

## Dangers of Showing Off (Riyā’)

Shaykh Ibn Bāz, may Allāh have mercy upon him, said in the definition of Ar-Riyā’:

“Riyā’ is the maṣḍar (source, verbal noun) of [the verb] ‘to show off, and [the one who does it] is a Murā’ī (show-off). And it means that he does deeds for people to see him, he observes Ṣalāh for people to see him, he gives in charity for people to see him. His goal is that they commend and praise him and that they know that he gives in charity, or he observes Ṣalāh, or he performs Ḥajj (the greater pilgrimage) or ‘Umrah (the lesser pilgrimage) because of that [i.e for them to know that he is doing it], and so forth.

And likewise, when he recites [the Qur’ān] for them to commend him, it is termed Sum’ah (to make people hear of one's deeds)—if Riyā’ is done with words, it is termed as Sum’ah. Or that he enjoins good and forbids evil for him to be commended and praised, not for Allāh alone—this is from Riyā’ in actions. [However,] it is said regarding that which is heard: Sum’ah.

And the Prophet ﷺ said: ‘Whoever shows off his good deeds to the people, Allāh will humiliate him before the people.

And whoever does good deeds to be heard by the people, Allāh will humiliate him before the people.”<sup>1</sup>

Allāh, the Most High, said:

(And they were commanded not, but that they should worship Allah, and worship none but Him Alone)  
[Al-Bayyinah:5]

Imām As-Sa’dī, may Allāh have mercy upon him, said in his tafsīr:

They were not commanded in the other legislations [that were revealed before Islām], except that they worship Allāh and worship none but Him alone. That is, having the intent of [seeking] the face of Allāh and seeking closeness to Him in all their acts of worship—apparent and hidden.<sup>2</sup>

He, the Most High, also said:

(Verily, We have sent down the Book to you (O Muhammad ﷺ) in truth: So worship Allah (Alone) by doing religious deeds sincerely for Allah's sake only. Surely, the religion (i.e. the worship and the obedience) is for Allah only.)  
[Az-Zumar:2-3]

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<sup>1</sup> [Source](#)

<sup>2</sup> Tafsir Imam Sa'di Pg 942

He, the Most High, also said:

(Who has created death and life, that He may test you which of you is best in deed.) [Al-Mulk:2]

It was said to Al-Fuḍayl bn 'Iyād: “O Abū 'Alī, what is the meaning of the best deed?” He said: “The most sincere and most correct of it.” It was said: “What is the most sincere and most correct of it?” He said: “Indeed, if a deed is sincere and not correct, it is not accepted; and if it is correct and not sincere, it is not accepted; until it becomes sincere and correct.” It was said: “O Abū 'Alī, what is the sincere and correct [deed]?” He said: “The sincere [deed] is for it to be [done] for Allāh alone. And the correct [deed] is for it to be [done] in accordance to the Sunnah.”<sup>3</sup>

Allāh, the Most High, said:

(So whoever hopes for the Meeting with his Lord, let him work righteousness and associate none as a partner in the worship of his Lord.) [Al-Kahf:110]

Imām As-Sa'dī, may Allāh have mercy upon him, said:

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<sup>3</sup> Kitaabul Ikhlāas of Ibn Abi Dunya Pg50

(So whoever hopes for the Meeting with his Lord, let him work righteousness)

“And it [i.e the righteous action] is the one in accordance with the legislation of Allāh, whether an obligation or recommended act.”

(...and associate none as a partner in the worship of his Lord.)

“Meaning: He should not show off his deeds. Rather, he should do them sincerely for the face of Allāh, the Most High. This is the one who combines between Ikhlāṣ (sincerity) and Mutāba‘ah (agreement with the legislation of Allāh). He is the one who obtains what he hopes for and seeks. As for whoever[’s case] is not like that, then he is a loser in his world and his hereafter, and he has missed being close to his Lord and His pleasure.”<sup>4</sup>

Imām Aṭ-Ṭabarī, may Allāh have mercy upon him, said:

“And His statement: (...and associate none as a partner in the worship of his Lord.)

He says: And he should not ascribe a partner to Him in his worship of Him. And he is only ascribing a partner to Him in His worship whenever he shows off his deeds which is

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<sup>4</sup> Tafsir Imam Sa’di Pg 487

apparently for Allāh while he intends other than Him with it.”<sup>5</sup>

Allāh, the Most High, said:

(And who can be better in religion than one who submits his face (himself) to Allah and is a Muhsin (a good-doer))  
[An-Nisā':125]

Ibn Al-Qayyim said in Madārij As-Sālikīn:

“Submitting the face is sincerity of intent and action for Allāh [alone]. And Iḥsān (doing good) is conforming with the Messenger of Allāh صلى الله عليه وسلم and his Sunnah.”<sup>6</sup>

Allāh, the Most High, said:

(On the Day they will see the angels, no glad tidings will there be for the Mujrimun (criminals, disbelievers, polytheists, sinners, etc.) that day. And they (angels) will say: "All kinds of glad tidings are forbidden for you,". And We shall turn to whatever deeds they did, and We shall make such deeds as scattered floating particles of dust.) [Al-Furqān:22-23]

Imām As-Sa'dī, may Allāh have mercy upon him, said:

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<sup>5</sup> Tafsir Imam Tabari Pg 304

<sup>6</sup> Madaarij As-Saalikeen 2/90

“(And We shall turn to whatever deeds they did,)”

Meaning: Their deeds which they hoped will be good for them and exhausted themselves over.

(and We shall make such deeds as scattered floating particles of dust.)

Meaning: Void and vanishing. They will lose it, they will be deprived of its reward, and they will be punished for it.”<sup>7</sup>

Imām Ibn Al-Qayyim said:

“And they are the deeds that were not in accordance to the Sunnah or that the face of Allāh was not intended by them.”<sup>8</sup>

The Prophet ﷺ said:

“Whoever does good deeds to be heard by the people, Allāh will humiliate him before the people. And whoever shows off his good deeds to the people, Allāh will humiliate him before the people.”<sup>9</sup>

Imām Ibn ‘Uthaymīn, may Allāh have mercy upon him, said:

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<sup>7</sup> Tafsir Imam Sa'di Pg 584

<sup>8</sup> Madaarij as-Saalikeen 2/89

<sup>9</sup> Bukhari 6499

Meaning: Whoever makes a statement which he worships Allāh with, and raises his voice so that people can hear him and say that so-and-so remembers Allāh alot, he recites the Qur'ān alot, and so forth, such a person has done his deed so that the slaves of Allāh can hear, and he is showing off with that. We ask Allāh for well-being.

“Allāh will humiliate him before the people.”

Meaning: He will expose him, uncover his reality, and make his flaw apparent to the people, and it will become clear to them that he is a show-off. And the ḥadīth did not define whether it will occur in this world or the hereafter. So, it is possible that Allāh humiliates him in this world, and expose his flaw to the people. And it is possible for that to be in the hereafter, and it is worse—and refuge is sought in Allāh—and more humiliating. Just as Allāh, the Most High, said:

(But surely, the torment of the Hereafter will be more disgracing, and they will never be helped.) [Fuṣṣilāt:16]

And likewise, whoever And whoever shows off his good deeds to the people, Allāh will humiliate him before the people. Meaning, whoever does a deed for people to see him and commend him for it, then Allāh, the Most High, will surely humiliate him, make his flaw apparent to the people, and expose him—and refuge is sought in Allāh—so that it becomes clear that he is a show-off.

And this ḥadīth contains a tremendous warning against showing off, and that no matter how much the show-off conceals himself, his reality will surely become clear—and refuge is sought in Allāh—because Allāh has guaranteed that. Whoever does good deeds to be heard by the people, Allāh will humiliate him before the people. And whoever shows off his good deeds to the people, Allāh will humiliate him before the people.”<sup>10</sup>

Imām Adh-Dhahabī said in As-Siyar:

“So, whoever seeks knowledge for action, knowledge will break him (make him humble), and he will cry over himself. And whoever seeks knowledge for the schools, issuing verdicts, bragging, and for showing off, he becomes stupid, haughty, he belittles the people, and is destroyed by self-amazement, and the souls [i.e., people] despise him.”<sup>11</sup>

On the authority of Abū Hurayrah, may Allāh be pleased with him, Allāh's Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

“Whoever learns a knowledge from what is used to seek the face of Allāh, the Mighty and Majestic's face, and does not

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<sup>10</sup> [Source](#)

<sup>11</sup> Siyar A'alam An-Nubala 18/192



learn it except to attain a portion of this world, he will not find the fragrance of paradise on the day of resurrection.”<sup>12</sup>

Imām Ibn ‘Uthaymīn, may Allāh be pleased with him, said:

“For example, if a person were to learn the science of the creeds, for it to be said that so-and-so is good in the creed, or for him to be employed, and so forth; or the science of islamic jurisprudence, or the science of tafsīr, or the science of ḥadīth, for him to show off to the people, then he will not find the fragrance of paradise—and refuge is sought in Allāh—meaning, he will be deprived of entering it.

As for the sciences that are not from what is used to seek the face of Allāh, like the worldly sciences, like accounting, engineering, and construction, if a person were to learn them seeking to attain a portion of the world, there is no blame on him. Because, this is a worldly science which is aimed at for [attaining] the worldly life, and the ḥadīth that contains the threat of punishment is restricted with the knowledge which is used to seek that face of Allāh.

If a person says: ‘Most of the students nowadays study in the colleges to obtain the certificate’, it is said that actions are judged by intentions. If he intends to obtain the certificate so

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<sup>12</sup> Sunan Abi Dawud 3664

that he may obtain employment and rank, this one wants a portion of the world. And if he intends to take charge of a post so that he can benefit the people, so that he can be a teacher, a principal, a director, this is good, and there is no harm in it. Because nowadays, people do not assess a person with his knowledge anymore, they only assess him with his certificate. So, if he says: 'If I remain without a certificate, no matter how much knowledge I attain, they will not make a teacher. However, I will study and take the certificate so that I can be a teacher and benefit the Muslims.' This is a good intention, and there is nothing wrong with it. And it is Allāh that grants success."<sup>13</sup>

Allāh's Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

By Allāh whom none is worthy of worship except Him, a man amongst you will do the deeds of the people of Paradise till there is only a cubit between him and it, and then what has been written for him overtakes him, and he starts doing deeds of the people of the Fire, and he enters it. And a man amongst you will do the deeds of the people of the Fire till there is only a cubit between him and it, and then what has been written for him overtakes him, and he starts doing

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<sup>13</sup> [Source](#)

deeds of the people of Paradise, and he enters it. [Reported by Al-Bukhārī and Muslim]<sup>14</sup>

Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymīn said in explanation of this ḥadīth:

I say this, so that an evil assumption will not be made of Allāh: By Allāh, no one turns to Allāh truthfully and sincerely, and does the deeds of the people of Paradise, except that Allāh never deserts him. For Allāh, the Mighty and Majestic, is more generous than his slave. However, the heart must be tested.

And remember the story of a man that was with the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in one of his battles, and this man did not leave a single nor isolated fighter from the enemy except that he killed him. So the people were amazed at him and they said: “This is the one that won the battle.” The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم then said: “He is from the people of the Fire.” So, that baffled the companions, may Allāh be pleased with them. How will this man be from the people of the Fire? So a man said: ‘I will stick to him.’ i.e I will track him. So, he tracked him. Then, this brave and courageous man was hit with an arrow from the enemies, so he was grieved. So when he was grieved, he unsheathed his sword (and refuge is sought in Allāh), then, he placed the tip

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<sup>14</sup> Bukhari 3208  
Muslim 2643

of his sword on his chest and its grip on the ground, then he rested upon it until it emerged from his back. So, he killed himself. So the man came to the Prophet ﷺ and he informed him. He said: ‘I testify that you are Allāh's Messenger.’ He [i.e., the Prophet ﷺ] said: ‘And why is that?’ He said: ‘Indeed, the man whom you said is from the people of the Fire, so and so occurred from him.’ So, the Prophet ﷺ said afterwards: ‘Indeed, a man might seem to the people as doing deeds of the people of Paradise, while he is from the people of the Fire.’”<sup>15</sup>

On the authority of Maḥmūd bn Labīd Al-Anṣārī, may Allāh be pleased with him, Allāh's Messenger ﷺ said:

“Verily, that which I fear for you most is the minor Shirk: Riyā’. Allāh will say on the day of resurrection, after he has recompensed people for their deeds: ‘Go to those you used to show off to in the world and check whether you can find any recompense with them.’”<sup>16</sup>

And it has been said—as was reported in Madārij As-Sālikīn—that:

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<sup>15</sup> Sharh Arba’een An-Nawawiyah of Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen Pg 78,79

<sup>16</sup> Reported by Ahmad, authenticated by Imām Al-Albānī in Ṣaḥīḥ At-Targhīb Wa At-Tarhīb 1/120. Hadith 32

“Sincerity is for the deeds of the slave to be equal in the open and hidden. And Riyā’ is for his open to be more upright than his hidden.”

They said: “Sincerity is to forget the seeing of the creation and always looking at the creator. And whoever adorns himself for the people with what he does not have, he falls in the sight of Allāh.”<sup>17</sup>

Yūsuf bn Ḥusayn said: “The rarest thing in the world is sincerity. And how much have I tried to strike off Riyā’ from my heart, but it seems to always germinate in a new colour.”<sup>18</sup>

Imām Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allāh have mercy upon him, said: “Many a time, people link Riyā’ to ‘Ujb (self-amazement). Riyā’ is from the aspect of setting up the creation as partners with Allāh, while ‘Ujb is from the aspect of setting up oneself as a partner with Allāh. And this is the condition of the arrogant. So, the show-off does not actualize His statement: (You Alone we worship,) and the self-amazed does not actualize His statement: (and you Alone we ask for help.)

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<sup>17</sup> Madārij As-Sālikīn 2/91,92

<sup>18</sup> Madārij As-Sālikīn 2/92

So, whoever actualizes His statement: (You Alone we worship,) will be free of Riyā'. And whoever actualizes His statement: (and you Alone we ask for help.) will be free of self-amazement."<sup>19</sup>

Al-Fuḍayl bn 'Iyāḍ said:

“Whoever is saved from five affairs, he has been saved from the evil of this world and the hereafter: Self-amazement, Riyā', arrogance, debasement [of others], and carnal desires.”<sup>20</sup>

The treatment of Riyā'

### 1. Seeking For Allāh's Refuge

Shaykh Ibn Bāz, may Allāh have mercy upon him, said, when he was asked about the cure of Riyā':

Everytime a whispering or Riyā' crosses your mind, say: “I seek Allāh's refuge from Shayṭān, the outcast”, sincerely. If you do this sincerely, Allāh will suffice you of the evil of Shayṭān and He will aid you against him.”<sup>21</sup>

### 2. Renewing one's intention.

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<sup>19</sup> Majmū' Al-Fatāwá 10/277

<sup>20</sup> Hilyah al-awliya 8/95

<sup>21</sup> [Source](#)

3. Recitation of the Qur'ān.
4. Attending sittings of knowledge.
5. Concealing one's good deeds.

Az-Zubayr bn Al-'Awwām, may Allāh be pleased with him, said:

“Whoever among you is able to have a concealed good deed should do so.”<sup>22</sup>

On the authority of A'mash who said:

“I was with Ibrāhīm [An-Nakha'ī] while he was reciting from the Muṣḥaf, so a man sought permission to enter upon him then, he covered the Muṣḥaf and said: ‘This one should not think that I recite it everytime.’”<sup>23</sup>

Al-Ḥusayn bn Al-Ḥasan Abū Ma'īn Ar-Rāzī said: “I heard 'Alī bn Al-Madīnī, may Allāh magnify his reward, say: ‘None of our companions memorized more than Aḥmad. It has

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<sup>22</sup> Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Jami' 6018

<sup>23</sup> Ṣifah Aṣ-Ṣafwah p. 49

reached me that he does not narrate ḥadīth except from a book, and we have a good example in him.”<sup>24</sup>

On the authority of ‘Āṣim who said: “When Abū Wā’il—Shaqīq bn Salamah—observes Ṣalāh in his home, he cries a lot. And if you were to give him the whole world for him to do it while someone is seeing him, he will not do it.”<sup>25</sup>

O Allāh, cleanse our hearts from hypocrisy, our actions from Riyā’, our tongues from lies, and our eyes from deception, for indeed, you know the deception of the eyes and what the breasts conceal.

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<sup>24</sup> Al-Jarh wa Ta’deel 1/295

<sup>25</sup> Talbees Iblees Pg 128