“And fear the Fire, whose fuel is people and stones, prepared for the disbelievers.” (Surah al-Baqarah 2:24)

So this Fire is not fueled by wood or coal — rather, its fuel is human beings and stones, which shows its intensity and its horror. And this alone should be enough to shatter the illusion of those who treat sin lightly and surrender to desires.

And Allah said:

كُلَّمَا أَرَادُوا أَنْ يَخْرُجُوا مِنْهَا مِنْ غَمٍّ أُعِيدُوا فِيهَا وَذُوقُوا عَذَابَ الْحَرِيقِ

“Every time they want to get out of it from anguish, they will be returned to it, and [it will be said], ‘Taste the punishment of the Burning Fire!’” (Surah al-Hajj 22:22)

So there is no relief, and there is no escape, and no moment of safety. Rather, the people of Hell will want to flee in terror and grief, but they will be returned to it and commanded to taste its punishment again and again!

And Allah said:

إِنَّهَا تَرْمِي بِشَرَرٍ كَالْقَصْرِ
كَأَنَّهُ جِمَالَتٌ صُفْرٌ

“Indeed, it throws sparks as huge as a fortress, as if they were yellow camels.” (Surah al-Mursalat 77:32–33)

So even the sparks of Hellfire are not small — they are like enormous structures, like towering forms, and this is a description that shows that the Fire is beyond what a person imagines from the fire of this world.

And the Messenger of Allah ﷺ warned us about the severity of the Fire, and that its reality cannot be compared to what we know in this world:

نَارُكُمْ هَذِهِ الَّتِي يُوقِدُ ابْنُ آدَمَ جُزْءٌ مِنْ سَبْعِينَ جُزْءًا مِنْ حَرِّ جَهَنَّمَ

“This fire of yours which the son of Adam kindles is one part out of seventy parts of the heat of Hell.” (Sahih al-Bukhari 3265; Sahih Muslim 2843)

So if this fire that we know — with all of its pain and terror — is only one part of seventy parts of the Fire of Jahannam, then how can the mind truly comprehend its reality? And how can the believer ever feel safe while persisting upon sins?

And the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

أَوْتِي بِالنَّعَمِ أَهْلُ الدُّنْيَا مِنْ أَهْلِ النَّارِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فَيُصْبَغُ فِي النَّارِ صَبْغَةً ثُمَّ يُقَالُ: يَا ابْنَ آدَمَ، هَلْ رَأَيْتَ خَيْرًا قَطُّ؟ هَلْ مَرَّ بِكَ نَعِيمٌ قَطُّ؟ فَيَقُولُ: لَا وَاللَّهِ يَا رَبِّ

“The most luxurious person in the world from the people of the Fire will be brought on the Day of Resurrection and dipped into the Fire once, then it will be said: ‘O son of Adam, have you ever seen any good? Have you ever experienced any blessing?’ He will say: ‘No, by Allah, O Lord!’” (Sahih Muslim 2807)

So a single dip in the Fire makes the person forget every pleasure, every comfort, and every luxury he ever experienced. This shows that the punishment of Hellfire is beyond comparison, and it wipes away all worldly experiences as if they never existed.

And this is why the Salaf feared the Fire intensely, and they did not treat the Hereafter lightly ever. It was said that Umar ibn al-Khattab رضي الله عنه recited:

إِنَّ عَذَابَ رَبِّكَ لَوَاقِعٌ
مَّا لَهُ مِنْ دَافِعٍ

“Indeed, the punishment of your Lord will surely occur; of it there is no preventer.” (Surah al-Tur 52:7–8)

and he would weep until his crying affected his body, out of fear of meeting Allah with shortcomings.

So whoever wants safety must not surrender to desires, because desires may look small at the beginning, but they can open the door to a punishment that the human mind cannot bear.

And the Messenger of Allah ﷺ clarified the عَظَمَة (tremendousness) of the Fire of Hell by comparing it to the fire that people already know and fear in this life.

He ﷺ said:

نَارُكُمْ هَذِهِ الَّتِي يُوقِدُ ابْنُ آدَمَ جُزْءٌ مِنْ سَبْعِينَ جُزْءًا مِنْ حَرِّ جَهَنَّمَ

“This fire of yours which the son of Adam kindles is one part out of seventy parts of the heat of Hell.” (Sahih al-Bukhari 3265; Sahih Muslim 2843)

So this worldly fire — which a person cannot bear even for moments — is only one part from seventy parts of the Fire of Jahannam. So if a single part is already painful, terrifying, and unbearable, then how severe is the Hell-Fire? And how can the servant feel safe while persisting upon sin, or surrendering to desires that lead him toward destruction?

And the Salaf would take such texts seriously, because they understood that

the purpose of these warnings is not information — but خوف (fear) that restrains the nafs, and يقين (certainty) that prevents the servant from being deceived by short-lived ‘pleasures’.

And for this reason, Allah did not command the believer to merely “think” about the Fire, but commanded him to actively protect himself from it:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ

“O you who have believed, protect yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is people and stones.” (Surah al-Tahrim 66:6)

So the believer protects himself by Tawhid, by obedience, by repentance, by leaving sins, and by striving against the nafs — because whoever is careless with the Fire is careless with his own end.

Benefit #9

The believer must live in مراقبة (awareness that Allah is watching), so he does not incline right or left.

Allah said:

أَلَمْ يَعْلَم بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ يَرَى

“Does he not know that Allah sees?” (Surah al-‘Alaq 96:14)

This ayah cuts off غفلة (heedlessness) from the heart. Because the servant may be tempted in moments of privacy, or weakness, or desire — but the moment he remembers that Allah sees him, the heart becomes restrained, and the nafs becomes humbled, and a person feels shame to be seen by Allah upon disobedience.

And Allah said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا

“Indeed, Allah is ever, over you, an Observer.” (Surah al-Nisa 4:1)

So the believer is not left alone at any moment. Whether he is in public or private, whether he is surrounded by people or in complete isolation, Allah is رقيب (watching) over him — and this is why مراقبة is one of the strongest shields against sin.

And مراقبة (awareness that Allah is watching) is when the servant lives with the certainty that Allah sees him, hears him, and knows what is inside him — so he guards himself in the open and in secret, and he does not allow his heart to relax into heedlessness, because he knows that Allah is closer to him than anyone else and more aware of him than he is of himself.

So a person may hide his actions from creation, and he may conceal his words from people, and he may even cover his sins with darkness and privacy — but he can never hide from the sight of Allah. And once this becomes firm in the heart, the believer begins to treat “private moments” as moments of worship just like public moments, because he realizes that Allah’s النظر (gaze) is upon him in every place and every time.

And this is why the Salaf would say that true righteousness is what a servant is upon when no one sees him except Allah. The one who is upright when he is alone has understood مراقبة, and has tasted its sweetness, because he prefers Allah’s pleasure over his desires, and he fears Allah more than he fears the creation.

And when مراقبة becomes strong, it gives the servant ثبات (steadfastness) and it gives him قوة (strength), because every time the nafs calls him to sin, he remembers that Allah is watching him, and every time he feels weak, he remembers that Allah sees him, and this remembrance becomes a barrier between him and disobedience.

So مراقبة is not merely a “concept” — it is a living state in the heart: a state that makes the believer shy to be seen by Allah upon sin, and eager to be seen by Allah upon obedience, and careful that his heart does not slip even when his limbs are silent.

And Allah said:

يَغْلَمُ خَائِنَةَ الْأَعْيُنِ وَمَا تُخْفِي الصُّدُورُ

“He knows the deceit of the eyes and what the breasts conceal.” (Surah Ghafir 40:19)

So Allah knows what people hide in their chests, and He knows the betrayal of the eyes — the secret glance, the hidden look, the desire that a person thinks no one noticed. So when the believer truly lives with this ayah, he is no longer driven by what is hidden and private, but he is held upright by what Allah knows and sees.

And Allah said:

وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ ۚ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

“And He is with you wherever you are. And Allah, of what you do, is Seeing.” (Surah al-Hadid 57:4)

So the believer knows that Allah is with him wherever he is — meaning with His knowledge, His hearing, and His seeing — and that nothing of his deeds is hidden from Him. And this is why the Salaf would say that the root of righteousness begins when a servant becomes shy before Allah in private, just as he is shy before people in public.

And in the famous hadith of Jibril, the Prophet ﷺ said:

أَنْ تَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ كَأَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ، فَإِنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ تَرَاهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَرَاكَ

“To worship Allah as if you see Him, and if you do not see Him, then indeed He sees you.” (Sahih al-Bukhari 50; Sahih Muslim 9)

So this is the مقام (station) of الإحسان: to live as though Allah is before your eyes, and even if you do not see Him, then you know with certainty that He sees you. And when a servant reaches this level, he does not need people to watch him, because the One who watches him is Allah.

And the Messenger of Allah ﷺ also warned from a عباد (servant) being one way in public and another way in private, and he taught the believer to fear Allah in all conditions. He ﷺ said:

اتَّقِ اللَّهَ حَيْثُمَا كُنْتَ

“Fear Allah wherever you are.” (Sunan al-Tirmidhi 1987)

So the believer's taqwa is not seasonal, and it is not limited to gatherings or the masjid — rather, it is with him wherever he is, and this is exactly what مراقبة produces: consistency, firmness, and strength.

And for this reason, the Salaf would nurture this عزيمة (great matter) in the hearts, because they knew that when مراقبة becomes strong, desires become weak.

Al-Hasan al-Basri رحمه الله said:

إِنَّ الْمُؤْمِنَ أَحْسَنَ النَّاسِ عَمَلًا وَأَشَدَّهُمْ خَوْفًا

“The believer is the best of people in deeds, and the most intense of them in fear.”

Meaning: his fear is not panic (and/or influenced by shaytan) — rather, it is awareness. It is مراقبة. It is the fear that keeps him from slipping right or left.

And Umar ibn al-Khattab رضي الله عنه said:

حَاسِبُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ قَبْلَ أَنْ تُحَاسَبُوا، وَزِنُوهَا قَبْلَ أَنْ تُوزَنُوا

“Bring yourselves to account before you are brought to account, and weigh yourselves before you are weighed.”

So the one who lives in مراقبة does not let himself drift. He watches his heart, watches his intentions, watches his words, and watches his deeds — because he knows he will stand before Allah and be questioned.

And this is why the believer “does not incline right or left.” Because the one who is left without مراقبة becomes a plaything of desires: sometimes pulled toward lust, sometimes pulled toward anger, sometimes pulled toward pride, sometimes pulled toward laziness. But when the servant lives knowing that Allah sees him, he gains ثبات (steadfastness), and he gains عزيمة (determination), and he becomes stable upon obedience.

So مراقبة is not just a concept — it is a shield. It is the barrier between the servant and sin. And whoever strengthens it, Allah strengthens him.

And Allah said:

وَلِمَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ جَنَّاتٍ

“But for he who has feared the position/standing in front of his Lord are two gardens.” (Surah al-Rahman 55:46)

So fear of standing before Allah is what produces مراقبة, and مراقبة is what produces obedience, and obedience is what leads to Paradise.

Benefit #10

Paradise is surrounded by hardships, and the Fire is surrounded by desires—so do not let desires toy with you and drag you from obedience.

The believer is not created to be carried by whims, nor to be pulled in every direction by what the النفس (nafs) wants, and what the heart inclines toward in moments of weakness. Rather, he was created to worship Allah, to obey Him, and to restrain himself from what Allah has forbidden — and whoever allows desires to play with him will find that obedience becomes heavy, sins become light, and the path becomes unclear — exactly what the caller to Hell-Fire wants.

And this is why the Messenger of Allah ﷺ gave the believer a complete map of the two roads — the road of Paradise and the road of Hellfire — in one sentence:

حُفَّتِ الْجَنَّةُ بِالْمَكَارِهِ وَحُفَّتِ النَّارُ بِالشَّهَوَاتِ

“Paradise is surrounded by hardships, and the Fire is surrounded by desires.” (Sahih al-Bukhari 6487; Sahih Muslim 2822)

So Paradise is not surrounded by what the nafs loves. Rather, it is surrounded by المكاره (hardships) — meaning what is heavy upon the soul: patience upon obedience, lowering the gaze, restraining the tongue, guarding the prayers, fighting laziness, giving charity, abandoning haram, and forcing the self to remain steadfast even when it dislikes the struggle.

And the Fire is not surrounded by pain at the beginning — rather it is surrounded by الشهوات (desires): pleasures that appear sweet, indulgences that feel easy, lusts that seem harmless, and sins that the nafs and shaytan beautifies. So a person may enter through the door laughing, but he will meet the consequences crying — because the beginning of desires is decorated, but the end of desires is destruction.

And this is why the believer must not allow desires and lusts to toy with him. Because the nafs does not usually drag the servant into the worst end immediately — rather it pulls him step-by-step, through relaxation, compromise, and repeated surrender, until the heart becomes weak and the servant becomes enslaved to what he once resisted — and therefore, resisting and consistently struggling and striving is obligatory.

And Allah warned against this fitnah (trial) clearly:

رُئِيَ لِلنَّاسِ حُبُّ الشَّهَوَاتِ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ وَالْبَنِينَ وَالْقَنَاطِيرِ الْمُقَنْطَرَةِ مِنَ الذَّهَبِ وَالْفِصَّةِ وَالْخَيْلِ الْمُسَوَّمَةِ وَالْأَنْعَامِ وَالْخَرْبِ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ مَتَاعُ الدُّنْيَا ۗ وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ حُسْنُ الْمَآبِ

“Beautified for people is the love of that which they desire — of women and children, heaped-up sums of gold and silver, fine branded horses, cattle and tilled land. That is the enjoyment of the worldly life, but Allah has with Him the best return.” (Surah Al ‘Imran 3:14)

So, Allah described desires as “beautified” — meaning they are made appealing, attractive, and inviting. And that is why the believer needs vigilance, because the danger is not only the desire itself — but its decoration and deception step by step.

And Allah also described the true nature of Shaytan’s plan:

وَلَأُضِلَّهُمْ وَلَا مَنِيَّتَهُمْ

“And I will surely mislead them, and I will surely arouse in them false hopes.” (Surah al-Nisa 4:119)

So one of Shaytan’s strongest tools is to plant الأمانى (false hopes) — to make a person feel safe while sinning, to make him delay repentance, and to make him think that he can enjoy desire now and fix his heart later.

But the believer who understands the hadith (truth) knows that the road to Paradise will always feel heavy at the entrance — and the road to the Fire will always feel easy at the entrance. So he chooses the heaviness that ends in eternal bliss, and he abandons the sweetness that ends in punishment.

And the Salaf knew this reality, and they spoke about it clearly.

Al-Hasan al-Basri رحمه الله said:

إِنَّ الْمُؤْمِنَ أَحْسَنَ النَّاسِ عَمَلًا وَأَشَدَّهُمْ خَوْفًا

“The believer is the best of people in deeds, and the most intense of them in fear.”

He fears where he may fall, and he restrains himself before he slips. He does not walk into temptation, and he does not approach desires thinking he will survive — rather, he holds the rope tightly before the wind pulls him away.

And because this struggle is the very essence of success, Allah praised the one who restrains the النفس (nafs) from desire:

وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ وَنَهَى النَّفْسَ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ
فَإِنَّ الْجَنَّةَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَىٰ

“But as for he who feared the position/standing before his Lord and prevented the soul from [unlawful] desire, then indeed Paradise will be [his] refuge.” (Surah al-Nazi‘at 79:40–41)

So the one who prevents his nafs from hawa does not lose — rather he gains Jannah. And the one who follows hawa is not gaining pleasure — rather he is walking toward a path surrounded by desires, and desires are the fences around the Fire.

So the believer does not let desires play with him, because he knows they are not innocent — they are a الطريق (road/path), and every road/path has an end. And the end of desires is either repentance and struggle — or regret and punishment. So whoever wants Paradise must accept its المكاه, and whoever fears Hellfire must flee from its desires.

Benefit #11

Whoever truly wants to be among the people of Paradise must strive against his own self (nafs).

This is the path of the believers and the road of salvation: that Paradise is not reached by wishful thinking, nor by comfort, nor by surrendering to desire. Rather, it is reached through مجاهدة النفس (striving against the nafs), forcing it upon obedience, restraining it from disobedience, and keeping it firm until the servant meets Allah in a state of sincerity, ittibaa'a and steadfastness.

Because the nafs is not neutral. It calls, demands, urges, and beautifies. It loves ease, delay, indulgence, and the sweetness of what is immediate — even if it leads to destruction. And this is why Allah exposed the nature of the nafs, so that the servant does not feel safe from it:

وَمَا أُبْرِئُ نَفْسِي ۚ إِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَأَمَّارَةٌ بِالسُّوءِ إِلَّا مَا رَحِمَ رَبِّي ۚ إِنَّ رَبِّي غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

“And I do not acquit/clear myself. Indeed, the soul is a persistent enjoiner of evil, except those upon which my Lord has mercy. Indeed, my Lord is Forgiving and Merciful.” (Surah Yusuf 12:53)

So the believer does not trust his nafs, and he does not treat its desires as harmless. Rather, he watches it, disciplines it, and opposes it for the sake of Allah — because if he follows it, it will lead him to sin, and if he surrenders to it, it will drag him to ruin.

And Allah promised Paradise specifically to the one who restrains the nafs and prevents it from following desire:

وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ وَنَهَى النَّفْسَ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ
فَإِنَّ الْجَنَّةَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَىٰ

“But as for he who feared the position/standing in front of his Lord and prevented the soul from [unlawful] desire, then indeed Paradise will be [his] refuge.” (Surah al-Nazi‘at 79:40–41) So Allah connected Jannah to two عظام (great matters): fear of standing before Him, and منع النفس (restraining the soul) from hawa (desire). And this is the heart of striving: not merely to know what is right, but to force the soul to follow it, even when it resists.

And because many people misunderstand striving, thinking it is only outward struggle, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ clarified that the true mujahid begins with himself. He ﷺ said:

وَالْمُجَاهِدُ مَنْ جَاهَدَ نَفْسَهُ فِي طَاعَةِ اللَّهِ

“And the mujahid is the one who strives against his own self in obedience to Allah.” (Sunan al-Tirmidhi 1621 — Hasan Sahih)

So the one who defeats his nafs is victorious, even if no one sees his struggle. And the one who is defeated by his nafs is broken, even if he appears strong before all the people of the world — because the nafs is a hidden enemy, and its war does not stop until death.

And Allah promised that whoever strives sincerely for His sake will not be left alone, but will be given guidance and openings of righteousness:

وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

“And those who strive for Us - We will surely guide them to Our ways. And indeed, Allah is with the doers of good.” (Surah al-‘Ankabut 29:69)

So when a servant struggles against himself, fights his laziness, forces his soul to pray tahajjud, to lower his gaze, to guard his tongue, to abandon harming others, and to remain upright — Allah guides him to His paths. He opens the doors of steadfastness and grants him firmness, and the servant begins to taste the sweetness of obedience after the bitterness of struggle.

So whoever runs behind desire will find himself surrounded by desires until they deliver him to ruin. And whoever runs toward Paradise will find hardships at the beginning — but comfort forever at the end.

And this is why the Salaf would treat their own souls as something that must be controlled, not obeyed.

Al-Hasan al-Basri رحمه الله said:

إِنَّ الْمُؤْمِنَ قَوَّامٌ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ يُحَاسِبُ نَفْسَهُ لِلَّهِ

“Indeed the believer is a guardian over himself, and he brings himself to account for Allah.”

So the believer does not leave his soul to wander. He holds it accountable in the morning and the evening, and he watches his intentions, heart and actions, because he knows that if he neglects his soul, it will destroy him.

So striving against the nafs is not a side matter — it is the daily battle that decides whether a servant moves toward Paradise or toward destruction. It is the struggle that separates the truthful from the liar, the sincere from the performer, the one who wants Allah from the one who wants the dunya.

And Allah described the reward of those who fought themselves in secret for His sake, and remained steadfast upon obedience:

فَلَا تَعْلَمُ نَفْسٌ مَّا أُخْفِيَ لَهُم مِّن قُرَّةِ أَعْيُنٍ جَزَاءُ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

“And no soul knows what has been hidden for them of comfort for eyes as reward for what they used to do.” (Surah al-Sajdah 32:17)

So the نهاية (end) is clear: striving now, joy forever. Restraining the nafs now, Paradise forever. Fighting desire now, safety forever. And this is why whoever truly wants to be among the people of Paradise must strive against his own self (nafs).