

## **What Factors Allow the Influence of the Devil, and How Can We Overcome It?**

### **Guarding Our Hearts: Recognizing and Resisting the Daily Influence of the Devil**

Study on human being's experiences shows that the factors leading to an individuals' downfall or growth often boil down to a simple change, an impulsive decision, or a moment of negligence. Our lives are full of pivotal moments that may seem accidental at first glance, yet they reveal the depth of our character, faith, and insight.

Sometimes we make decisions with good intentions, but after a while we realize that those decisions have steered us off the right path. At other times, a seemingly small event, such as a superficial success or a small opportunity are magnified in our minds. In such moments, the influence of the devil (Satan), as a hidden force, is at play; a force we have often heard of but rarely recognize in the seemingly ordinary actions of our lives.

Many of us believe that the influence of the devil starts with an obvious sin or a temptation; however, the truth is that this influence does not always manifest itself in a deceptive guise or through a direct attack. Sometimes, it hides behind anxiety, superficial spirituality, or even sacred matters. Satan paves the way for his influence by subtly distorting the mind's perception and shifting spiritual boundaries. This hidden influence is more likely to affect those who are genuinely concerned about living rightly but lack sufficient awareness of the complexities of the path.

In this lesson, we will explore the ways in which Satan influences us. We will explain how negligence, life changes, a lack of gratitude, and an incomplete understanding of monotheism can create opportunities for Satan, our enemy, to attack us. We will also strive to understand how strengthening our faith, cultivating a monotheistic perspective, and the presence of heart can help us resist the influence of the devil.

Furthermore, we will closely examine the particular ways through which Satan manipulates us. In such cases, we often start on a new path with concern, fear, worshipping God, and even goodwill. However, if we are not vigilant, these can lead to internal changes that may surprise us years down the line.

### **How Does Monotheistic Thinking Prevent the Influence of the Devil?**

Monotheistic thinking is like a strong fortress that prevents this hidden enemy from invading the mind and heart of a person. If an individual does not perceive God's presence in all aspects of life, their mind gradually becomes more vulnerable to hidden temptations. In such circumstances, Satan subtly exploits cognitive and emotional cracks, gradually shifting the boundaries of the monotheistic beliefs individuals hold.

Just as infections can more quickly affect physically weak individuals, Satan tends to invade the minds of those who are either non-monotheistic or weak in their monotheistic beliefs. In contrast, a person who has a monotheistic perspective and acts accordingly always see God's hand in everything. As a result, they resist fears, temptations, and doubts.

A monotheist does not worry excessively about the future, regret the past, or feel anxious right now. They interpret every occurrence within the framework of divine wisdom. As a result, their minds are protected from gradual influence of the devil. God does not allow Satan to dominate such servants [1]. For these individuals, temptations become opportunities for growth rather than threats. They use this opportunity to take refuge in God.

When a person fails to know God's will in the events of their life, they leave the door open to the influence of the devil. Anxiety, doubt, even being tempted to do some activities that seem religious, and worrying about being alone in the future, all are products of a non-monotheistic perspective. However, someone whose outlook and actions embody monotheism is safeguarded from both the covert and overt influences of Satan.

From the perspective of the Quran, one of the main conditions for guidance is faith in the unseen [2]. This faith is not merely a theoretical belief; it must manifest itself in a person's lifestyle. A believer sees God as all-seeing and ever-present in their personal decisions, social interactions, and even in their perspective on hardships and blessings. Such a perspective serves as the most important shield against the influence of the devil.

Whenever a person is in doubt, is haunted by the fear of the future, or feels like they have no one to turn to, they should realize that they are under attack from a hidden enemy. In such moments, remembering God's Lordship and returning to the *fitri* and monotheistic perspective act like a spiritual medicine that prevents the continuation of the influence of the devil.

Monotheistic thinking is not only a means of salvation in critical situations but also a foundation for nurturing our inner selves and cultivating emotional and behavioral balance in all circumstances. Those who have gained this perspective tend to bounce back from their mistakes, even if they have made them. This is because their heart is still connected to the divine center.

On the path to guidance, it does not matter how intense the temptations may be; what matters is how much we trust in God and how strong our connection with Him is. If we see God as the only One who can benefit us or hurt us, we will resist the influence of the devil and his enmity.

### **The Role of Gratitude in Resisting the Influence of the Devil**

According to the Holy Quran, Satan has explicitly stated that he attacks humans from various sides. He has declared the result of his attack, addressing God, "You will find most of them ungrateful" [3]. This verse indicates that one of the main ways for the influence of the devil is to lead people to live an ungrateful life. He first diminishes our awareness of blessings and then, by solidifying negligence and ingratitude, finds the door open to enter our lives.

But what is gratitude, and why does it play such a crucial role in countering the influence of the devil? On a superficial level, gratitude might simply mean a verbal reaction like saying "*Alhamdulillah*" (Praise be to God); however, on a deeper level, gratitude represents a constant and active awareness of the source of blessings, God's role in life, and His presence in every moment.

A grateful person does not see the world as random or abandoned; rather, they recognize a wise will behind every phenomenon. For this reason, gratitude is not merely a moral virtue; it is a state in which our heart is awakened and stay connected with the Creator. Conversely, whenever this connection weakens or is severed, the influence of the devil starts. When blessings appear ordinary to a person and no longer remind them of their Creator, negligence takes hold. This negligence is the very open door through which Satan enters a person's mind and heart.

Someone who is blind to both their apparent and hidden blessings gradually becomes dissatisfied with life, thinks they have been treated unfairly, or is under the illusion of being self-sufficient. These states prepare a fertile ground for the influence of the devil. Many of us have seen individuals who are always dissatisfied with their financial situation or constantly complain about their job, while remaining indifferent to blessings such as health, security, family, or the opportunity for spiritual growth. This dissatisfaction causes people to plant seeds of resentment and ingratitude in their hearts, which over time lead to negative thoughts, anger, jealousy, and despair. In contrast, if they were grateful, they would focus on what they have rather than what they lack; this would enable them to make rapid progress in their spiritual and personal growth journeys.

Gratitude is more than just acknowledging blessings; it is a kind of constant awareness that prevents Satan from exploiting our mental weaknesses. Gratitude keeps a person active, causes them to take responsibility for their life, and be present in the moment. It helps people to let go of the past and stop worrying about

the future. Being present in the moment consciously is one of the most significant barriers to the gradual influence of the devil.

Gratitude is practical monotheism because it helps a person understand that everything they have comes from God and that whatever happens is within the framework of His wisdom. A grateful person is neither proud of their accomplishments nor disappointed from their defeat. This spiritual balance is what Satan hates and always tries to disrupt.

Gratitude can be viewed as both a shield and a weapon against the influence of the devil; it is a tool that keeps the mind bright and the heart awake. Gratitude is a divine and educational strategy for confronting an enemy that has openly declared its intention to deceive the human being [4]. In an age when negligence is widespread, being grateful is one of the most important ways to maintain awareness, strengthen resilience, and neutralize the subtle influence of the devil.

### **How Does Negligence Create an Opportunity for the Deception and Influence of the Devil?**

When a person has an awareness of their situation and senses danger, they become more vigilant and careful. One of the dangers that many people overlook is the constant enmity of Satan toward them. Satan has warned that he will hinder individuals precisely on the Straight Path, where they are growing and striving for elevation [5]. This warning indicates that the influence of the devil is not solely aimed at misguided people; rather, it primarily targets those who are on the path of guidance.

Satan, like a hidden attacker, lies in wait for a moment of negligence to seize a person's mind and heart. Imam Sadiq (Peace be upon him) said, "If Satan is indeed an enemy, then why the negligence" [6]? Negligence means being oblivious to a danger that can lead a person astray from the divine path at any moment. Just as Satan is serious in his hostility, a person must also be serious in safeguarding themselves. A person who is negligent remains powerless against temptations.

One of Satan's titles is "Taa'if," which refers to a being that constantly circulates a person's heart, waiting for a moment of negligence to enter. Like a thief waiting for the household to fall asleep, Satan also waits for a person's heart to neglect God, it is the moment when a person forgets God, the purpose of creation, and their responsibilities. It is precisely from this point that the influence of the devil starts.

However, when introducing Satan as the human being's enemy, God has also shown the way to confront him. One of the most important strategies is to remind yourself of the hereafter and being present in God's presence [7]. Remembering the hereafter means avoiding negligence, and this remembrance serves as a fundamental barrier against Satan's influence.

Satan attacks from various sides. In fact, a person must always be vigilant regarding four main sides that occupy their mind and heart: the past, the future, seemingly spiritual motivations, and overt sins. The important point is that Satan does not always influence us through overt sins and corruption; sometimes this influence manifest itself under the guise of superficial or apparent spirituality. History shows us that there were individuals who were devoted to worship, yet when they doubted *Wilayah* (guardianship) of Imam Ali (Peace be upon him), they did not support him [8]. This indicates that being religious without following the *WaliAllah*

(God's appointed guardian) and having an insight into his role creates an opportunity for the influence of the devil.

In fact, any religious act that is not aligned with *Wilayah* can lead to deviation. The orientation of all actions should be towards the *WaliAllah* —the infallible expert who helps us reach the purpose of creation. Even a slight deviation from this path can unintentionally lead a person astray.

It is important to note that Satan is not trying to mislead those who followed falsehood; they are already caught in his trap. His focus is on those who walk on the path of guidance. Therefore, Satan's attacks can serve as a good criterion for measuring a person's level of awareness or negligence.

Satan is like a viral infection that causes fever that triggers a defensive response from the body. If a person is vigilant, temptations pave the way for them to grow and become resilient; however, if they are negligent, those very temptations can become the root of their deviation and cause their downfall.

### **How Do Changes and Events in Life Become a Breeding Ground for the Influence of the Devil?**

Change is a natural process in life. Sometimes, it is desirable and gives us hope, as in getting married, becoming a parent, or creating a new path in life. However, sometimes it is something unwanted and difficult such as becoming ill, facing failure, or losing a loved one. The common things among all these changes are a kind of mental instability and turmoil, a state in which a person has not yet adapted

to the new situation and has also distanced themselves from the previous one. In this unstable condition, the ground is laid for the influence of the devil.

According to the Quran, one way Satan enters our hearts is through attacking us from the front. It means Satan makes us fear the future. It is while the future is not here. However, in such a situation, we are anxious about the future and feel uncertain about it. We might ask ourselves: "What will happen?", "What if I fail?", "Will I be able to manage it?" It is normal to ask these questions, but the thing is that Satan magnifies anxieties, stirs hidden fears, and creates an unclear image of the future. As a result, he freezes our minds and weakens our willpower.

For example, a young person who is going to get married may be overwhelmed with negative thoughts, fear, and doubt, if they lack *ma'rifa*, while they can seek advice and make rational decisions. Similarly, a patient who continuously imagines an uncertain future instead of focusing on treatment falls prey to the same influences. In these situations, Satan takes advantage of the lack of trust and understanding to start to influence them.

In contrast, in the monotheistic perspective, change is not a threat; rather, it is an opportunity for growth and refinement. God says in the Quran: "Give good news to those who patiently endure—who say, when struck by a disaster, 'Surely to Allah we belong and to Him we will [all] return'" [9]. This means that a believer knows their place in the realm of existence, so no matter what happens to them, in any case, they find inner peace.

To avoid Satan's deception during moments of change, one must refrain from becoming consumed by constant future predictions and instead shift their focus back to the present. Anxiety stems from fearing an uncertain future, while living in

the moment helps us to gain control over any situation and resist temptations. Engaging in conversation with insightful individuals—rather than those who merely offer emotional support —can also help prevent hasty decisions and extreme reactions.

Maintaining our connection with God, even in its simplest form, serves as a significant barrier against the influence of the devil. You do not always need specific forms of *dhikr*; sometimes having a sincere intention or saying a simple phrase like "God, help me" can safeguard the mind from the influence of the devil. It is because we focus on and connect with the ultimate Source of strength and peace.

Every change can be an opportunity for self-discovery, evaluating weaknesses, and uncovering hidden potentials, as long as we do not view it as an obstacle or a threat and do not run away from it. A person with a monotheistic perspective and a clear purpose will not be shattered in the face of change; however, if one's identity is tied to their circumstances and if they have a weak connection with God, even a small change can shatter them. Such situations are the best opportunities for the influence of the devil.

Reviewing the various sections of this lesson shows that the influence of the devil starts not from the outside but from internal weaknesses. In this regard, the monotheistic thinking serves as the most important shield against this influence. It is because if a person does not see God's presence in all aspects of their life, fear, illusion, and doubt enter their mind.

In the second section, we learned that true gratitude goes beyond verbal thanks; it is living with the constant awareness of God's role in life, preventing us from forgetting our bond with our Creator. The third section showed that negligence, even in seemingly religious occasions or when we are altruistic, can create an

opening for the influence of the devil. It is because Satan does not wait for us to commit overt sins. He takes advantage of momentary distractions.

The fourth section clarified that if apparent changes are not accompanied by awareness and trust, they can lead to doubt, fear, anxiety, and temptation. It is precisely in these mental instabilities that Satan's subtle and gradual influence starts.

What do you think? Have you ever experienced a hidden temptation disguised as spirituality or altruism that changed your thoughts or actions? We are eager to hear your perspectives.

## References

- [1]. Quran, 17:65
- [2]. Quran, 2:2,3
- [3]. Quran, 7:17
- [4]. Quran, 38:82
- [5]. Quran, 7:16
- [6]. Majlesi, Muhammad Baqir. *Bihar Al-Anwar*. v.78, p.190.
- [7]. Quran, 38:46
- [8]. Dinwari, Abu Hanifa. *Akhbar Al-tiwal*. p.165
- [9]. Quran, 2:155-156