

PERFECTION (WORDS & DEEDS)

Say: Beware, O people of Bahá, lest ye walk in the ways of them whose words differ from their deeds. Strive that ye may be enabled to manifest to the peoples of the earth the signs of God, and to mirror forth His commandments. Let your acts be a guide unto all mankind, for the professions of most men, be they high or low, differ from their conduct. It is through your deeds that ye can distinguish yourselves from others. Through them the brightness of your light can be shed upon the whole earth. Happy is the man that heedeth My counsel, and keepeth the precepts prescribed by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

(Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, Page: 305)

76. O SON OF MY HANDMAID! Guidance hath ever been given by words, and now it is given by deeds. Every one must show forth deeds that are pure and holy, for words are the property of all alike, whereas such deeds as these belong only to Our loved ones. Strive then with heart and soul to distinguish yourselves by your deeds. In this wise We counsel you in this holy and resplendent tablet.

(Hidden Words, Page: 48)

The essence of faith is fewness of words and abundance of deeds; he whose words exceed his deeds, know verily his death is better than his life.

(Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, Page: 156)

The second attribute of perfection is justice and impartiality. This means to have no regard for one's own personal benefits and selfish advantages, and to carry out the laws of God without the slightest concern for anything else. It means to see one's self as only one of the servants of God, the All-Possessing, and except for aspiring to spiritual distinction, never attempting to be singled out from the others. It means to consider the welfare of the community as one's own. It means, in brief, to regard humanity as a single individual, and one's own self as a member of that corporeal form, and to know of a certainty that if pain or injury afflicts any members of that body, it must inevitably result in suffering for all the rest.

(The Secret of Divine Civilization, Page: 39)

Therefore strive that your actions day by day may be beautiful prayers. Turn towards God, and seek always to do that which is right and noble.

(Paris Talks, Page: 81)

Let the love and light of the Kingdom radiate through you until all who look upon you shall be illumined by its reflection.

(Promulgation of Universal Peace, Page: 8)

Humanity is not perfect. There are imperfections in every human being, and you will always become unhappy if you look toward the people themselves. But if you look toward God, you will love them and be kind to them, for the world of God is the world of

perfection and complete mercy. Therefore, do not look at the shortcomings of anybody; see with the sight of forgiveness. The imperfect eye beholds imperfections. The eye that covers faults looks toward the Creator of souls.

(Promulgation of Universal Peace, Page: 93)

A man who does great good, and talks not of it, is on the way to perfection. The man who has accomplished a small good and magnifies it in his speech is worth very little.

(Paris Talks, Page: 16)

THE PROGRESS OF THE SOUL

"Does the soul progress more through sorrow or through the joy in the world?"

'Abdu'l-Bahá. - 'The mind and spirit of man advance when he is tried by suffering. The more the ground is ploughed the better the seed will grow, the better the harvest will be. Just as the plough furrows the earth deeply, purifying it of weeds and thistles, so suffering and tribulation free man from the petty affairs of this worldly life until he arrives at a state of complete detachment. His attitude in this world will be that of divine happiness. Man is, so to speak, unripe: the heat of the fire of suffering will mature him. Look back to the times past and you will find that the greatest men have suffered most.'

'He who through suffering has attained development, should he fear happiness?'

'Abdu'l-Bahá. - 'Through suffering he will attain to an eternal happiness which nothing can take from him. The apostles of Christ suffered: they attained eternal happiness.'

'Then it is impossible to attain happiness without suffering?'

'Abdu'l-Bahá. - 'To attain eternal happiness one must suffer. He who has reached the state of self-sacrifice has true joy. Temporal joy will vanish.'

'Can a departed soul converse with someone still on earth?'

'Abdu'l-Bah'a. - 'A conversation can be held, but not as our conversation. There is no doubt that the forces of the higher worlds interplay with the forces of this plane. The heart of man is open to inspiration; this is spiritual communication. As in a dream one talks with a friend while the mouth is silent, so is it in the conversation of the spirit. A man may converse with

the ego within him saying: "May I do this? Would it be advisable for me to do this work?" Such as this is conversation with the higher self.'

(Paris Talks, Page: 178)

"The more difficulties one sees in the world the more perfect one becomes. The more you plough and dig the ground the more fertile it becomes. The more you cut the branches of a tree, the higher and stronger it grows. The more you put the gold in the fire the purer it becomes. The more you sharpen the steel by grinding the better it cuts. Therefore, the more sorrows one sees the more perfect one becomes. That is why, in all times the Prophets of God have had tribulations and difficulties to withstand. The more often the captain of a ship is in the tempest and difficult sailing the greater his knowledge becomes. Therefore I am happy that you have had great tribulations and difficulties. For this I am very happy that you have had many sorrows. Strange it is that I love you and still I am happy that you have sorrows."

('Abdu'l-Bahá: Star of the West, Vol.XIV, No.2, p.41)

"In this day everyone must be tested,....The 'first fruits' must be ripened in spirit, mellowed in love, and consumed by their self-sacrifice and severance."

('Abdu'l-Bahá: Star of the West, Vol.VI, No. 6, p.45)

"Consider to what extent the friends of God have been urged and exhorted in the Will and Testament as well as in the holy Tablets and Writings to show forth uprightness, good will, tolerance, sanctity, detachment from all things besides God, and severance from whatever pertains to this world, and to exemplify heavenly qualities and traits. First and foremost one should resort to every possible means to purge one's heart and motives, otherwise it would be futile to engage in any form of enterprise. It is also essential to abstain from hypocrisy and blind imitation, inasmuch as their foul odour would soon be detected by every man of understanding and wisdom. Moreover the friends must observe the specific times for the remembrance of God, meditation, devotion and prayer, as it is highly unlikely, nay, rather impossible, that any enterprise should prosper and develop short of divine bestowals and confirmation. One can hardly imagine what a great influence genuine love, truthfulness and purity of motives exert on the souls of men. But these traits cannot be acquired unless every believer makes a daily effort to gain them...."

"It is primarily through the potency of noble deeds and character, then by the power of exposition and proofs that the friends of God should demonstrate to the world the fact that what has been promised by God is bound to happen, that it is already taking place and that the divine glad-tidings are clear, evident and complete. Indeed, unless some distinguished souls set foot in the arena of service and shine forth resplendent in the assemblage of men, the task of vindicating the truth of this Cause before the eyes of the enlightened men of the world would be a formidable one. However, should the friends become the embodiment of goodly character and virtue, words and arguments would not be necessary. Their very deeds would serve as eloquent testimony and their noble conduct would ensure the preservation, integrity and glory of the Cause of God."

(Shoghi Effendi, from letter dated December 19, 1923)

The Sin-covering Eye

On no subject are the Bahá'í teaching more imperative and uncompromising than on the requirement to abstain from faultfinding. Christ spoke very strongly on the same subject, but it has now become usual to regard the Sermon on the Mount as embodying

"Counsels of Perfection" which the ordinary Christian

cannot be expected to live up to. Both Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá are at great pains to make it clear that on this subject They mean all They say. We read in the Hidden Words: -

O Son of Man! Breather not the sins of others so long as thou art thyself a sinner.

Shouldst thou transgress this command, accursed wouldst thou be, and to this I bear witness.

O Son of Being! Ascribe not to any soul that which thou wouldst not have ascribed to thee, and say not that which thou doest not. This is My command unto thee, do thou observe it.

'Abdu'l-Bahá tells us: - To be silent concerning the faults of others, to pray for them, and to help them, through kindness, to correct their faults. To look always at the good and not at the bad. If a man has ten good qualities and one bad one, to look at the ten and forget the one; and if a man has ten bad qualities and one good one, to look at the one and forget the ten.

Never to allow ourselves to speak one unkind word about another, even though that other be our enemy.

(Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era, Page: 82)

26. O SON OF BEING! How couldst thou forget thine own faults and busy thyself with the faults of others? Whoso doeth this is accursed of Me.

(Hidden Words, Page: 10)

27. O SON OF MAN! Breathe not the sins of others so long as thou art thyself a sinner. Shouldst thou transgress this command, accursed wouldst thou be, and to this I bear witness.

(Hidden Words, Page: 10)

29. O SON OF BEING! Ascribe not to any soul that which thou wouldst not have ascribed to thee, and say not that which thou doest not. This is My command unto thee, do thou observe it.

(Hidden Words, Page: 10)

He hopes you will all study deeply the teachings, as this alone will give you the foundation you need for your services to the Faith. You should also make every effort to distinguish your lives from those of other young people of your generation, and thus, by the display of Bahá'í virtues and morals, attract the interest and esteem of others.

(The Light of Divine Guidance, Volume 1; Page: 105)