

What Is the Danger of *Shirk*?

Why Is *Shirk* Considered One of the Unforgivable Sins?

How Does *Shirk* Slow Down Our Progress Toward Goals?

According to the *hadith* of the Infallibles, the danger of *shirk* is one of the threats that can destroy all our good deeds. It can even prevent the effectiveness of intercessors' intercession on the Day of Judgment. But why? Naturally, after identifying our goal at each stage of life, we must try to overcome obstacles and hardships. This is because if our goals are vague, we cannot achieve them, just as an unclear goal can prevent us from reaching it, obstacles and hardships can slow down or even stop our progress.

The most important thing in our lives—one that guarantees or destroys our eternal bliss—is moving toward eternity. Eternity is our ultimate destination and home. So all our deeds are defined by how seriously we take eternity and our correct understanding of the conditions and requirements of living in it. Our healthy birth into eternity ultimately determines our everlasting bliss or misery. Without considering the prerequisites of a healthy birth, it is impossible to reach our desired outcome in the journey toward eternity.

However, Satan, as our greatest enemy, spares no effort to create obstacles on this path. He works tirelessly to prevent us from reaching the goal for which God created us, one of which is to make us doubt God's word or commit *shirk* (polytheism). In this lesson, we aim to understand what *shirk* is and how it affects the quality of our movement toward eternity and God's purpose for our creation.

Definition of *Shirk*

To properly understand the danger of *shirk* and how it impacts our journey toward eternity, we first must clarify the definition of *shirk*. *Shirk* is considered one of the key factors that hinder our progress; without understanding the nature of *shirk*, it is impossible to examine the amount of its impact.

To grasp the importance of this danger, it suffices to say that *shirk* is the opposite of *Tawhid* (monotheism)—the very factor we need to achieve God's purpose of our creation. As mentioned in previous lessons, our happiness and peace in the hereafter, our eternal home, depend on how close we are to Allah. This closeness is determined by how much we are similar to Him i.e., the Absolute Perfection and Infinite Existence. The first step toward growing closer to Allah and becoming similar to Him is having the correct belief in the One and Infinite Being, without Whom we cannot exist.

Just as faith and *Tawhid* have different levels, *shirk* also has various types. It can be broadly divided into two categories:

- Theoretical *Shirk*

This type of *shirk*, which is the greatest sin, is committed when a person, both verbally and practically, associates partners with the One and Only God, believing that anything other than Allah or the Absolute Existence is the cause of anything and has effect on their actions.

- Practical *Shirk*

This is committed when, although we verbally acknowledge the oneness of Allah, our actions show reliance on causes and factors other than Him. For example, even though we believe Allah is the Creator and in control of everything, we seek help from others besides Him to solve our problems or heal us.

The Danger of *Shirk* to Our Progress

Now, the question is: How does shirk hinder us from achieving God's purpose of our creation and affect our eternity?

In fact, believing that Allah's purpose of our creation is that we become similar to Him answers this question to a large degree. This is because we become similar to Allah only when we first have a correct understanding of Him, believing that Allah is the only source of existence throughout the universe. *Shirk* precisely indicates that we have trouble understanding Allah as the Only Being who influences the entire realm of existence. As a result, instead of perceiving Allah as the unified, infinite, and all-encompassing being, we see Him as a limited being far from Absolute Perfection. Therefore, we do not recognize Him as the Absolute Power to ask Him for help in our weaknesses, nor as the Absolute Master Planner to entrust our affairs to, nor as God of infinite knowledge and the Lord to rely on in solving problems.

Thus, we commit *shirk* when we do not know God as the Absolute Perfection that everything depends on Him. *Shirk* directly opposes our happiness and God's purpose of our creation. This is why, *shirk* is unforgivable and the greatest sin.

Shirk as a Factor That Slows Down Our Progress

No matter how successful we are in life or how perfect we are in our various dimensions. We are losers if we do not reach God's purpose of our creation. Given the limited life span in the womb of the world, success comes not only when we hasten toward God but also when we compete with one another to reach Him. However, the danger of *shirk* is that it acts like a factor that not only diminishes speed and progress toward eternity but also traps us in a cycle that never leads to the true destination—Allah.

In this case, instead of prioritizing Allah, we rely on illusions that are not independent existence and are dependent on Allah for their existence. It is like trying to establish a relationship with a subordinate employee to make a contract instead of the CEO of a company, expecting to achieve the desired result. In other words, we ignore the important thing and expect result from dependent, ineffective things. Although this may seem unreasonable or unlikely, many of us fall into this trap at different levels, which causes slow progress in our journey toward eternity. In fact, when we do not know the exact definition of Absolute Perfection who is infinite, and when we lose faith in Allah as the only effective being in the universe, we fall into various degrees of *shirk*.