

SIFAH LECTURE SERIES

Winning the Opening Moment: The Battle of Hardship and Desire

A practical lecture — knowledge you can act on

Ustadh Bilal Saleem

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SIFAH

SCHOOL OF ISLAMIC
FOUNDATIONS &
ADVOCACY FOR HUMANITY

Winning the Opening Moment: The Battle of Hardship and Desire

Your whole journey to Jannah turns on a single decisive instant: the first strike of pain and the first pull of desire. Learn to win it.

WHY THIS MATTERS

A Thread from the First Page to the Last

My dear brother, my dear sister, have you ever noticed *where* Allah chose to begin His Book? Of all the stories He could have told first, of all the lessons He could have opened with, He began with the story of our father Ādam. And there is nothing accidental in the placement of a single letter of the Qur'an, let alone the very first story. So we must ask ourselves honestly: why this one? Why open the greatest book ever revealed with a man in a garden, surrounded by every blessing, who reached in a single moment for the one thing he was told to leave?

Because that story, my brother and sister, is **your** story. It is the story of every soul that has ever lived. Ādam was not evil. He was not rebellious in his heart. He was hasty. In one unguarded instant, with paradise all around him, he fixed his gaze on the single forbidden tree and reached for it. And that one hasty moment cost him the Garden for a time. Yet, and here is the mercy that should melt every heart, Allah forgave him. We do not inherit his sin. We do not carry his burden. We are simply the continuation of his journey, the journey of a soul that slips in a moment of haste and must learn how to return.

Then Allah moves from the story of one man to the story of a whole nation, the Children of Israel, and He reminds them of His blessings, and of the covenant: keep My covenant, and I will keep yours, and fear Me alone. And then, as the very fruit of that covenant, He hands us an instruction that will carry a believer through his entire life, from his first breath to his last. Read it slowly, because this single verse is the spine of everything we will talk about today.

ج
وَأَسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ وَإِنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلَّا عَلَى
الْخَاشِعِينَ ۚ الَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُلَاقُوا رَبِّهِمْ وَأَنَّهُمْ
إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

And seek help through patience and prayer; indeed, it is difficult except for the humble, those who are certain that they will meet their Lord and that to Him they will return.

Surah Al-Baqarah (2:45-46)

Look at what Allah is telling us. The entire journey to Jannah, when you strip it down to its bones, comes down to two great struggles. The first is the struggle to be *patient* when life strikes you with hardship. The second is the struggle to *restrain yourself* when your desires pull you toward what Allah has forbidden. That is it. That is the whole exam. And the shocking truth, the truth the Companions understood better than we do, is that the test of ease is often heavier than the test of hardship.

THE HARDER TEST

When the World Opens All Its Doors

Let me tell you about one of the wealthiest men who ever walked with the Prophet ﷺ. ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf, may Allah be pleased with him, a man of such riches that his caravans could shake the streets of Madinah. And this man, this giant of a Companion, confessed something about himself that should make every one of us pause.

He said: *We were tested with hardship, and we were patient; then we were tested with ease, and we were not able to be patient.* Reflect on that, my dear brother and sister. A man who endured the persecution of Makkah, who left his home and his wealth and migrated with nothing, who stood firm through hunger and fear and war, tells you that the poverty was the easy exam. The riches were the hard one.

And is he not right? When you are struck by something painful, it is actually easier to lose your appetite for this world, to feel its emptiness, to turn your grief into a rope that pulls you back to Allah. Pain has a way of stripping the shine off the dunya. But when the world opens all of its doors to you, when it lays every pleasure at your feet and whispers, *go on, you have earned it*, to restrain yourself in that moment is a far, far harder thing. So we are going to speak of both today: the patience of the one who is struck, and the patience of the one who is tempted. And here is the secret that binds them together: both are won or lost in a single decisive moment. The first moment.

Come back with me to Ādam for a second, because his story maps onto ours perfectly. He was surrounded by gardens, by rivers, by blessing upon blessing. But in the instant of the pull, what did he see? Not the thousand trees that were already his. He saw only the one tree that was forbidden. Is this not exactly the shape of our own falls? Allah has poured blessing upon blessing over your life, more than you could count if you spent your whole life counting, and yet a single unguarded impulse fixes your gaze on the one thing you were warned away from. The whole struggle of the believer is to learn what Ādam's children are meant to learn from him: not that you will never feel the pull, but that you can **master the moment of the pull**, return quickly to Allah as Ādam returned, and refuse to let one hasty instant decide your eternity.

THE BLOW LANDS

Patience Is at the First Strike

So let us begin with hardship, because it comes to all of us, uninvited. Allah, in His wisdom, does not leave us defenceless when the trial arrives. He tells us in advance exactly what the believers do the moment the blow lands. Read this, and notice where He places the reward.

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ
الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالثَّمَرَاتِ وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٥٥﴾
الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمُ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ
رَاجِعُونَ

*And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger, and a loss of wealth, lives, and fruits; but give glad tidings to the patient, **those who, when disaster strikes them, say: indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return.***

Surah Al-Baqarah (2:155-156)

Do you see it? The glad tidings, the reward, are tied to *that first instant*, the moment of shock. Allah does not describe them as those who eventually calm down after a month. He describes them by what escapes their lips the very second the disaster lands. A person who has been quietly preparing his heart his whole life for that blow will find everything he has nurtured inside himself rise up to meet it, in a beautiful opportunity that cannot be found anywhere else.

This is exactly why our Prophet ﷺ, when he passed a woman weeping uncontrollably at a grave and gently counselled her to fear Allah and be patient, and she pushed him away, not even knowing who he was, taught the Ummah a principle we have leaned on ever since.

إِنَّمَا الصَّبْرُ عِنْدَ الصَّدْمَةِ الْأُولَى

Patience is only at the first strike.

Source: Sahih al-Bukhari: 1283 and Sahih Muslim: 926 · **Authenticity:** Muttafaqun Alayh (agreed upon)

Let me be honest with you about what this means, because it is easy to misunderstand. It does not mean there is no reward for patience after a day, or a week, or a year. Of course there is. What it means is that the *very first strike* carries a particular, unrepeatable reward that the later hours simply do not. You do not suddenly manufacture patience when the great tribulation arrives at your door. You prepared for the shock in advance, and what you had been building inside yourself materialises in that instant, in the words *innā lillāhi wa innā ilayhi rāji'ūn*, to Allah we belong and to Him we return.

So when the trial lands, great or small, the first level of patience is simply this: hold your tongue and your limbs from anything that would compromise your reward. The bare minimum is silence and restraint. Do not scream against the decree. Do not tear your clothes. Do not curse your fate. And above that bare minimum is the higher level: channel the pain toward Allah, ask Him for the reward He promised, until the wound itself becomes a door to His mercy.

THE TRAINING GROUND

Train at the Small Strikes

Now here is a mercy hidden in plain sight, a mercy we overlook every single day. These words, *innā lillāhi wa innā ilayhi rāji'ūn*, are not reserved for the graveside. There is a common idea in our communities that we only say them when someone has died. My dear brother, my dear sister, this is a mistake, and it is costing us.

The Prophet ﷺ taught that whatever hurts or troubles a Muslim is a kind of calamity, even something as small as a lamp going out at night, and that bearing it patiently with these words carries the promise of reward from Allah. Do you understand what that means? It means the believer has a **thousand small opportunities every day** to train the very muscle he will need when the great blow finally comes.

The traffic that traps you when you are already late. The power that cuts out in the heat. The spilled cup of coffee. The plan that falls apart at the last minute. The careless word from someone you love. Each of these, my brother and sister, is a small strike. And each is a chance to say, quietly, under your breath, *innā lillāhi wa innā ilayhi rājiʿūn*, and then, when the relief returns, *al-ḥamdu lillāh*.

Think of it as training. Think of it as the gym. A soul that has said *innā lillāh* a thousand times over spilled coffee and missed buses and minor frustrations has worn a deep groove into the heart. So on the day a real calamity strikes, the day the phone call comes that changes everything, the tongue and the heart run straight into that familiar groove without even being told. It is automatic. It is muscle memory of the soul.

But the one who meets every small discomfort with complaint and cursing, who treats every minor inconvenience as an outrage against him personally, has been training himself for the opposite. And he should not expect to suddenly find dignity and patience at the hour of his greatest test. Let me say it as plainly as I can: **we become, at the moment of the great strike, whatever we practised at the small ones.** So do not waste the small strikes. Allah has scattered them through your day out of pure mercy, to prepare you for the blows that truly matter.

THE PRIZE

The Reward of the One Who Holds Firm

And what does this patience buy you? My dear brother and sister, the reward is beyond anything your imagination can hold. Allah described the servants of the Most Merciful, the ones who held firm, and He told us exactly what their patience purchases for them.

أُولَئِكَ يُجْزَوْنَ الْغُرْفَةَ بِمَا صَبَرُوا وَيُلَقَّوْنَ فِيهَا تَحِيَّةً
وَسَلَامًا

*Those will be awarded the **highest chambers of Paradise** for what they patiently endured, and they will be received therein with greetings and peace.*

Surah Al-Furqan (25:75)

The highest chambers. Bought with patience. Now let me bring this down from the clouds into your ordinary week, because that is where patience really strikes. It strikes in the middle of an argument. Picture it. The tension in the room, the words getting sharper, the temperature rising. The hypocrite, the one with no living sense of the Hereafter, goes all out to win. He reaches for the most hurtful thing he can find and throws it, precisely to inflict maximum pain. He wants the victory.

But the believer, in that same heated moment, thinks something completely different. He thinks: *I could win a house in Paradise right now. I would rather lose this argument than lose that house.* And listen to how the Prophet ﷺ turned that exact trade into a guarantee.

أَنَا زَعِيمٌ بِبَيْتٍ فِي رِبْضِ الْجَنَّةِ لِمَنْ تَرَكَ الْمِرَاءَ وَإِنْ
كَانَ مُحِقًّا

*I am a guarantor of a house in the outskirts of Paradise for whoever abandons argument **even when he is right.***

Source: Sunan Abi Dawud: 4800 · Authenticity: Hasan

Even when he is right. Read that again. You could be completely, provably right, and the Prophet ﷺ still guarantees you a house in Jannah if you are willing to walk away from the fight. That is the trade on the table every time your blood begins to boil. A house in Paradise for a moment of swallowed pride. Who would not take that deal?

And in that same heated moment, when the anger rises and every fibre of you wants to strike back, the Prophet ﷺ handed us a weapon. He saw two men trading insults, one of them red in the face with rage, and he said he knew a word which, if the angry man would only say it, his rage would leave him.

إِنِّي لَأَعْلَمُ كَلِمَةً لَوْ قَالَهَا لَذَهَبَ عَنْهُ مَا يَجِدُ: أَعُوذُ
بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ

*Indeed I know a word which, if he said it, what he feels would leave him: **I seek refuge in Allah from Shayṭān, the accursed.***

Source: Sahih al-Bukhari: 3282 and Sahih Muslim: 2610 · **Authenticity:** Muttafaqun Alayh (agreed upon)

And if even that feels too hard in the white heat of the moment, if you cannot get the words out, the Prophet ﷺ gave us the bare floor of restraint: when one of you becomes angry, let him be silent. If you cannot say something good, then say nothing at all, and protect yourself from a word you will carry with regret for the rest of your life. Silence, my brother, has never once betrayed a believer.

THREE STRENGTHS, ONE MUSCLE

The Three Patiences That Carry a Believer

The scholars, may Allah have mercy on them, taught us that patience is of three kinds, and a believer needs all three to make it home. Let me walk you through them, because understanding them will change how you see your own struggles.

The first is **patience upon obedience**: the strength to keep doing what Allah commanded when your soul grows tired of it. To rise for Fajr when the bed is warm. To guard your five prayers when life is busy.

To keep the fast when the day is long. The second is **patience away from sin**: the strength to hold back from what Allah forbade when the desire is burning inside you. And this, my dear brother and sister, is the patience we struggle with most in an age that dangles temptation before our eyes at every single moment. The third is **patience with the decree of Allah**: the strength to bear what He has willed of loss and pain without raising a complaint against Him.

So heavy and so precious is this quality that ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, may Allah be pleased with him, weighed it against faith itself.

الصَّبْرُ مِنَ الْإِيمَانِ بِمَنْزِلَةِ الرَّأْسِ مِنَ الْجَسَدِ

*Patience is to faith what **the head is to the body**; and there is no faith for the one who has no patience.*

Source: Reported by al-Bayhaqi in Shu‘ab al-Iman · **Authenticity:** Hasan

The head to the body. A body without a head is a corpse. And here is the beautiful thing I want you to see: these three patiences are not three separate gifts handed out to three different kinds of people. They are *one strength*, built in the small moments, that simply shows itself in whichever battle the day happens to bring. The one who has trained himself to be patient upon obedience has already learned to overrule his own comfort, and that very same muscle is what holds him back from sin and steadies him under the decree. Train it once, and you have trained it for all three. And every one of them is won or lost at the first moment: before the tiredness becomes surrender, before the temptation becomes action, before the grief becomes complaint.

THE SECOND STRUGGLE

The Patience of Holding Back Desire

Now turn with me, my dear brother and sister, from the patience of hardship to the patience of desire. Because here is the wonderful truth: they are won in exactly the same way, at exactly the same instant. The very first moment.

When the alarm sounds for Fajr, let me tell you what is really happening. You are not truly fighting your bed. You are fighting your phone and your own soul, and the desire to sink back into sleep is so, so sweet. The Prophet ﷺ, by contrast, was described as one who would spring up for the prayer, while the hypocrites rise heavy, dragging their feet, asking whether it is really time again. And here is the hard reality: if you do not conquer that first inclination the very instant the call comes, there is a very good chance the prayer is already lost. The negotiation has begun, and the nafs is a ruthless negotiator.

The same is true of every single desire in your life. You say to yourself, *I will have just one small bite*, and once that first bite is taken, the whole plate is gone. You say, *I will exercise later*, and once you have said the word later, there will be no exercise that day. You say, *just one video*, and an hour vanishes. The decisive battle, my brother and sister, is **always at the beginning**, before the soul has tasted the thing and shut off every voice of conscience in order to keep enjoying it. That is precisely why the Prophet ﷺ taught that the moment you are reminded of Allah at the edge of a sin, you stop right there. Not after the first taste. At the edge.

And in His mercy, Allah gave us a training ground for exactly this discipline, and He wove it into the very same verse that commanded patience and prayer, because the scholars explained that the patience mentioned there points to *fasting*. And the Prophet ﷺ named fasting as the shield of the young man who cannot yet restrain his desire.

يَا مَعْشَرَ الشَّبَابِ، مَنْ اسْتَطَاعَ مِنْكُمُ الْبَاءَةَ فَلْيَتَزَوَّجْ،
وَمَنْ لَمْ يَسْتَطِعْ فَعَلَيْهِ بِالصَّوْمِ فَإِنَّهُ لَهُ وِجَاءٌ

O young people, whoever among you is able to marry, let him marry; and whoever is not able, let him fast, for it is a shield for him.

Source: Sahih al-Bukhari: 5066 and Sahih Muslim: 1400 · **Authenticity:** Muttafaqun Alayh (agreed upon)

Consider carefully what fasting does to a soul. You tell yourself you cannot drink the water sitting right in front of you, because it is not yet time. You cannot eat, even though you are genuinely hungry, because a reward awaits the one who holds back. That, my dear brother and sister, is **delayed gratification**

trained directly into the body. The one who can master himself in the small matter of food and drink has learned the exact skill he needs to master himself before every other desire: to say to the soul, firmly, *no, not now*, and to actually mean it. So seek help through patience and prayer, and let the fast become the school in which you learn, month after month, to conquer that first impulse.

THE PERFECT EXAMPLE

How the Prophet ﷺ Conquered the First Moment

And no one, in the history of the human race, mastered this first moment like our beloved Prophet ﷺ. When the call to prayer came, he did not wrestle with himself the way we wrestle with our alarms and our warm blankets. He would spring to the prayer, hurrying to it, activated toward it, alive with it, while the hypocrite gets up heavy and reluctant, dragging his feet, muttering. The Prophet ﷺ overcame the desire to sleep, the desire to rest after a brutally hard day, the desire to linger over his food, the very moment the prayer was called, and he leapt toward it like a man running to meet a beloved.

Most of us, if we are honest, live somewhere on the spectrum between the heaviness of the hypocrite and the eagerness of the Prophet ﷺ. And the work of an entire lifetime is to move ourselves, moment by moment, prayer by prayer, closer to his end of it. You will not arrive tomorrow. But you can take one step tomorrow.

And here is something profound about how he ﷺ dealt with desire: he understood that desire is conquered by *awareness*, not by mere scolding. Let me tell you a story that should stay with you. A young man once came to him and asked, openly, in front of everyone, for permission to commit fornication. The Companions were outraged and rushed at him in anger. But the Prophet ﷺ, with a heart bigger than the sky, drew the young man close. He did not shame him. He reasoned with his heart. He asked him gently: *would you accept such a thing for your own mother?* The young man said no. *For your daughter?* No. *For your sister?* No, never. And each time, the Prophet ﷺ said: other people feel exactly the same about their mothers, their daughters, their sisters.

Then he placed his blessed hand upon the young man and prayed that Allah purify his heart and guard his chastity. And that young man walked away with the desire emptied clean out of him. Do you see the wisdom, my dear brother and sister? The Prophet ﷺ did not crush the young man. He **transported him**, in a single moment, to an awareness that dissolved the craving at its very root. That is how the first

impulse is won: not by shouting at the desire, but by lifting the heart to something higher than the thing in front of it.

WHO WINS THE GARDEN

Those Who Restrained the Soul

Because Allah has told us plainly, with no ambiguity whatsoever, who wins the Garden. It is not the one who never felt the pull. It is the one who feared standing before his Lord and reined in his own desire.

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

*But as for the one who feared the standing before his Lord and **restrained the soul from its desire**, then indeed Paradise will be the refuge.*

Surah An-Naziat (79:40-41)

There is a rule that the wise have always known for disciplining desire and defeating instant gratification, and I want you to write it on your heart: **give up what you want now, for what you want more.** You restrain yourself from the pleasure sitting in front of you, not because pleasure is evil, but because you refuse to let it cost you your true destination. Think of Paradise as the place where the believer can finally exhale. Finally release. Finally taste, in full and without limit, every gratification he patiently delayed here.

If you can just conquer the soul at that first impulse, you gain eternal, unlimited access to everything you were truly seeking all along. So when the impulse strikes, let two things move you at once. First, the fear of compounding your own trial by falling into something that will only harm you. And then, right behind it, the pleasure of the Paradise that Allah has personally guaranteed you instead. Fear pulls you back from the edge; hope pulls you forward toward Him. Between the two, the soul finds its balance.

The Algorithm and the Burning Coal

Now let us be honest about the world we actually live in, because it is a world that has made itself the sworn enemy of restraint. There are devices sitting in our pockets right now, and applications running on them, that have studied our souls more closely than we have ever studied them ourselves. Let that sink in. They know what your nafs craves, sometimes better than you know it. And they feed you craving after craving after craving: the next image, the next outrage, the next piece of drama, the next thing your lower self reaches for.

They enslave a person to an endless feed. And when we become impulsive creatures who simply move to the next thing, and the next, and the next, without ever pausing to think, without ever choosing, then we have already lost the very battle this entire religion is calling us to win. You know the feeling. The agitation until you open your phone. The strange restlessness of an hour without checking it. The question gnawing quietly at the back of your mind about what you might have missed. My dear brother, my dear sister, that impulse is not a healthy one. And if we do not conquer it, we are led rather than leading. And the one who is led by his desires needs no devil to decorate sin for him, because he runs to every craving entirely on his own.

The Prophet ﷺ described these very days of ours in a way that should make us sit up straight.

يَأْتِي عَلَى النَّاسِ زَمَانٌ الصَّابِرُ فِيهِمْ عَلَى دِينِهِ كَالْقَابِضِ
عَلَى الْجَمْرِ

*A time will come upon people when the one who holds firmly to his religion will be like **one grasping a burning coal.***

Source: Sunan at-Tirmidhi: 2260 · **Authenticity:** Hasan

So how do we hold the coal without dropping it? We conquer the first impulse. We place a word of remembrance, or even just a single moment of pause, between ourselves and the reach of the hand, so

that we are *choosing* and not merely being pulled along like a leaf on a river. And understand the trap for what it truly is. These feeds are not neutral, my brother and sister. They are engineered, by very clever people, to defeat exactly the restraint our religion is trying to build in us. They study what holds your gaze, and they feed you more of it, training your soul to crave the next thing the instant the last one ends, until patience itself starts to feel unnatural and stillness starts to feel like withdrawal.

A soul fed this way for years does not suddenly discover self-control at the moment of a real temptation, any more than a man who never once lifted a weight will suddenly find strength when he must carry something heavy. So the discipline of the first impulse is not only about the obvious, dramatic sins. It is about reclaiming the very ability to pause, to choose, and to say *not now*, which the entire machinery of our age is working, day and night, to steal from you. Win it in the small thing, the idle scroll, and you are training the exact same muscle you will need in the large one.

THE SOURCE OF STRENGTH

The One Who Watches and to Whom We Return

But here is the deepest truth of all, and without it none of the rest will work. You cannot conquer that first moment, when the soul seems to be completely dominating you, **unless you become deeply aware of the One who is watching you and to whom you will return.** This is the stunning coherence of the Qur'an, and I want you to see how the pieces lock together.

The same passage that commanded patience and prayer named the exact people who could bear it: those who are certain they will meet their Lord and that to Him they will return. And the same Sūrah that promised Paradise named its people as those who feared the standing before their Lord and restrained the soul from desire. Do you see it? The fear of that standing, and the certainty of that return, these are the fuel. These are the strength that lets a person say no in the decisive moment when everything inside him is screaming yes.

So when the first taste of a forbidden sweetness arrives, the first pull of the desire, try to transport yourself at once, in your mind, to the moment you will stand before Allah. Keep reminders of Him around you. Keep your tongue quietly moving with His remembrance throughout your day. Because the one who remembers Allah at the edge of the sin is the one who is given the strength to step back from it. Remembrance is not decoration. It is armour.

A Reward No Eye Has Ever Seen

And do not, for one second, imagine that what you give up in those private, unwitnessed moments is lost. My dear brother, my dear sister, it is not lost. It is *invested*. Allah praised the ones who tore themselves away from their warm beds in the depth of the night, who denied their souls the sweetness of sleep in order to stand and call upon Him in fear and hope. And listen to what He said He is keeping for them.

تَتَجَافَىٰ جُنُوبُهُمْ عَنِ الْمَضَاجِعِ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ خَوْفًا
وَطَمَعًا ۖ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ ﴿١٦﴾ فَلَا تَعْلَمُ نَفْسٌ مَّا
أُخْفِيَ لَهُم مِّن قُرَّةِ أَعْيُنٍ جَزَاءً بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

*Their sides part from their beds as they call upon their Lord in fear and hope, and they spend from what We have provided them. And **no soul knows what comfort of the eyes has been hidden for them** as a reward for what they used to do.*

Surah As-Sajdah (32:16-17)

No soul knows what has been hidden for them. Think about that. Every desire you denied in its first moment. Every craving you refused to feed. Every comfort you quietly set aside in order to obey your Lord. Allah is storing all of it for you in a place beyond imagining, hidden away *precisely because it is too great to be shown here*. It could not fit in this world. This is exactly why the believer is so willing to lose the small pleasure now: because he knows the One he is dealing with, and he trusts, with everything in him, that what Allah keeps hidden is worth infinitely more than what the world offers in the open.

The Day You Read Your Own Book

And let me show you why we store our deeds instead of spending their sweetness now. Look at the one who is given his record in his right hand on the Day of Judgement, after a lifetime of enduring the world's insults, of holding back the desire to answer people in kind, of starving the cravings of the self. Watch how Allah describes his joy.

فَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ بِيَمِينِهِ فَيَقُولُ هَاؤُمُ اقْرَءُوا كِتَابِيهِ
إِنِّي ظَنَنْتُ أَنِّي مُلَاقٍ حِسَابِيهِ

*So as for the one who is given his record in his right hand, he will say: **here, read my record.***

Indeed, I was certain that I would meet my account.

Surah Al-Haqqah (69:19-20)

In this life, the believer hides his good deeds almost the same way he hides his sins, because he does not want the sweetness of those deeds to be spent here. He wants the whole reward saved, untouched, for the day he meets Allah, because the more it is tasted here, the less remains stored there. But on *that* Day, my dear brother and sister, there is no more hiding. The one who held back, who delayed his gratification, who conquered the first impulse again and again and again, now runs through the vast gathering calling out to everyone he passes: *here, read my book!*

Picture the difference. In this world, when a person does a quiet good deed, he tucks it away from the eyes of others so that it stays pure and stored with Allah, carrying his worship the way a man carries a treasure he does not wish to be seen. But on that Day, the one who receives his book in his right hand does not tuck it away or whisper about it. He is not humbled by it. He is **overjoyed** by it. He goes through the gathering showing it to everyone he meets, the prayers, the fasts, the charity given in secret, all of it now revealed at last, because the moment he was saving it for has finally arrived.

That is the meaning of giving up what you want now for what you want more. So please, do not measure what you give up against the small loss you feel today. Measure it against the right hand, and the open book, and the running through the gathering with joy on your face. Do that, and you will find that no desire you ever conquered was a loss at all. Not one.

A REMINDER CARRIED HOME

It All Turns on One Moment

So let me gather it all for you, my dear brother and sister, as you prepare to leave this and step back into your life. The whole of our journey turns upon a single decisive moment. The patience of hardship is won at the *first strike* of the blow, when the heart returns to Allah with *innā lillāhi wa innā ilayhi rājiʿūn* before grief can drag it down into complaint. And the patience of desire is won at the *first pull* of temptation, before the soul has tasted the thing and silenced the voice of conscience.

Master that first moment, and you have mastered the entire course. Lose it, and you are carried helplessly wherever the impulse decides to drag you. You are not asked to be perfect. You are not asked to never feel the pull. Ādam felt it. You will feel it. You are asked only to become the kind of soul that, in that first instant, turns back to Allah. And that soul is not born; it is built, quietly, in a thousand small moments that no one else will ever see.

Remember the command with which Allah draws the whole affair together, the command of justice and excellence: *Indeed, Allah commands justice, excellence, and giving to relatives, and He forbids immorality, wrongdoing, and oppression. He admonishes you that you may take heed.* So take heed, my beloved brother and sister. Remember Allah, the Most Great, and He will remember you. Thank Him for His favours, and He will increase you. And the first way you begin all of it, tomorrow, is by winning the first moment.

☰ Your Action Plan: Win the First Moment

Don't just read — choose what you will act on this week.

1 Leap for Fajr without negotiating

When the alarm calls, rise the very instant you hear it, before your nafs opens negotiations. Conquer the soul at dawn and you rehearse the exact skill you need at every temptation of the day.

DAILY

Make it last: keep it daily until it becomes second nature — a habit for the rest of your life.

2 Say innā lillāh at the small strikes

Spilled coffee, traffic, a broken plan, a careless word. Meet each one quietly with innā lillāhi wa innā ilayhi rāji'ūn, then al-ḥamdu lillāh when relief returns. Wear the groove into your heart before the great blow lands.

DAILY

Make it last: keep it daily until it becomes second nature — a habit for the rest of your life.

3 Take up the shield of fasting

Fast even one day, Monday or Thursday, following the Sunnah. Let the hunger and thirst train your body to hear the word 'no' and obey it, so you can say it to every other desire.

THIS WEEK

Make it last: once this first week is done, don't stop — carry it on as a lifelong habit.

4 Put a pause before the phone

When the restless urge to scroll rises, place one breath of remembrance between the impulse and the screen. Reach for Allah's dhikr once instead, and watch the soul return to your command.

DAILY

Make it last: keep it daily until it becomes second nature — a habit for the rest of your life.

5 Reach for the refuge when anger flares

The moment your blood begins to boil, say a'ūdhu billāhi mina-sh-shayṭāni-r-rajīm. If that is too much in the heat of it, fall back to silence and abandon the argument for a house in Jannah.

THIS WEEK

Make it last: once this first week is done, don't stop — carry it on as a lifelong habit.

🚩 The 7-Day First-Moment Challenge

For seven days, fight one battle only: the first moment. Each morning rise for Fajr the instant the alarm calls, with zero negotiation. Each time a small frustration hits, catch it with innā lillāh before you complain. Each time your hand drifts to the phone out of habit, pause for one breath of dhikr first. Keep a single line each night noting one first moment you won and one you lost, with no shame in the losses, only awareness. Seven days will not make you perfect, but they will reshape the reflex, and a reshaped reflex, carried for a lifetime, is exactly what carries a believer all the way to the open book in the right hand.

✍️ Make it stick – and make it last

- ✓ **Write it down.** Put your chosen action on a sticky note on your mirror, desk, or fridge – somewhere you cannot miss it.
- ✓ **Print this plan** and tick each action off as you do it.
- ✓ **Set a daily reminder** on your phone or calendar so it never slips your mind.
- ✓ **Keep a one-line journal** each night – did I do it today? how did it go? – and watch your streak grow.

Don't aim for one good day or week – aim to keep it for life. A habit only counts once it outlives the challenge.