

Core Curriculum

6 Measuring Good and Bad in Islam

6.6 **Fate and the Consequences of our Choices in Islam**

INTRODUCTION

Bismillāhir Rahmānir Rahīm, As-salāmu ‘Alaykum wa rahmatullāhi wa barakātuh. Peace be upon you brothers and sisters.

Welcome back to the Muslim Converts Channel! Fate is commonly understood as a series of developments or events that are beyond a person’s control. In Abrahamic religions, these events are usually regarded as having been determined by God Himself.

In Islam, there is no question that fate itself exists. God determines a large sequence of events in existence that are beyond anyone’s control. The continued existence of the world, the movement of subatomic particles, the existence of gravity in the universe, or the movement of photons across space are all physical events that are beyond anyone’s control.

Islam, however, also believes that we have free will, that we are able to make choices and through these choices, we can, through God's permission and will, influence some results. It is based on these choices that we make that Allah takes us up to task, whether we sin and ruin our souls, or rise ourselves spiritually and attain salvation.

If all was determined by God, then there would be no reason for Allah to send Prophets unto this earth, including the Prophet Muhammad (s) as well as his successors, the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (as).

In this lesson, we want to briefly look at the consequences of the free will that Allah has given us. As a matter of expediency, we won't dwell into philosophical discussions of predestination (called qadar in Arabic) vs. free will as those kinds of discussions are rather complex and require care, something which a 10 minute lecture cannot cover.

BODY OF TEXT

Corruption has appeared throughout the land and sea by [reason of] what the hands of people have earned so He may let them taste part of [the consequence of] what they have done that perhaps they will return [to righteousness]. (Chapter 30, verse 41 of the Holy Qur'an)

And we will surely let them taste the nearer punishment short of the greater punishment that perhaps they will repent. (Chapter 32, verse 21 of the Holy Qur'an)

According to Islam, our free will in this world is limited. Much of what we think is under our control, such as the results of many of our actions, are actually not in our hands. There are millions of factors that play into how our choices and events unfold in this world.

These include our environment, upbringing and a predetermined set of rules, such as unconscious cultural and social norms that mediate our choices as well as the results of these choices.

For example, we may be raised in such a way that would make us more likely to commit a deed that society would consider a crime (like not paying taxes) and based on that deed, a set of rules (beyond our control) would be applied to us, like imprisonment.

Despite our environment, we still have some limited maneuverability in choosing the direction we want to take in life. Allah sends Prophets and Divine Books in our lives to show us, despite what our environment tells us, what right and wrong is. Based on these teachings, we are given some space in making some form of God-directed, rational choice.

The primary recipient of these consequences are our selves, that is, our souls. Every single choice that we make in this world brings about two things, either they take us away from God, or they strengthen the bond and relationship we have with the Creator of the world.

The Messenger of Allah (s) taught us that we are either servants of this world or servants of God. The Qur'an instructs us to prayer and repentance so as to exalt us to God.

By pulling us into friendship with God, we free ourselves from the environmental dictates of our surroundings. For example, the world may tell us that we have no hope in healing our sickness, whereas the verses we recite in our prayers tells us that no, God is the owner and master of all of existence and that through prayer, we may find healing despite what doctors tell us.

Through a relationship with God, limited choice becomes vastly expanded. But this doesn't come easy. As humans, we are very prone to sink into a life of heedlessness and forgetfulness. For this reason, God makes sure that our actions in this world also have consequences in this world.

When we do evil deeds, God makes us see their consequences in this world so that we may pay heed and desist from what may destroy us. Through these tests and "karmas," God betters us as human beings so that we may be better examples for others, create better families and better communities (in our case, Muslim communities).

The tests we face in this life, and the karma that Allah makes us see in this world are meant to build us spiritually. They are there to guide us in making better, "free-er" choices which only a state of closeness to God

can produce.

Verily, We shall put you to test with some fear, and hunger, and with some loss of wealth, lives, and offspring. And (O Muhammad) convey good tidings to those who are patient, who say, when inflicted by hardship, "Verily we are of God and verily to Him shall we return;" upon them is the blessings of Allah and His mercy. (Chapter 2, verse 155 of the Holy Qur'an)

So whatever actions we choose, along with the intentions behind them, find their greatest impact internally. Our internal states cannot be discounted for these are the primary determinants of how others are affected by us. The effect that our words have, on their own, are limited.

Until Next Time, Thank you for watching. As-salāmu 'Alaykum wa rahmatullāhi wa barakātuh