

Internal Struggle Against Sin

by **THE PRODUCTIVE SERVANT**

In an ideal state, temptations of strong desires of the "body" (from the carnal mind) are supposed to be subordinate to desires of the "mind" (conscience). And they are harmonized through the perfection of the original mind–body relationship.

The more the original mind dominates human thinking and behaviour, the closer the conscience comes to directing people according to absolute standards of beauty, truth and goodness.

INTERNAL STRUGGLE AGAINST SIN

By The Productive Servant @ 2025

DEDICATIONS

I borrowed or adapted liberally from The Bible, The Quran and Jehovah's Witness JW.ORG. I also adapted material from "A guide for the new Muslim" by Jamaal al-Din M. Zarabozo, for which I give thanks to Abdul Razak Ibrahim. I pray that God accepts this work from me as being solely for His sake, I ask God to forgive me for my shortcomings and to guide me to the Straight Path.

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Inspiration from Grace Idowu medley of gospel songs.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE

PREVIEW

- Preface 6
- Introduction 9
- My Glossary & Scripture Definitions 25

CHAPTER 1: GOD'S REVELATIONS 53

CHAPTER 2: GOD'S CREATION AND IT'S DUAL NATURE 74

- Evil Dwells in Us
- God Lives in Us
- God's Holy Spirit is Present Through our Conscience
- Truth and Falsehood
- Positive and Negative Emotions
- Good and Evil - (Invitations of Wisdom and Folly)

CHAPTER 3: WORSHIPPING GOD 95

Features of Worshipping God 97

- Knowledge of God's Names and Attributes
- Belief in God's Revelations
- Belief in The Last Day and The Hereafter
- Belief in The Purpose of Life

PAGE

The Pillars of Worshipping God 103

- Pure Monotheism: Omnipotent and Omniscient; Worshipping God alone and not Associating partners; Gratitude to God that He is the Sole Rewarder; Hope and Fear of God
- Faith-True Belief in God
- The Divine Decree

CHAPTER 4: RITUAL ACTS OF WORSHIP 121

- Prayer and Praises to God
- Fasting, Giving Alms, Pilgrimage, Circumcision

CHAPTER 5: MUNDANE ACTS OF WORSHIP 143
(Ordering Good and Eradicating Evil)

CHAPTER 6: OUR MODERATE GOD 167

CHAPTER 7: PERCEPTION AND ACCEPTANCE 175
OF THE ACTUAL REALITIES OF LIFE

CHAPTER 8: PURIFICATION OF THE SOUL 182
(The Transformative Process)

- Examining Your Motives
- Decluttering Your Thoughts
- Personal Jihad

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION 230

PREFACE

The information contained in this book itself is not new, it was known before hand, however, that was knowledge that was dead, cold, still, and unmoving information. The principles emphasized in this work brings this information and presents it in a practical, emotional and moving setting.

This, God willing, will change one's perspective about the subject as if it were not what was known before. The verses quoted did not change but we will be the ones who will change, the outcome of this will be noticeably clear and real.

Let us look at this short synopsis of the cycle of a person's spiritual struggle against sin and God's guidance and provision to overcome sin:
An 'anchor' stabilizes a ship during a storm and stops it from drifting on to 'rocks.' But an anchor is useful only if the 'chain' that attaches it to the 'ship' does not break. Just us 'rust' weakens an anchor chain, so unresolved doubts weaken our faith.

Hebrews 6:19 “We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain.”

Here is a breakdown of the comparison:

- The Ship represents a person's journey of life worshipping God.
- Storm represents trials and challenges that test faith.
- Anchor represents hope and faith in God.
- Chain represents the strength and durability of endurance and obedience that is essential to a firm faith.
- Rust represents temptations and doubts which when left unchecked weakens faith just like rust weakens an anchor chain.

Temptations when unavoided poses a threat to a life of obedience and discipline. Just as a strong, rust-free chain is essential for the anchor to function. A firm faith requires the awareness and endurance for the solutions to unresolved doubts. Why? Because one of our enemies never sleeps, that enemy is the temptation to do what is wrong.

The rocks represent the wages of sin. Just as a worker receives a salary for their labour, a sinner receives death as a consequence for his or her actions. It signifies not only the

physical consequence of spiritual and eternal separation from God, but also the path to self-destruction and internal disharmony.

The passage uses the imagery of a ship's anchor to illustrate the strength and reliance of hope in faith, comparing it to the stability provided by an anchor chain. The passage suggests that hope, like a strong anchor, provides stability and guidance, particularly in times of difficulty.

The passage emphasizes that faith, like a ship's anchor, should be strong, dependable and capable of withstanding the storms of life. It also highlights the importance of addressing and resolving doubts to maintain that strength.

INTRODUCTION

This book is meant to encourage one another to embrace faith within diverse belief systems of monotheism, which is belief in a single God, our Creator. This is different from polytheism, which is belief in multiple gods.

Rather than allow our diversity to divide us we must overcome our differences and welcome one another to confront sin as our common and greatest enemy.
Sin generally refers to an individual's thought, word, or deed that violates God's will as in divine commandments or moral laws.

Apart from the "original sin", the nature of sin can be classified in both Christianity and Islam as:
Disobedience - Sin as a violation of God's commandments or laws.
Rebellion - Sin as a rejection of God's authority or will.
Moral failure - Sin as a failure to meet moral standards or expectations, as in adherence to the moral precepts.

1 John 1:8-9 “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

Quran 7:172-173 “And remember when your Lord brought forth from the loins of the children of Adam their descendants and had them testify regarding themselves. Allah asked, “Am I not your Lord?” They replied, “Yes, You are! We testify.” He cautioned, “Now you have no right to say on Judgment Day, We were not aware of this.”

Of similar import is Romans 3:23 “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”. Romans 3:10 “As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one”. These verses demonstrate that sin is inherent in humans, and that no one is exempt from the human condition of sin. Therefore one cannot achieve God’s standard of perfection on their own, it highlights the universal need for salvation and God’s grace.

It is therefore a foundational truth that all humans need to understand that temptation when not checked leads to sin, which in turn leads to consequences such as:

- Spiritual separation - Sin can lead to a separation from God or a spiritual disconnect.

- Moral corruption - Sin can lead to moral decay or corruption.
- Punishment or consequences - Sin can result in punishment or negative consequences.

As a reflection of divine love and grace, the Scriptures give directions as to how to gain salvation, overcome sin and benefit from God's guidance related to:

- Repentance - The act of turning away from sin and towards God.
- Forgiveness - God's forgiveness of sin and restoration of relationship.
- Redemption - The idea of being saved or redeemed from sin through divine intervention.

The struggle against sin is a never-ending battle that requires intentionality and a consolidated monolithic religious approach. Thus, the last chapter of this book discusses in detail the transformative process of Purification of the soul, as a strategy to attain higher spiritual consciousness and moral growth.

Romans 1:10-12 "For I'm longing to see you, that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, for you to be made firm, or rather that we may have an interchange of encouragement

by one another's faith, both yours and mine. That is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine."

Each has something of value that the other does not possess. A humble person views others as being superior to him Philippians 2:3-4 "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves."

Pure monotheism is the only belief system that provides the true answers to the questions that perplex all humans i.e. Where have I come from? Where am I headed? For what purpose do I exist?

Where have I come from? Genesis 1:27 "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." Signifying that both genders share this divine likeness (image of God) and are fundamental in God's design for humankind. This concept has significant implications for how humans are viewed and treated. It underscores the inherent worth and dignity of every individual, regardless of background, social status, or any other differentiating factor.

Image of God, "Imago Dei" in Latin, is a concept that has been interpreted in many ways. It signifies that humans possess inherent dignity, value, and a capacity for relationship with God and others.

It is important to note that "image of God" does not imply a physical resemblance. Instead, it refers to the unique qualities God bestowed upon humanity to possess spiritual and moral characteristics that distinguish them from the rest of creation.

Humans are honoured creatures created by God in a unique way and having the freedom to choose to be among the noblest of creatures or among the basest of all creatures.

Quran 17:70 states that "God has honored the children of Adam, carrying them on land and sea, providing them with good things, and preferring them above many other creatures." The verse emphasizes human dignity and God's favor upon humanity, highlighting physical and material provisions as well as a higher status compared to many other creations.

Genesis 1:26 "Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in

the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." This passage speaks of humanity being created in God's image and given dominion over the rest of creation.

Genesis 1:28 "God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground." These verses establish God's declaration for the "Children of Adam," establishing a fundamental principle of human dignity, irrespective of individual actions.

Thus, God says "Verily We created man of the best stature (mould), then We reduced him to the lowest of low, except, those who believe and do righteous deeds, they shall have a reward without end (Paradise)" Quran 95:4-6.

The understanding of this message has significant implications on religious, moral, and ethical issues. This includes human rights, social justice, and the treatment of all individuals.

Where am I headed? Interpreted, refers to the choices we make in this life and its eternal consequences, impacting

where we spend eternity. The Scriptures explain two final destinations: heaven for believers and hell for those who reject God's offer of salvation.

Hebrews 9:27 “And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment.” Quran 99:6-8 “the human is headed back to a meeting with his Lord and Creator. This momentous occasion will happen after his death in this worldly life. There will be no escape from this encounter. At this time, the human will be fairly and equitably judged. All the deeds that he performed in this life will be weighed.”

Figuratively, it also speaks of the journey of life, emphasizing the importance of choosing the right path and living according to God's will. Matthew 6:33 “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

This is a promise of provision of true peace and care from God, if one pursues God's standard of what is right and good. It means striving to live a life that is pleasing to God by aligning one's actions with His moral principles. This involves prioritizing God's will, purposes and values in one's thoughts, actions, and priorities.

Matthew 6:20 “But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.” This verse points out that earthly possessions are vulnerable to various forms of loss, while spiritual treasures like faith are imperishable.

For what purpose do I exist? The human has been created for the noblest of all purposes, to worship God alone. In other words, to become a true and sincere servant of God all other goals that one may seek should be considered simply as secondary goals regarding the primary objective for the creation of humankind. The holy Quran states in Quran 51:56 that “Allah created jinn and humankind for no other purpose than to worship Him alone.”

Though secondary goals are sometimes admirable, these goals are usually tainted due to the inappropriate motives. One may seek them just for egotistic reasons, such as to be remembered or praised as the person who did such and such. God alone is completely free from desires and prejudice. Therefore, any genuinely good goal of this life could be considered part of the true worship of God.

Fulfilling one's true purpose and being successful upon meeting one's Lord is completely dependent on adhering to

a true and unadulterated monotheism. Three of the most well-known monotheistic religions are Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. All three of these religions believe in the same God, who is all-knowing, all-seeing, and all-powerful.

In all the religions of monotheism as found in the Torah, Bible and Quran, submission to only God is a common strand that runs through all the teachings. Submission in monotheism refers to the act of surrendering one's will entirely to God and worshipping Him alone. This means directing all acts of worship solely towards God, and not to any other deity or created being.

Our religious vows require us to live in Just, Truth and Love for one another and obedience towards God's Prophets and Messengers, all in an effort to become a true believer.

God says in the Scriptures, “The same religion has He established for you as that which He enjoined on Noah, that which We have sent by inspiration to you. He has ordained for you of religion what He enjoined upon Noah and that which We have revealed to you, and what We enjoined upon Abraham, Moses, and Jesus – to establish the religion and not be divided therein.” Quran 42:13

This verse highlights that the core message of all Prophets

and religion is the same and emphasizes unity and the establishment of a single, divinely ordained way of life. It engenders one to consider the diversity of people and their respective religion. For instance one can cite those who were raised to obey the Mosaic Law or African Traditional Laws just as Gentiles in Biblical times, whose background was different.

That is, each people had their Prophets, followed their teachings and were on the path of worshipping and submitting to God alone. The true and matured servant, throughout all ages and times believe in all the Prophets, they support all of them and defend their honour as well.

Quran 3:83 “O Prophet, We believe in Allah and what has been revealed to us and what was revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and his descendants; and what was given to Moses, Jesus, and other Prophets from their Lord—we make no distinction between any of them, and to Him we fully submit.”

This verse mentions by name six Prophets and without equivocation commands the bridging of peace and unity between the 1.9 billion Muslims and 2.4 billion Christians and Jews of the world. We must have the utmost respect and

reverence for the religious figures of these major monotheistic religions.

This verse also urges believers not to selectively believe in God's Prophets and reject others based on their own whims. It is the command of God to bear witness to the truth of every Messenger of God. Quran 17:110 “O Prophet, call upon Allah or call upon the Most Compassionate, whichever you call, He has the Most Beautiful Names.”

True believers should not scoff at others, taunt each other, or revile each other with nicknames. The Scriptures also states that believers should avoid being excessively suspicious and that some suspicion is a sin. Quran 49:12 “O believers! Avoid many suspicions, for indeed, some suspicions are sinful. And do not spy, nor backbite one another. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of their dead brother? You would despise that! And fear Allah. Surely Allah is the Acceptor of Repentance, Most Merciful.”

Literal or figurative translation given to the titles of God's Prophets, have caused disagreements and disaffection between religious belief systems and even religious sects. Sometimes disagreements are formed due to difference in interpretations of core doctrines, resulting in the rejection of

other Prophets and their Revelations that was handed to them by God.

Some may resort to semantics and logical gymnastics to affirm their faith and denounce other faith, often accusing the other of tainted monotheism for reasons like identifying other personalities with God or creating partners with God. The worst of all is claiming that one can only be saved or be entered into paradise through one and only one Prophet or Messenger. This is unfortunately done by partially or selectively citing Scriptural verses.

The disingenuous selection of verses to create distortion and disagreement between faith systems is heresy. The context of the verse is important because there is continuity and relation between verses.

This work does not seek to slight the reasons behind one's choice of name or description of God's Messengers or Prophets; it encourages one to overlook the nuances of alternative names and translations of titles for God's Messengers or Prophets. These human interpretations tend to overshadow the real import of God's message to us.

Any verse from any Book of God that says the condition for

God accepting your worship or going to Heaven, is dependent on which particular name you mention in reference to God or His Prophets can only be making that statement based on what is known or familiar to the person.

We know and are comfortable with only what we grew up with. How possible is it that in all of God's infinite attributes and completeness, He will not provide His religion and the guide to worshipping Him, to humankind in all corners of this world. It is not possible that some people will be disenfranchised because of geography or time.

Fortunately, what remains constant and incontestably common to the monotheistic belief system is our belief in the original Creator and only one true God. Our differences and what sets us apart is not greater than what we have in common in God.

Undoubtedly the Holy books were inspired by God and written by men. Although some Scriptures have gone through revisions and distortions during their preservation by humans, it is still a divine guidance for all aspects of our lives.

The Religion of God is not a man-made philosophy; its

teachings found in the Revelations or Scriptures come directly from the Creator. God's Revelations was not simply revealed upon a mountainside for anyone to read and understand on his own.

God chose to transmit Revelations to His Prophets to equip them with messages and guidance necessary for humanity. God chose Messengers and Prophets from among humans, giving them the noblest task of conveying His guidance to humankind.

It is the guidance that the Creator, through His mercy, has bestowed upon humankind, thus, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus Christ, and Prophet Muhammad for example, were all Messengers and Prophet's of God.

Matthew 10:41 “The one who receives a Prophet because he is a Prophet will receive a Prophet's reward, and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward.” The verse encourages believers to recognize and honour Prophets or righteous persons, for they will share in the blessings and rewards that God bestows upon His faithful servants.

By the wisdom of God, He did not allow the teachings of the

previous Prophets to remain preserved in a completely undistorted manner. Thus, all revelations have been revealed to affirm what has been preserved of the earlier revelations while correcting any distortions. Quran 46-69 says “Do not affirm what the people of the book say nor deny them. Instead say we believe in what has been revealed to you. Our God and your God is one and we submit to Him as servants.”

It is interesting to note how humans resist the dominance of a human over another human, readily recognizing that God alone is the law giver and ultimate authority. It is God alone who can lay down just laws and ordinances as He alone is completely free from desires and prejudice.

But most humans fail to realize it when a group formed for special targeted interest dominate them, and they are willing to submit to the manipulation, extortion, and oppression of that group. Many times, this is achieved through mystifying what otherwise is a simple and moderate path to worshipping God under a facade and charade of chasing a promise that has been repackaged and sold for selfish interests of riches or power.

This is idolatry and this evil can only be remedied by relying

on the word of God. There is the need therefore to reevaluate our attitude towards the gracious and merciful Creator who created us, provided for us, sent us guidance, warned us of a punishment for those who turn away from the truth, and promised a great reward for those who accepted the truth. We must be grateful to Him and submit to Him.

Human subjugation and dominance are one of the gravest tragedies in the history of humankind, second perhaps to the tragedy of humans accepting such a situation and willingly submitting to other humans. The worst form is worshipping other humans. This is completely degrading because all humans share the same essential human nature and weaknesses.

Rather than allow our diversity to divide us, we must overcome our differences and welcome one another.

Let us refer to the translations in this glossary, to help us relate to the information contained in the chapters of this book. The Bible like all other Scriptures is prophetic and parabolic. In view of this, let us carry out this exercise in good faith.

MY GLOSSARY
& SCRIPTURE DEFINITIONS

JUSTICE VS JUST: Justice is ordinarily associated with the concept of fairness that is derived, ascertained, and administered through a national justice system - a creature of human authority. Accordingly, the human brand of Justice is anchored to the application of evidence and filtered through man-made laws and equitable principles, to prove elements such as intent or ownership. These are made applicable to relationship between individuals or with societal institutions/bodies. Therefore, naked truth alone, is not the standard for evaluating the validity of a claim or motive within the institution of this type of justice. Indeed, for this truth to be deemed acceptable, it must be shown to have manifested in some element of proof, which can be tendered.

There is an alternate process that ensures a Just result. This involves persons, action or outcome that are based on notions of morality, culture or tradition. In this regard, the concept of morality, for instance, concerns the righteous application of natural laws, premised on God's tenets or

metaphysics. Under this model, what is said to be Just has a nexus with an asserted Truth. It is premised on a belief system and revealed through the quality of thoughts, speech and authenticity.

A Just deed comes from within, without compulsion and is based upon a desire to be fair. However, the outcome from the man-made justice contains technicality and is not always just. This literary work prefers to use the term "Just" instead of Justice since it advocates for an individual to voluntarily choose virtuousness rather than the recourse to national framework (witnesses, evidence, judges, laws, courts). Conscience must be the determinant and driving force behind an individual's choice to be good or bad, wrong or right.

GOD is referenced as *JUST:* God is described as just in several verses. One example is Deuteronomy 32:4 which states, “He is the Rock, His works are perfect, and all His ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright, and just is he.”

Psalm 11:7 “For the LORD is righteous; he loves righteous deeds; the upright shall behold his face. The Lord is righteous, he loves justice.” Isaiah 30:18 Emphasizes God as

just with the phrase, "For the Lord is a God of justice."

Jesus is referenced as *TRUTH:* Jesus is not just the path to God, but also the embodiment of truth itself. The following verses reference Jesus as "the truth."
In John 14:6 Jesus answered, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."
John 1:17 "for the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ," directly emphasizing the connection between Jesus and truth.

PARADISE is referenced as *PEACE OF MIND:* Matthew 13:44-46 "The Kingdom of the heavens is like a treasure, hidden in the field, that a man found and hid; and because of his joy, he goes and sells everything he has and buys that field."

Several Scripture verses connect heaven with a feeling of spiritual peace in the heart. This peace is a gift rooted in a relationship with God and is not dependent on external circumstances. This peace is not just the absence of conflict, but a deep, inner tranquillity that comes from knowing God.
John 14:27 "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."

Paradise is more than just living forever in a physical sense. It is a life of communion with God, experiencing His love and grace. While eternal life is often associated with the afterlife, the Scriptures also suggests that believers experience this quality of life now, in their relationship with God. It suggests that the spiritual contentment and peace found in faith are far superior to the pleasures and power that worldly people pursue.

The quote "If the kings and the children of the kings knew what felicity we are in, they would fight us over it with their swords" is attributed to Ibrahim Ibn Adha. It refers to the profound sense of joy, peace, and contentment that comes from a deep connection with God and devotion to a life of faith. So profound that even those with worldly power would desire it, even violently, if they understood its true value.

BELIEF IN GOD AS THE CREATOR: God's religion does not demand that humans believe in matters that go against their own nature and reasoning that God has given them. Instead, God calls upon humans to look at creation, at their own selves and everything around them.

We humans may never fully comprehend how it is that God has always existed and will always exist. We may not

understand fully how light works. Does that mean that light does not exist? Not at all. The mystery and transcendence of God cannot be plainly understood beyond the scope of observation and comprehension of human beings.

Revelation 4:11 "You are worthy, Jehovah our God, to receive the glory and the honour and the power, because you created all things, and because of your will they came into existence and were created."

Quran 13:2 "It is Allah Who has raised the heavens without pillars, as you can see, then established Himself on the Throne. He has subjected the sun and the moon, each orbiting for an appointed term. He conducts the whole affair. He makes the signs clear so that you may be certain of the meeting with your Lord."

God points to different aspects of His creation and describes them as signs for those people who reflect. Quran 3:190-191 "Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day are signs for those of understanding."

The expression 'clear proofs' refers to those signs which are likely to convince a truth-seeking and truth-loving person

that God is the original Creator of this universe. When humans honestly reflect upon the creation around them, very clear conclusions should result in the following:

- This existence could not have come about without a wise and intelligent creator.
- Such a wise and intelligent creator could not create this without some purpose behind it.

Some people think that having faith means believing in something without proof or a blind leap of faith, where one goes beyond what can be rationally accepted to mere blind acceptance and belief. This approach is very much contrary to religious conception. From a religious perspective, one's belief in God must be knowledge-based. So that both the heart and the mind find solace in it and submit to it with a firm resolution. Notice that belief in invincible realities such as God and Paradise or Heaven is based ultimately on faith and convincing evidence. By faith we perceive that the systems of things were put in order by God, so that what is seen has come into existence from things that are not visible.

Acts 17:24-28 "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. And he is not served by

human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. From one man He made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. For in him we live and move and have our being. As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'"

This passage states that God created all human nations from one man, determining their geographical locations and the times they would inhabit them. This was done so that people would seek God and potentially find Him.

The verse explains that faith is not just about believing in future promises, but also in past events like creation that are unseen and fulfilled prophecies. Faith allows us to understand that the universe was created by God, and what we see was not made from visible things. Clarifying that the visible world was not made from pre-existing visible materials.

The Scriptural argument is that it is not logically possible to come to any other conclusion. It also follows that, if a person

believes in God as the creator, by definition it is unbecoming of such a noble and great creator to create all of this order and beauty, and yet have no purpose or thought behind His creation.

This will be describing a creator that is childlike and unintelligent. It is hard to believe that a creator like that could possibly come up with a creation like the one everyone witnesses today.

Some do not believe in a Creator because they say that they believe only in what they can see. They make exceptions of course, for such unseen things as gravity, which is after all a reality. You can build your faith in the Creator by observing animals, plants and stars.

For instance, you may know that our sun, in addition to providing life giving heat, emits harmful energy in the form of ultraviolet rays. We humans are protected from this by our earthly home which has its own protective shield, a layer of ozone gas that filters out the harmful radiation. As the ultraviolet rays from the sun get more intense, the amount of ozone gas grows.

If this world was created, it is logical that there is a creator.

Just like any invention, the inventor reserves the rights to the creation, such that although the title to the product is passed onto the new owner, the property rights eternally belong to the Creator.

The legal tender of cash or your passport remains the property of the state even though it belongs to you. The government has rights over both the currency and your identification document, such that you can be prosecuted for infringement of the laws that govern it. Ultimately you are accountable and responsible to keep them clean and not damage or deface them. You are required to return same to the "creator" after its useful life.

My grandmother told me that our organs are loaned to us by God for a period of about seventy years, amortized. As we age, with each year that passes by, we lose the effectiveness of our organs until they can barely function. At every stage of our lives, we can value our life by reducing balance, until our book value is nil when we return to our Creator.

The whole nature of this existence points to the Creator being one of very special character who would not create anything of this nature simply in sport or jest. That Creator could only be God with His perfect and sublime attributes.

This creation needs God, and it could not be just and proper except under the control of God, exactly as God is.

A second very important conclusion that one can derive by simply pondering over this creation is that the one who created this from nothing can easily recreate it. If He has the ability to recreate things after their demise, this means He has the ability to resurrect them and bring them all in front of Him. This thought obviously has either ominous or promising outcomes for humans and their behaviour in this world.

REPENTANCE AND GOD'S FORGIVENESS: The word repentance (tawbah) basically denotes 'to come back, to turn towards someone'. On the part of man, this signifies that he has given up his attitude of disobedience and has returned to submission and obedience to God. The same word used in respect of God or forgiveness means that He has mercifully turned towards His repentant servant so that the latter has once more become an object of His compassionate attention.

JUDGEMENT DAY: A time of complete restoration and fulfilment of the prophesy of eternal life after death, where individuals will be judged by God and rewarded with

Paradise (Jannah) or punished in Hell (Jahannam) based on their beliefs and deeds.

The one who negates resurrection is expecting God to treat the wrongdoers like the pious people. God makes it clear that such will never be the case, highlighting that such thoughts can only come from those who don't believe in God.

THIS LIFE AND THE HEREAFTER: The Scriptures point out that life on earth is a test, and that the Afterlife is where individuals will face the consequences of their actions. A central concept is the Day of Judgment, where God will weigh each person's deeds to determine their fate.
The Scriptures teach us that one's actions in this life directly influence their experience in the afterlife, with virtuous deeds leading to reward and bad deeds leading to punishment. It is the blessings of God as a reward for one's virtuous deeds that presents eternal life as a gift from God, not something earned through virtuous deeds.

This life of fulfilment includes joy, peace, and happiness which begins in this life and continues into eternity. It is a quality of life that transcends the physical, focusing on a relationship with God's will of being righteous.

Paradise is often described with key features including lush gardens and natural surroundings, and proximity to God. Inhabitants will enjoy luxurious abodes with access to anything they desire. Indicating a life of comfort and luxury. Inhabitants of Paradise will have beautiful companions and be eternally youthful, healthy, and free from sicknesses. People will be reunited with loved ones and enjoy close companionship. A place of peace, free from fear and sorrow. There will be no suffering, pain, or negative emotions. (Quran 9:72, Quran 15:48 and Quran 44:51-55)

Revelation 21:4 “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away.”

The Scripture states that both Paradise and Hell are everlasting, with no end to the life in the Hereafter. The Bible and the Quran describe Hell as a place of fire and torment for those who have rejected God and committed evil deeds. The Quran details various levels of reward in Paradise and different degrees of punishment in Hell based on the severity of one's actions.

DISCERNMENT: This is not just about knowing right from

wrong, but recognizing good and evil, both in oneself and in others, and making choices that align with God's will. Discernment refers to the ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood in God's will from other influences. It is the ability to grasp how one idea relates to another and how it differs from another and to see what is not immediately obvious.

UNDERSTANDING: It is the ability to comprehend and analyse information to enable you to grasp its meaning and implications.

KNOWLEDGE: This refers to the fact or condition of being aware of something. Psalm1:1-3 “Happy is the man who does not walk according to the advice of the wicked, and does not stand on the path of sinners, and does not sit in the seat of scoffers. But his delight is in the law of God, and he reads His law in an undertone day and night. He will be like a tree planted by streams of water, a tree that produces fruit in its season, the foliage of which does not wither. And everything he does will succeed.”

WISDOM: Wisdom is more than just intellectual knowledge. It is the ability to apply knowledge skilfully and make wise choices in all areas of life, especially in relation to God's will. Proverbs 4:7 “Wisdom is the most important thing, so

acquire wisdom, and with all you acquire, acquire understanding." Proverbs 2:10-11 "When wisdom enters your heart and knowledge becomes pleasant to your soul, thinking ability will keep watch over you, and discernment will safeguard you."

In a biblical context, wisdom, knowledge, and understanding are distinct yet interconnected concepts. The Bible often portrays these three as interconnected and building upon each other.

DISCIPLINE: This can be emotionally and physically painful. We may feel that it is not justified or that it is too harsh. As a result, we may miss something special, seeing the discipline as an expression of punishment.

OBEDIENCE: It involves actively listening to and acting upon God's commands and instructions, based on love and reverential fear of God. It is a pathway to blessings, while disobedience leads to perversion for perdition.

We can learn to be obedient, like God's faithful servants learned obedience not from necessarily ideal conditions, but from conditions of affliction. In 1 Peter 5:10 we can learn obedience under challenging circumstances, "but after you have suffered a little while, the God of all undeserved

kindness, who called you to his everlasting glory in union with Christ, will himself finish your training. He will make you firm, he will make you strong, he will firmly ground you."

It is important to note that all the benefits of God's commandments accrue to the human. It is solely for his own benefit that God has provided His guidance to humankind. God Himself is not in need, but in His mercy, He has shown humankind the proper mode of behaviour to meet His approval.

When we obey rules and regulations from superior authorities, we benefit ourselves and others. How so? For one thing, we avoid the punishment that comes to those who disobey the law. Our personal obedience can enhance our reputation that may one day help protect ourselves. Matthew 5:16 "In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

1 Peter 2:12 "Maintain your conduct fine among the nations, so that when they accuse you of being wrongdoers, they may be eyewitnesses of your fine works and, as a result, glorify God in the day of his inspection."

1 Timothy 4:15 "Ponder over these things; be absorbed in

them, so that your advancement may be plainly seen by all people."

ENDURANCE: God does not shield us from temptations; our trials are temporary and brief when compared to the true peace and everlasting reward promised. This is the assurance to believers, that God is actively working in their lives, even through suffering, to make them stronger and more steadfast in their faith. Just like everyone competing in a contest, you exercise self-control with the aim of receiving a crown.

Of course, they do it to receive a crown that can perish, but for us, there is a kind of peace that this world knows nothing about. It is 'the peace of God,' the calmness that comes from overcoming temptations. 1 Corinthians 9:25 "Now everyone competing in a contest exercises self-control in all things. Of course, they do it to receive a crown that can perish, but we, one that does not perish."

Matthew 6:19-21 "So stop storing up for yourselves treasures on the earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal. Rather, store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consume, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

God assures us that He is near to all those calling on Him in prayer, if we rely on Him, we can endure any trial and even find measure of happiness when we suffer. Psalm 145:18 "The Lord is near to all who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth."

James 1:2-4 "Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you meet with various trials, knowing as you do that this tested quality of your faith produces endurance. But let endurance complete its work, so that you may be complete and sound in all respects, not lacking in anything."
We are more likely to endure the future great tribulation if we endure trials today. Romans 5:3 "Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance." Endurance will refine you, strengthen your faith that God is ready and willing to help. Faith, in turn, will help you endure the next trial.

RIGHTEOUSNESS: This refers to the state in which a person is viewed by God as acceptable, even guiltless.

HOPE AND FAITH (True Belief in God): Hope is the desire and expectation for a particular thing to happen. In religious terms faith, which is a larger term, is a strong belief or hope in the fulfilment of God's promises because He is Omnipotent and Omniscient. The divine elements of faith or True belief in

God is discussed in detail in another chapter.

Faith and hope are often intertwined, and one can strengthen the other. In a religious context, faith might be seen as believing in God's promises, while hope is the expectation that those promises will be fulfilled.

In sum, faith, meaning true and definitive belief in something, should lead to a corresponding submission to what one believes in. Otherwise, it is simply an acceptance of a fact, but it is not the divine concept of faith.

We are appreciating it even more the longer we must wait for it. It is something worth waiting for especially when we embody God's word, you will begin to evaluate your hope more highly than ever before. Whether we expect to enjoy everlasting life in heaven or on earth, we have a glorious hope that gives us reason to rejoice. And our joyful hope can grow even stronger.

Romans 5:2-5 “Through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance, perseverance, character, and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has

been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us."

THE SPIRITUAL "HEART": In religious context, the heart of a person is a whole concept used to describe the non-physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects of a person, which is largely and directly controlled by their level of faith in God. The elements and state of the individual's faith are manifested in the person's moral compass, their sense of right and wrong, and their capacity for kindness and empathy. Or the tendency to behave immorally and engage in acts that displeases God.

Psalm 15:1-5 "Lord, who may dwell in your sacred tent? Who may live on your holy mountain? The one whose walk is blameless, who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from their heart, whose tongue utters no slander, who does no wrong to a neighbour, and casts no slur on others, who despises a vile person but honors those who fear the Lord; who keeps an oath even when it hurts, and does not change their mind; who lends money to the poor without interest; who does not accept a bribe against the innocent. Whoever does these things will never be shaken."

This passage outlines the character of a person who is

worthy to enter God's presence and dwell in His “sanctuary.” Similarly, words like tent, temple, holy mountain have figurative meanings. This can also represent the condition of a person's heart, and whether the heart is in a conducive state to receive the Holy Spirit’s guidance, in doing God’s will.

“Circumcision of the heart” figuratively refers to purifying one's inner self, and not a literal surgical procedure. It refers to a spiritual transformation where a person's inner self is cleansed and renewed, moving away from sin and towards God. It signifies a deep, internal change that aligns the heart with God's will, rather than just an external religious act. Also referred to as Personal Jihad, this will be discussed in a subsequent chapter, as a subject of Purification of the Soul (heart). This is the transformation caused by removing sinful desires and inclinations.

THE HOLY SPIRIT: A few translations and meaning of God are: ‘I Am’, ‘He Will Be What He Says He Will Be’, ‘He Causes to Become.’ The Holy Spirit is God's active force, divine presence, and power in His activities in creation, putting animation in living things and providing us guidance through our faith in Him.

John 14:17 “the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.” This verse introduces the Holy Spirit as the **Spirit of truth - your conscience,** emphasizing the world's inability to receive Him due to its lack of spiritual discernment. John 14:26 “But the helper, the Holy Spirit, which the Father will send in my name, that one will teach you all things and bring back to your minds all the things I told you.”

Examining the verses that describe the Holy Spirit, one sees two forms:
Devine guidance is God’s active force which already dwells in us, providing humans with spiritual gifts and empowerment and guidance.

Distinct entity associates the Holy Spirit as God’s representation which is to come in the future.
Some Christian faiths view the Holy Spirit as a person of the Trinity. Muslims associate the Holy Spirit with Angel Gabriel (Jibril), or a force from God. The Scriptures for both Religions say that the Holy Spirit brought the divine Revelations to the Messengers of God.

The Scriptures also say that the Holy Spirit is a divine spirit or

power that supports, and acts as God's medium to Messengers, Prophets and human beings, e.g. Mary, Jesus The Messiah, and Prophet Muhammed. The Holy Spirit is associated with spiritual gifts, such as prophecy, healing and speaking in tongues.

Quran 2:87 "Surely, We gave Moses the Scripture and caused a train of Messengers to follow him and then sent Jesus, the son of Mary, with Clear Proofs and supported him with the spirit of holiness." Romans 5:5 "And the hope does not lead to disappointment, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, which was given to us."

GOD'S MESSENGERS / PROPHETS: A Prophet is someone who speaks on behalf of God. When a Prophet speaks for God, it is as if God were speaking. A Messenger is a Prophet who God has specifically chosen to deliver a new divine law or scripture to a specific people or community in a particular dispensation. Every Messenger is considered a Prophet, but not every Prophet is a Messenger.

Messengers are often considered to hold a higher rank than Prophets, as they are entrusted with delivering new divine laws. Moses, Jesus Christ, and Prophet Muhammad are

considered Messengers because they were all entrusted with new scriptures and laws, while Prophets like John the Baptist were not sent with a new divine law.

Quran 2:253 “Those Messengers, some of them We caused to exceed others. Among them were those to whom Allah spoke, and He raised some of them in degree. And We gave Jesus, the Son of Mary, clear proofs, and We supported Him with the Pure Spirit. If Allah had willed, those [generations] succeeding them would not have fought each other after the clear proofs had come to them. But they differed, and some of them believed and some of them disbelieved. And if Allah had willed, they would not have fought each other, but Allah does what He intends.”

Numbers 12:6-8 “he said, Listen to my words: “When there is a Prophet among you, I, the Lord, reveal myself to them in visions, I speak to them in dreams. But this is not true of my servant Moses, he is faithful in all my house. With Him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles, he sees the form of the Lord. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?””

Exodus 32:34 “Go now, lead the people to the place about which I have spoken to you. Look! My angel will go ahead of

you, and on the day when I make an accounting, I will bring punishment on them for their sin."

The scriptures also say that, God appointed Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. And He gave the Israelites visible evidence that He was guiding them by means of Moses. Exodus 13:21 "Now God was going ahead of them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day and by night."

God also appointed an Angel who was going ahead of the camp, guiding the nation into the Promised Land. Exodus 14:19 "Then the Angel of the true God who was going ahead of the camp of Israel departed and went to their rear, and the pillar of cloud that was in front of them moved to the rear and stood behind them."

Moses followed the pillar, which led Him and the Israelites to the Red Sea. The people panicked when they thought that they were trapped between the sea and the pursuing Egyptian army. They concluded that Moses was mistaken in bringing them to the Red Sea. But it was no mistake. God had intentionally led his people there by means of Moses.

God then delivered them in a most astonishing way. Exodus 14:26-28 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may flow back over the Egyptians and their chariots and horsemen.” Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea went back to its place. The Egyptians were fleeing towards it, and the Lord swept them into the sea. The water flowed back and covered the chariots and horsemen, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed the Israelites into the sea. Not one of them survived.”

For 40 years thereafter, Moses continued to depend on the pillar of cloud to guide God's people through the wilderness. For a time, God placed the pillar above Moses' tent, where all Israel could see it. From the pillar God spoke to Moses, who in turn conveyed His instructions to the people.

Exodus 33:7-10 “Now Moses used to take a tent and pitch it outside the camp some distance away, calling it the “tent of meeting.” Anyone inquiring about the Lord would go to the tent of meeting outside the camp. And whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people rose and stood at the entrances to their tents, watching Moses until he entered the tent. As Moses went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and stay at the entrance, while the Lord spoke

with Moses. Whenever the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance to the tent, they all stood and worshipped, each at the entrance to their tent." Psalm 99:7 "In the pillar of the cloud he spoke to them; they kept his testimonies and the statute that he gave them." The Israelites had ample evidence that God was using Moses to guide them.

According to Islam "Ruh al-Qudus," meaning the Holy Spirit in Arabic, is a term that appears four times in the Quran, often interpreted as referring to the Angel Gabriel (Jibril).

Quran 2:87 "Indeed, we gave Moses the Book and sent after him successive messengers. And We gave Jesus, son of Mary, clear proofs and supported him with the Holy Spirit." Mentioning the support of Jesus with the Holy Spirit is interpreted by many Muslims as referring to Jesus Christ as Angel Gabriel. In Islamic tradition, the Holy Spirit is linked to the revelation of Scriptures and the strengthening of Prophets, particularly Jesus Christ (Isa).

Beyond believing Jesus Christ as being Angel Gabriel, many Islamic scholars and commentators and some interpretations see the Holy Spirit as a broader concept representing a divine force or spirit that provides guidance,

inspiration, and support to believers.

The Holy Spirit in the Quran embodies both the specific angelic figure of Angel Gabriel and a broader concept of divine power and guidance that assists believers in their spiritual journey.

This interpretation is not identical to God, while powerful, the Holy Spirit is not considered to be God, but rather a creation of God. It is a force that is subordinate to God's will and commands. It is important to note that while both Islam and Christianity have a concept of the Holy Spirit, the Islamic interpretation of the Holy Spirit is distinct from the Christian understanding of the Holy Spirit as one part of the Trinity.

Let us look at how God's Revelations tell us how His Messengers have a lot in common, which establishes the oneness of God's Religion. Both religions acknowledge Jesus Christ's pre-human existence as Angel Gabriel, a spirit being before his birth as a human.

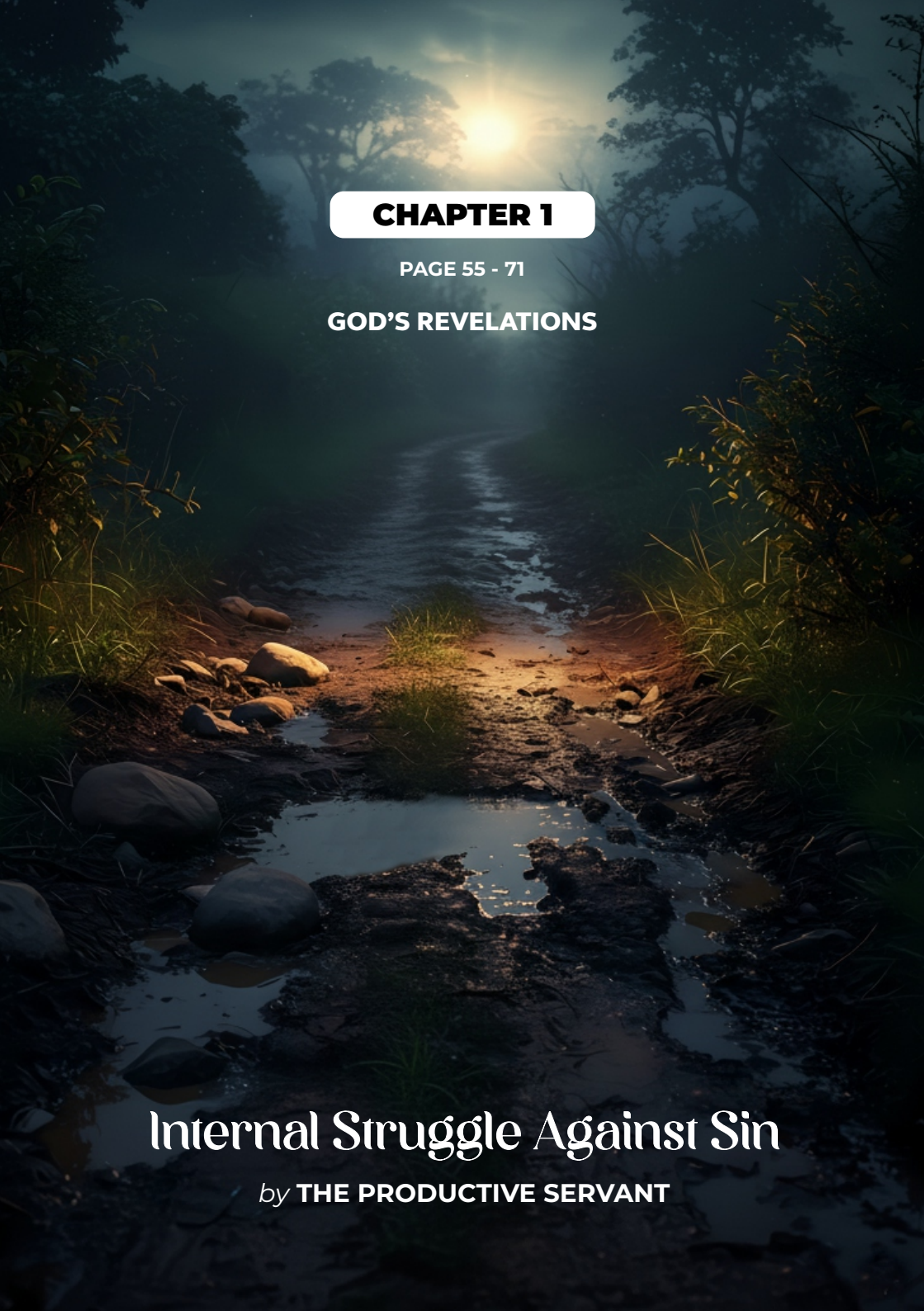
The core difference lies in the representations of the power and authority with which Jesus Christ will return. The Bible describes Jesus descending with the voice of an archangel. With a shout, and with the trumpet of God.

1 Thessalonians 4:16 “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.” Revelation 19:14 “And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.”

This is part of a larger narrative about Jesus's second coming. Which depicts Jesus Christ returning with an army of angels, and He is depicted as a conquering king, leading his armies to defeat the forces of the Antichrist and the False Prophet.

The challenge that some have with this assertion is the lack of explicit identification of the “Antichrist and the False Prophet.” This is the cause of the misconception that, reference is being made to Islam and Prophet Muhammad.

Symbolically, the interpretation of this verse could also mean the pending change of Humankind's DNA. This war will signify the eternal resolution of the inherent struggle between God and Satan, good and evil, leading to the ultimate triumph of God's forces.



CHAPTER 1

PAGE 55 - 71

GOD'S REVELATIONS

Internal Struggle Against Sin

by **THE PRODUCTIVE SERVANT**

Hebrews 4:12 "For the word of God is alive and exerts power and is sharper than any two-edged sword and pierces even to the dividing of soul and spirit, and of joints from the marrow, and is able to discern thoughts and intentions of the heart."

The Scriptures say that "everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock." Matthew 7:24-25.

CHAPTER 1
GOD'S REVELATIONS



God's revelations are the ways God communicates His existence, will, and purpose to humanity. They can be categorized as general revelation, seen through nature and creation, or special revelation, which is a more direct communication through Scripture or prophets. Religious traditions understand these revelations to provide a foundation for faith, guide moral living, and offer a path to salvation.

These are God's written revelations meant to be the source of complete guidance for human behaviour in all aspects of life, thus, for example, how to behave towards one's parents neighbours, others and even oneself are covered comprehensively. For example, although God's revelation is not a health-care book or a dietary manual, it does reveal God's thinking in these areas by exhorting us to ward off harmful things that could damage our body.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 “All Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial for teaching, for reproving, for setting things

straight, for disciplining in righteousness, so that the man of God may be fully competent, completely equipped for every good work." God says in Quran 5:48 "And we have sent down to you the Book in truth, confirming the Scriptures that came before it (Old Scriptures). So, judge between them by what God has revealed, and follow not their vain desires, diverging away from the truth that has come to you."

Truth is the foundation upon which accurate understanding and knowledge are built, it is the factual, objective reality that is supposed to guide our existence in this world. Just as a moral guide, is the principle of fairness and rightness, guiding ethical conduct and ensuring equitable treatment. It is the framework for upholding moral principles and ensuring that individuals are treated fairly.

These statements and definitions demonstrate that all revelations have been revealed in truth and just, therefore, personal judgements must be evaluated in the light of what is just and truthful.

Hebrews 5:14 "But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil."

Let us now unpack the text above in terms of the key words used, i.e.

"**Solid food**" refers to a deeper, more mature understanding of God's Word and His principles, not just the foundational truths (milk).

"**Mature**" implies that, spiritual maturity comes because of consistent practice and discernment.

"**Constant** use" emphasizes the importance of actively and constantly engaging with God's Revelations and applying its principles in daily life.

"**Distinguish** good from evil" implies the ability to discern right and wrong, truth and falsehood, in spiritual matters. As you read with truth and just, your understanding of the Scriptures grows to attain spiritual insights.

How do you "**train**" yourself to distinguish good from evil? This is explained in the transformative exercise called Purification of The Soul, explained in subsequent chapters of this book.

How can you find spiritual treasures when reading God's word? First and foremost, carefully analyse what you read and note how it relates to other things you know. Look for the meaning of a verse or passage and see ways in which you can apply it in your life.

As humans we have been divinely endowed with the amazing faculty of imagination to help us make Scripture accounts meaningful to our lives. Try to imagine the context and see yourself in the place of the key character. Try to see the things he or she saw and to feel the emotions that the character might have felt.

The next element or step is the practice of meditation. Meditation essentially involves thinking carefully about what you read and about how the information applies to you. It helps you to connect thoughts and gain a deeper understanding of a subject. Reading the word of God without meditation is like looking at a puzzle without assembling them.

Proverbs 2:4-6 “And if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.” When we eat food and digest it, we are nourished physically, likewise we are nourished spiritually when we study God's Word and meditate on it.

Not all of us like reading and researching, but God invites us to ‘keep seeking’ and to ‘keep searching’ for a deeper understanding of the truth. God does not speak to us

directly, as he did with Job, but He does speak to us through His Scriptures. He comforts us by giving us hope for the future. Romans 15:4 “For all the things that were written beforehand were written for our instruction, so that through our endurance and truthfulness we might have hope.”

It is important to note that, the more we meditate, the more our spiritual heart will absorb God's will. Proverbs 2:10-12 “When wisdom enters your heart and knowledge becomes pleasant to your soul, thinking ability will keep watch over you, and discernment will safeguard you, to save you from the bad course, from the man speaking perverse things.”

Hebrews 4:12 “For the word of God is alive and exerts power and is sharper than any two-edged sword and pierces even to the dividing of soul and spirit, and of joints from the marrow, and is able to discern thoughts and intentions of the heart.” This verse highlights the living and active nature of God's Word, actively working in the lives of believers. Penetrating, with the ability to cut through all things, separating truth from falsehood and revealing hidden motives in a person's heart.

Jeremiah 17:9 “The heart is more treacherous than anything else and is desperate, who can know it?” Only God can. This then clearly suggests that we should be cautious

about our own motivations and desires, as the human heart is inherently prone to deception and wickedness, and can be easily swayed by external influences or internal impulses.

Along similar lines, the holy Prophet Muhammed drew distinction between a clean heart and impure heart. “Beware!, there is a piece of flesh in the body; if it becomes good (reformed) the whole body becomes good. But if it becomes damaged, the whole body gets damaged and that is the heart.

One can understand why this is so when one reads in the Scriptures that the main motive for heretics or disbelievers denying the existence of God and rejecting God's word, is that of unjustified pride. Such a proud person feels that it does not befit him to be created or governed by a being acknowledged to be greater than himself and to whom he must be grateful and submissive.

The Scriptures encourages reliance on a higher power for guidance and strength, to achieve a state of consciousness and fear of God, leading to righteous conduct and obedience to divine command.

The Scriptures say that “everyone who hears these words of

mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock." Matthew 7:24-25.

How often have you turned to the Scriptures and read a verse that seemed written just for you? Yet, the Bible appeals to millions of people. All of us can sense God's personal interest in us, as we read His Word. We require discernment to receive God's wisdom in His revelations, not only to teach us as a group but also to instruct and comfort us as individuals for our everyday affairs.

This emphasizes that God's Word is not static or lifeless, yet, fixed in matters that need to be fixed for all of humankind until the Day of Judgment. Guiding, yet flexible or accommodating in those matters that need to be open to change due to the changing circumstances of humankind. God's Revelations is comprehensive in many regards, in the sense that, it applies to all human beings and is applicable by all regardless of where or what time they may be living in.
Notice that any attempt by a human being to construct a metaphysical concept or a system of life through human imagination, results in a concept or system that is

incomprehensive. It can only be partially valid, good for one time and place but not for other times and places, and appropriate for one set of circumstances but not for others.

People and nations basing their social, political, and economic systems on account of human experiences and philosophies are forever confronted with contradictions and dialectics. Often, these so-called cultural and societal norms like gun culture, sexual orientation and gender identity are formed in direct opposition to Scriptural prescriptions. Many cite constitutional and human rights as a primary reason, and go as far as, attributing the source of their misguided ways, to nature.

2 Timothy 4:3-4 "For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths." 2 Timothy 3:13 "But wicked men and impostors will advance from bad to worse, misleading and being misled."

This does not mean that the true believer never falls into sin. Indeed, true believers do commit sins. But if they recognize that what they did is not correct and it is inconsistent with their obligation of submitting to God's commands, then they

have not violated the soundness of their testimony of faith.

Experience has shown that the more a person looks at, listens to, or talks about unclean, immoral things, the easier it is for him or her to be inclined to wrongdoing. In this regard, there is a concerted effort to deceive us, and to make us believe that what God calls immoral and unclean is not wrong at all. Colossians 2:8 "See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ."

Those in whose control are this world's system of materialism, continue to actively blind the minds of people, to deny them the illumination of the glorious truth of God. 2 Corinthians 4:4 "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."

Consistently, the force of evil makes use of different means to confuse people so that they are unable to discern what is right from what is wrong. [Isaiah 5:20] Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.

It is no wonder that many movies, television shows, and websites promote ideas that go against God's righteous standards, trying to deceive mankind into thinking that unclean practices and lifestyles are harmless, in vogue and have no consequences. While we are being promised freedom, they themselves are slaves of fleshly desires and corruption, for if anyone is overcome by something, he is his slave. 2 Peter 2:19 “They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.”

Among some people, there is the tendency to mock at those who live by God's principles. These ridiculers are motivated by their own desires for ungodly things. Unfortunately, what many people do not realize is that the greatest way of spreading corruption and evil on earth is by turning one's back on the Revelation from God and encouraging people to forget about what He has commanded, thereby following one's own wants and desires. But when the heart is rendered empty of true belief in God it becomes highly prone to unethical behaviour and unjust practices.

Humankind is solely responsible for the decadent state of this world, filled with evil of all sorts and unbridled materialism. Free will is not exercised responsibly and

people do anything to satisfy their selfish desires, and in the process unleash hatred, enmity, aggression, oppression, violence, and wars among humankind. Ephesians 4:19 “Having gone past all moral sense, they gave themselves over to brazen conduct to practice every sort of uncleanness with greediness.”

Today, the media and social networks are used for spreading conspiracy theories and false news reports promoted by business and political leaders, to mislead and divide people. It is not surprising to see humans being used simply as tools for economic advantage and profit. Indeed, it is not surprising to see thousands of humans killed for the sake of economic or religious advantage. After all, coming from such perspectives, why should humans be treated any differently from other animals that are equally exploited, killed, and destroyed.

Jeremiah 5:31 “The Prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests' rule at their direction; my people love to have it so, but what will you do when the end comes?” This describes a state of spiritual corruption within the people of Judah. It states that the Prophets are prophesying falsely, the priests' rule by their own authority, and the people love this arrangement. The verse concludes with a question, “But

what will you do in the end?"

This verse is a warning about the consequences of corrupt and spiritually disobedient leadership, and people who are complacent in their spiritual state. They do not want to learn what the Scriptures say or to be held accountable to its standards. We certainly do not want to imitate those who are wilfully ignorant.

Clearly something must change unless we have resigned ourselves to the fulfilment of God's prophesy of "the conclusion of the system of things". The individual created by God obviously, cannot claim for himself the right to treat others in any way he wishes, for every human must realize that he did not create himself. God has provided guidance in relation to all spheres of life, whether it is with respect to one's parents, children, neighbours, others in society or even animals and inanimate objects such as wealth. There is a way of behaviour that is expected of a true believer.

Admittedly, it is a utopia for one to expect another individual to be a perfect Christian or Muslim overnight. However, the goal is to understand and accept in one's heart, the fear and love of God. Change starts when we learn to balance the expectations of our transient existence on earth with the

everlasting value of eternal promise. It behoves on a believer to learn this proper behaviour and to exert himself to live by it in his life to the best of his ability.

The original creation of God intended for the human body and spirit to grow to maturity in parallel, within the same time, so that there would exist a perfect balance between them. In the world as it is, however, there is a huge imbalance between the physical and spiritual development of human beings. Given the necessary physical conditions, all bodies grow to completion, but spirits distant from God, cannot reach maturity. Why then are people spiritually incomplete and immature?

This imbalance between spirit and body is responsible for the evils of humankind. In a natural order of creation, the desires of the mind take the dominant position over the desires of the body. Conversely, in the current state, the body usurps the role of the mind; the obvious outcome is a reversal of priorities in the mind itself, thus the needs of the physical being are placed above the needs of the spiritual being, contrary to the order of God's creation.

In this state, people lose their value as human beings, since it is the spirit that makes humans unique and central in

creation. Furthermore, every human must realize that he did not create himself. He is not his own lord. He cannot even claim for himself the right to use his own body in any way that he wills, although this fact is something that one does not hear often nowadays.

Romans 14:7-8 "For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone. If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord." Quran 51:56 "And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me." This emphasizes that humans are created by God and are meant to serve Him, not themselves. We are created by God and exist for His purpose.

Once you live in a society of alien culture and have chosen to live by 'liberal type' values, the only source of light for you is returning to divine guidance and preserving your original identity. Thus, in numerous places in the Scriptures, God makes it clear that all this merciful guidance is simply at the disposal of the humans for their own benefit. 1 Corinthians 14:20 "Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature."

1 Corinthians 15:33 "Do not be misled, bad associations spoil

useful habits." Quran 39:41 "Surely, we have revealed to you the Book O Prophet with the truth for humanity. So, whoever chooses to be guided, it is for their own good. And whoever chooses to stray, it is only to their own loss. You are not a keeper over them."

The mark of distinction between and among humans has nothing to do with their gender, ethnicity, race, wealth, sex appeal nor class. All of those are shallow or false ways of considering humans on standards that do nothing but denigrate humans. The only true standard for determining the worth of a human is his relationship with God who is just, and being just is the closest to piety.

The most honourable of us with God is that believer who has piety. Being just and truthful is the most important characteristic in the eyes of God, regardless of one's background or lineage. Micah 6:8 states that, "He has told you, O man, what is good. And what is God requiring of you? Only to exercise justice, to cherish loyalty, and to walk in modesty with your God." Quran: Surah 13:1 "These are the verses of the Book. What has been revealed to you O Prophet from your Lord is the truth, but most people do not believe." Even in tackling a single problem, one is incapable of looking at it from all sides, taking into consideration all the

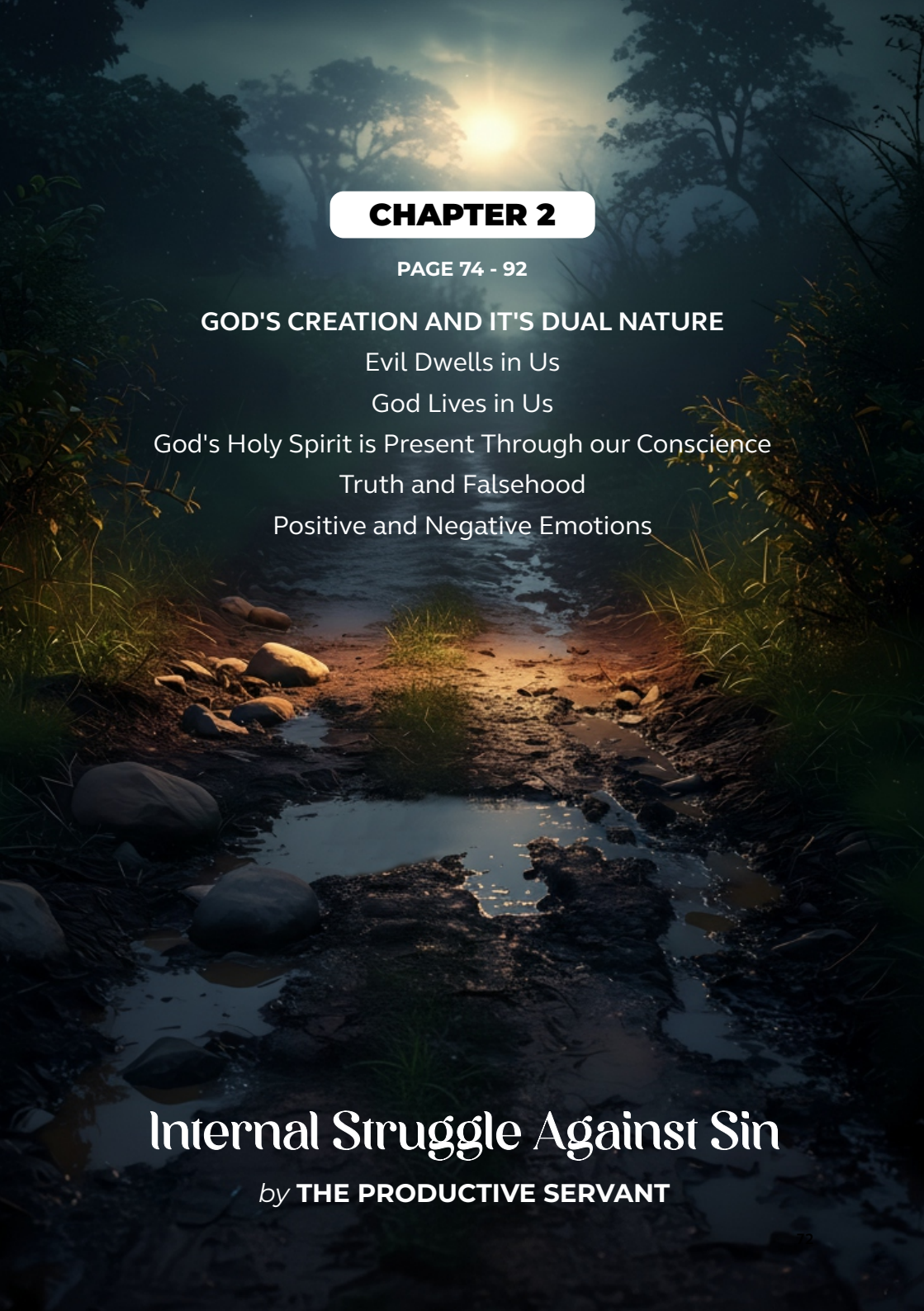
consequences of the proposed solution. Furthermore, every problem extends in space and time and relates to precedents and antecedents beyond the scope of observation and comprehension of human beings.

God's Revelations, however, is complete such that it is relevant to the most knowledgeable scientist as well as the illiterate. God's Revelations also covers both this Life and the Hereafter. The Scriptures offer complete and practical guidance for the affairs of this world, meant to establish a sound and proper society in this life, and not only for the Hereafter, Heaven or Paradise .The preferred terminology or theory of human final destination is inconsequential, what matters is your firm belief and practice of your dedication vow, that we are all accountable to our Creator at the conclusion of this system of things.

We can therefore conclude that no philosophy and no system of life produced by human thought, can have the characteristic of 'comprehensiveness.' At most, it can cover a segment of human life and can be valid for a temporary period. Because of its limited scope, it is always deficient in many respects and require modifications and changes in the original philosophy or system of life.

In God's scheme for His creation, humans have been given special talents and skills, making them distinct from other creatures. God has even subjugated everything in the heavens and the earth to the needs of humans. Truly, it is through God's Revelations that one begins to fully appreciate what a human is made of and how humans should be treated and respected. Through divine Revelations one can fully understand the many ways by which humans have been honoured by their Creator.

Through God's Revelations one discovers that humans are not in a battle against nature which needs to be conquered. One also learns that humans are not simply the “cousins of apes,” with no particular purpose or goal in this life. This marked difference is not a result of a random “evolution” but is the intentional determination of the Creator. God allowed humans to bear the greatest responsibility of being His faithful servants, by which they can attain the greatest of all rewards, which is to serve Him.



CHAPTER 2

PAGE 74 - 92

GOD'S CREATION AND IT'S DUAL NATURE

Evil Dwells in Us

God Lives in Us

God's Holy Spirit is Present Through our Conscience

Truth and Falsehood

Positive and Negative Emotions

Internal Struggle Against Sin

by **THE PRODUCTIVE SERVANT**

2 Corinthians 12:7–10 “Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a Messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

CHAPTER 2
GOD'S CREATION AND IT'S DUAL NATURE



To gain an accurate perspective on life, we need to gain insight into the two domains of existence namely **spiritual** world and the **physical** world. A corresponding duality in human composition is the spirit "mind" and the physical "body".

The physical body: The body is focused on desires related to the physical needs and susceptible to selfish and indulgent behaviour. It concentrates on earthly pleasures, material possessions, and social status, without focusing on spiritual growth.

The spirit mind: The mind is a place in humans where God can dwell and control the core of our spiritual life that is our emotions and individual ideals. The spirit mind is made up of two warring faculties; the carnal mind and conscience. Romans 7:22-23 "For in my inner being I delight in God's law. But I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me."

The carnal mind refers to the mind's faculty that focuses on earthly and fleshly pleasures as well as instincts, rather than spiritual matters. It is a mind-set where one prioritizes physical gratification and worldly pursuits over connection with God's ideals, often leading to selfish and indulgent behaviour. It is about living according to the natural human inclination rather than being guided by spiritual values.

The original mind is the voice of God in humans, speaking through our conscience. In both the Scriptures and literal translation, conscience is an inner voice or faculty that judges the rightness or wrongness of one's thoughts and actions. It is a moral sense that neither accuses or excuses, prompting individuals towards right action or warning against wrongdoing.

Conscience dwells universally in humanity, present even in those who do not have a formal moral code, suggesting it is a divine inscription on the human mind, acting as a guide to one's behaviour. Acts 24:16 “And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.”

In the inversion of what humans must value, people are controlled by their physical desires than the desires of their

spirit. This imbalance in body and soul relationship often causes one to be estranged from God's will, leading to struggles to recognize or appreciate religious and moral codes. This is what creates the type of chaos and suffering seen in the world today where rampant physical lusts are pursued at the cost of spiritual and moral values.

In an ideal state, temptations caused by strong “bodily” desires (from the carnal mind) are supposed to be subordinate to desires of the “mind” (conscience). They are harmonized through the perfection of the original mind-body relationship. The more the original mind dominates human thinking and behaviour, the closer the conscience comes to directing people according to absolute standards of beauty, truth, and goodness.

The physical body responds, by acting on the desires and instructions of the mind. The human mind is the spiritual channel of communication with God, its is supposed to supercede the physical body and provide direction and purpose to human existence.

This means that temptation originates from within individuals, not from Satan or external forces. It is the allure of our own desires that pulls us into temptation. James 1:14-

15 “Temptation comes from a person's own desire, passion, and lust. When this desire is conceived and indulged, it gives birth to sin, which then leads to death.” Evil therefore originates internally from the carnal mind of a person.

Evil Dwells in Us: You acknowledge powerful forces within you, when you get an urge to sin, and this battles with your desire to obey God. This can ultimately enslave you, to give in to worldly or fleshly sinful desires. [Isaiah 30:21] And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, “This is the way, walk in it,” when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 “Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a Messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” This passage is from Paul the apostle and describes the persistent and distressing experience that he endured.

The “Thorn in the Flesh” here, is a metaphor used in the sense of negative (bad) elements as opposed to positive (good) elements. Here, it is used in the sense of a figure or voice opposed to good, but representing the force of evil, that is temptation.

These verses suggest that the “thorn in the flesh” though a source of torment, was not punishment from Satan; but was to prevent Paul from becoming arrogant or conceited due to the extraordinary revelations he had received. He acknowledges that the thorn is a weakness, but he finds strength and joy in Christ's power, which is made perfect in his weakness.

Paul describes the “thorn in the flesh” here, as a Messenger of Satan sent to torment him. This supports not just the personal physical suffering, but also the eternal spiritual ramifications of cruelty or kindness.

This is a caution against the dangers of unchecked desires and the importance of resisting temptation to help one avoid the path of disobedience that leads to destruction. God proclaimed to Paul that, “my grace is sufficient for you”. And that His power is made perfect in weakness, which means that God had provided the strength and endurance to

overcome the affliction sent to harass Paul.

God in turn, promises that he will not let us be tempted beyond what we can bear. 1 Corinthians 10:12-13 “So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall! No temptation has come upon you except what is common to men. But God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear, but along with the temptation he will also make the way out so that you may be able to endure it.”

God Lives in Us: Unlike what is generally believed, God is not defined by space and time. He has a throne above the 7th Heaven or sky, but He does not sit on the throne. The whole of humankind cannot accept Him because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. John 14:17 “This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot accept, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He lives with you and will be in you.”

After all, God created us to do His will and gave us the gift of choice. He placed within us a spiritual need and made us in His image. As a result, we can draw near to Him and find delight in doing His will. Acknowledging that God sees into our hearts, souls, and thoughts helps us discern our

intentions; those that please or displease Him. In turn, we cultivate a genuine desire and joy in obeying God's law, a longing rooted in our spiritual nature.

Psalm 139:1-2 "You have searched me, LORD, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar."

God's Holy Spirit is Present Through Our Conscience: The Holy Spirit is the source of truth. It provides divine guidance and direction in life's decisions and journey. It comes internally, through a sense of awareness or intuition, rather than instincts or external sources. Isaiah 48:17-18 "I, Jehovah, am your God, the one teaching you to benefit yourself, the one guiding you in the way you should walk, if only you would pay attention to my commandments, then your peace would become just like a river and your righteousness like the waves of the sea."

The Holy Spirit will guide believers into all truth, not speaking on its own but guided by truths already known.

John 16:13 "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will

declare to you the things that are to come." This verse speaks about the role of the Holy Spirit, or the Spirit of Truth, in guiding believers towards a deeper understanding of God and His truth. The Holy Spirit will not introduce new ideas but will reveal truths that are already known and will also reveal what is yet to come. The Holy Spirit is unwavering and dependable; it is tangible through our conscience and made real in our minds.

These dual elements seem to run through the entirety of God's creation and is evident all around us, contrasting, yet still complementing each other.

Truth And Falsehood: Truth is a fundamental requirement that aligns with various principles found in various philosophies including legal proceedings, moral reasoning, and everyday decision-making in the worship of God. There is an inherent relationship between truth, wisdom, good, and justice. Every truth said can only be wise, pure, and fair.

Truth, like a modest little flower in the wilderness of life, is surrounded and almost choked by the luxuriant growth of the weeds of error. To find it you must be ever on the lookout. To possess it you must stoop to get it. Be not content with one flower of truth, rather gather, ever seeking for more.

In John 21:15-17, when they had finished breakfast, Peter's love for the truth was tested three times. Jesus asks Simon Peter three times, "Do you love me more than these"? Peter responds each time with, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you," and Jesus instructs him to 'Feed my lambs,' 'Shepherd my sheep.' These commands to Peter might relate to his ministry and leadership. However, considering the background of this account of betrayal and lies, the task "feed my lambs" could mean more.

This refers to Jesus as a lamb, emphasizing his sacrificial and obedient nature and role in redemption. Lambs were traditionally used as sacrificial animals, representing purity and innocence. 1 Peter 1:19 "but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot." This establishes that Jesus represents a lamb without blemish or spot, pure and true.

Let us reconsider Jesus's third question "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these." This refers to a more personal and affectionate inquest into Peter's betrayal of the truth (Jesus), in exchange for self preservation or rewards, referred to as "these things."

This is revealed by Peter's devastating feeling of guilt when

he realized the gravity of his denial, he broke down and wept bitterly. Just imagine Peter's anguish when hours later his friend Jesus was executed, how unworthy he must have felt.

Peter is forgiven and tasked with being truthful (feed my lambs), and to lead by example (tend my sheep).

God orders all faithful servants to fulfil the demands of truth and just, even if this should go against their own interests or needs. Quran 4:58 "Indeed, Allah commands you to return trusts to their rightful owners, and when you judge between people, judge with fairness. What a noble commandment from Allah to you! Surely Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing."

We cannot please God if we are dishonest, although many people today consider falsehood as a normal part of speech, we must stick to God's view on the matter. Not only should we desist from telling outright lies, but we must also desist from giving the wrong impression to others and avoid spreading harmful gossip.

2 Thessalonians 3:11 "For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies." Bearing false witness is frowned upon in both the Scriptures and in legal settings. This emphasizes the importance of truth and

just, by the condemnation of spreading false rumours or slandering someone's reputation.

Bearing false witness extends beyond legal consequences, it is seen as a moral failure that undermines truth and just. It can have dire consequences in one's spiritual growth and eternal ramifications. This lack of truthfulness diminishes objectivity in self-introspection, leading to self- denial of one's wrong.

If you see that a conversation is turning into harmful gossip, steer the discussion toward something positive. Since we live in a world where bad speech is rampant, we must work hard to ensure that our speech is one befitting of God's vessel, He will bless our sincere efforts to use our speech in a positive way. Mark 3:28-29 “all sins and blasphemies against God can be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is not forgivable and results in eternal condemnation.”

The hadith that says "speak good or remain silent" is a well-known saying of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) reported by Abu Hurairah. This tradition advises that those who believe in Allah and the Last Day should choose their words carefully, either speaking words that are beneficial and kind or remain silent instead of saying

something harmful or pointless.

Positive and Negative Emotions: Ephesians 4:31-32 “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you” This verse encourages believers to remove negative behaviours like anger, bitterness, and slander from their thoughts, deeds and speech. Rather, cultivate positive traits such as kindness, compassion, and forgiveness, modelled after God's will.

This involves unrelenting effort on our part especially because some of the negative personality traits are deep-rooted. For example, the scripture says that some people are prone to anger and disposed to rage. Proverbs 29:22 “An angry person will stir up strife, while a person given in to anger will commit numerous transgressions.” This verse highlights the dangers of an uncontrolled temperament, greed, envy etc., emphasizing its negative impact on relationships and character.

Controlling ingrained traits will require continuous effort. This is the internal struggle of wanting to do good but being unable to due to a conflict between negative and positive

emotions within oneself.

Paul states that when he desires to do good, evil is right there with him. He finds pleasure in God's law inwardly but sees another law in his members (body) warring against the law of his mind, leading him to be captive to the law of sin.

Good and Evil - (Invitations of Wisdom and Folly): This paragraph emphasizes the importance of choosing Good over Evil, Wisdom over Folly and Truth over Falsehood. It highlights the importance of listening to guidance and being open to correction, as these are key to learning and growing in our spiritual life. Although the choice is ours, we can compare the results of obedience with those of disobedience. Observe the kinds of problems people bring on themselves because they foolishly reject God's wise counsel. Then consider how much better life is when we obey God. Quran 41:46 "Indeed, those who deny the Reminder after it has come to them are doomed, for it is truly a mighty Book."

Psalm 32:8-10 "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go, I will counsel you with my eye upon you. Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle, or it will not stay near you.

Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the Lord."

James 2:8 "If you really fulfil the royal law according to the Scripture, You shall love your neighbour as yourself, you are doing well." The royal law of God refers to the commandment, love your neighbour as yourself. Loving your neighbour goes beyond just feeling good about others, it involves actively caring for their well-being and doing good to them. This is a foundational principle, emphasizing the fact that loving others is tantamount to loving oneself and fulfilling God's law. It is the second great commandment, second only to loving God.

This law encompasses the core principles of treating others with kindness, compassion, and respect, as one would expect to be treated by others. It extends to all people, regardless of their background or relationship to us. But if we continue showing favouritism, partiality or discrimination; we are committing sin, and are flawed in our claim to do God's will. This paragraph will contrast Folly's (evil) destructive path with wisdom's (good) invitation to a life of purpose and insight, which leads to eternal life.

Proverbs 9:13-18 "A stupid woman is loud. She is ignorant

and knows absolutely nothing. She sits at the entrance of her house on a seat in the high places of the city, calling out to those passing by, to those walking straight ahead on their way. "Whoever is inexperienced, let him come in here." She says to those lacking good sense, 'Stolen waters are sweet, and food eaten in secret is pleasant.' But he does not know that those powerless in death are there, that her guests are in the depths of the Grave."

This proverb contrasts the call of Wisdom with the call of Folly, highlighting the dangers of pursuing pleasure and ignoring instruction. Folly is portrayed as a loud, ignorant woman who tempts the simple minded with stolen pleasures, while the simple minded remain unaware of the deadly consequences.

Apologies to our precious better halves, as this is a symbolic drama. For these 'women' mean two covenants, each of the two women is described as extending an invitation to the inexperienced, those 'lacking good sense.' Each as it were, "Come into my house and have a meal."

This proverb uses personification to contrast Wisdom and Folly to illustrate the importance of seeking wisdom and avoiding foolishness. Wisdom (a good woman) invites all to

her feast and teaches valuable life lessons, while Folly (a bad woman) seduces with promises of pleasure, leading to destruction.

Good is portrayed as a wise woman who has built a house, prepared a meal, and invited all to partake of her feast. This invitation is an offer of, guidance, knowledge, and a life of truth and just. This choice represents the narrow path, characterized by sacrifice, obedience and endurance.

Evil, conversely, depicts the other woman as Folly, untruthful, loud, and seductive, who invites the naive and foolish into her house, promising a life of pleasure and ease. Mostly, promises like: stolen water is sweet, food eaten in secret is delicious. This represents the appeal of temptation which seems thrilling, but her path however, leads to destruction and ruin.

Similarly, there is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving, the joy of being generous and benefiting others brings a greater sense of well-being than simply receiving something. This idea resonates in religious and philosophical contexts, just like the scriptures say, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” The Hadith of Prophet Muhammad also states that "the hand that gives is better

than the hand that receives.

Proverbs 11:17 “The merciful man does good to his own soul, but he that is cruel troubles his own flesh.” This proverb highlights that kindness benefits the individual, while cruelty harms them. This part emphasizes that the acts of kindness and cruelty have both physical and spiritual impact on the person performing them.

Proverbs 19:17 “Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will reward them for what they have done.” It emphasizes the positive and negative consequences of helping or not helping those in need. Quran 55:60 “Is there any reward for goodness except goodness?”

Hebrew 13:16 “Moreover, do not forget to do good and to share what you have with others, for God is well-pleased with such sacrifices.” But whoever has the material possessions of this world and sees his brother in need and yet refuses to show him compassion, in what way does the love of God remain in him? This is consistent with God's Revelations. 1 John 3:17-18 “But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deeds and in truth.”

Giving in kindness and love is a powerful source of happiness akin to the feeling that comes from the fulfillment of nurturing. This natural sense of fulfilment is achieved especially when an act of good deed is performed unconditionally, without ulterior motives for personal gains or even for the purpose of self-aggrandizement.

Whether it is helping a friend, donating to a cause, or simply offering a kind gesture, research has shown that, performing acts of virtuous deeds has positive effects. It stimulates the brain's reward centres, by releasing endorphins and other feel-good hormones, this can contribute to happiness.

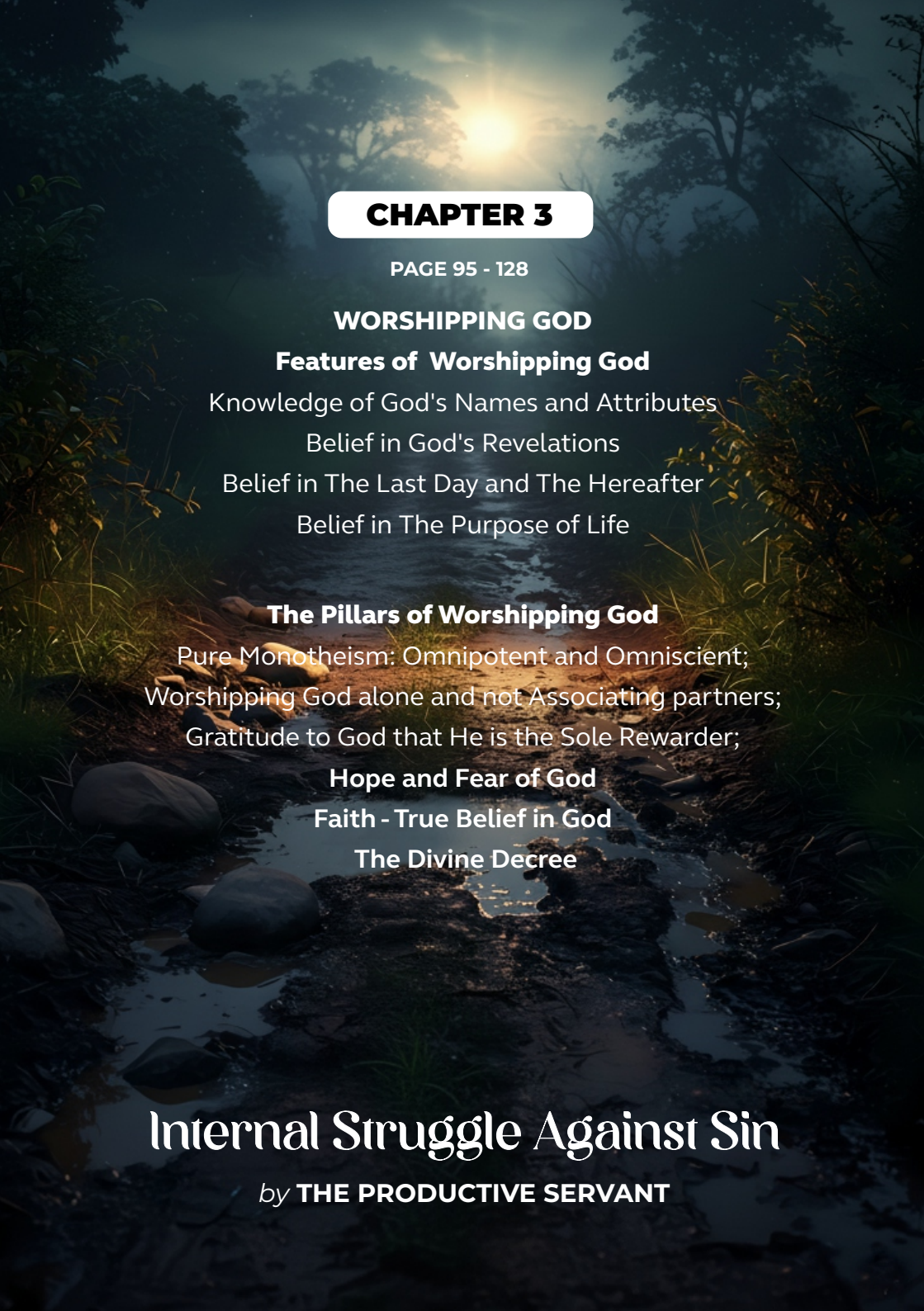
Forgiveness is also an act of giving. Notice the word ‘give’ in forgiveness. It is instructive to note that the perceived recipient in this exchange is not the main beneficiary, having this understanding can lead to complacency and laziness.

On the other hand, the giver who is parting away with, will naturally strive harder to improve the mind-set of being resourceful. Additionally, the giver learns to adapt to how to live without what has been taken away, both tangible and intangible.

This is the physical effect derived from choosing to do good

in order to make a positive impact on the lives of others, whether by easing their suffering, providing them with something they need, or simply bringing them joy. This feeling of making a positive difference without expecting material or spiritual reward, gives an inner peace that comes with a sense of direction and accomplishment.

Choosing to do good with the right motives will also insulate you from negative energy like envy, ungratefulness, bitterness, etc. This is due to the courage and confidence that innocence and purity of thoughts affords you, as you become an embodiment of contentment and well-being.



CHAPTER 3

PAGE 95 - 128

WORSHIPPING GOD

Features of Worshipping God

Knowledge of God's Names and Attributes

Belief in God's Revelations

Belief in The Last Day and The Hereafter

Belief in The Purpose of Life

The Pillars of Worshipping God

Pure Monotheism: Omnipotent and Omniscient;

Worshipping God alone and not Associating partners;

Gratitude to God that He is the Sole Rewarder;

Hope and Fear of God

Faith - True Belief in God

The Divine Decree

Internal Struggle Against Sin

by **THE PRODUCTIVE SERVANT**

When a person is born into God's religion, or is baptized or converts, their heart may be free of evil and disbelief, but that does not mean they understand the reasons and tenets of worshiping God alone or the components of pure monotheism.

For much of humankind today, it is not the case that they do not believe in God, but it is the case that their belief, is distorted and not based on any true source of knowledge concerning God. Their belief is based on their own whims and desires or their choice to blindly follow others.

CHAPTER 3
WORSHIPPING GOD



The fundamental goal of the religion of God, Allah or Jehovah is to worship Him alone; to become a true and sincere 'servant' of God according to what has been revealed from God and not simply according to one's own whims or imagination. It is important to always remember that one's ultimate goal is to obey God's commandments and continue spiritual growth. Colossians 1:10 "So as to walk worthily of God to please Him fully as you go on bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the accurate knowledge of God."

Worshipping God can be described like the structure of a house. The **foundation** is faith- our belief in God. The **pillars** are our ritual and mundane acts of worship. The **features** are the functionality. The foundation of one's religion is based on what is in one's heart and one's beliefs which is based on pure monotheism. Thus, both Christianity and Islam have put great emphasis on what to believe in; this shall be discussed later in this chapter.

For many among humankind today, it is not the case that they do not believe in God, but it is the case that their belief, is distorted and not based on any true source of knowledge concerning God. Their belief is based on their own whims and desires or a choice to blindly follow others.

For example, many people today believe that if someone is a "nice" person and does not do harm to others, God would never be displeased with such a person and him or her will enter Paradise or achieve some kind of eternal bliss. Although we may have some good qualities, however, we must endeavour to gain more knowledge about our Father and His tenets.

If we were to accept this 'nice person' misconception, then having the proper 'knowledge' and 'belief in God' does not even enter the equation. However, in reality, a person will not be able to completely internalize, and act upon the pillars of worshipping God and faith until he has a strong love and wholesome fear of God. When the knowledge of God's attributes and His purpose for us is truly internalized, it becomes natural for a person to emulate and imitate his object of admiration.

One sees this phenomenon of acknowledgment,

internalization and emulation in all walks of life. This explains why fans, for example, want to know so many details about the actors, athletes, or stars that they idolize. The goal in that regard is to know about them, and emulate them as much as possible. This feeling of devotion and willingness to emulate must even have greater emphasis for the person who realizes that through emulation and following God, one can be devoted to the true way of pleasing God and gaining His reward in both this Life and the Hereafter.

Features of Worshipping God

Knowledge of God's Names and Attributes: Just knowing, memorizing and reciting God's names by heart will not make a vicious man enter Paradise. Therefore, the word 'memorize' in the scriptures means to behave in accordance with the implications of God's names.

Throughout the Scriptures, God is referred to by various names and titles, revealing distinct aspects of His character and nature. Examples include Jehovah, Yahweh, Allah, Elohim, Adonai, El Shaddai, and many more.

Some of the descriptions and meanings of God's titles include Lord or Master, God Almighty or God of the mountain, The Alpha and the Omega, King of Kings, and Lord

of Lords. These names and titles, while not all strictly separate names, collectively reveal the multifaceted nature of God and His relationship with humanity.

God is the creator of all that exists. In addition, it is the knowledge of Him and relationship with Him that the soul seeks. Worshipping God in the proper manner engenders in the human a special type of relationship with his Creator. Without this relationship, purposelessness will enter a person's heart. On the other hand, knowing God and establishing the proper relationship with Him will bring about true happiness and fulfilment.

In other words, the person develops an appreciation of God because he comes to understand the beauty, excellence, and perfection of God and all that He wills. It becomes no longer a matter of just submitting to the one who deserves such submission and obedience. It becomes a matter of appreciating who God is, what God has decreed, what God has commanded.

Belief in God's Revelations: Belief in the Revelations of God is an essential tenet in monotheistic religions; it signifies the belief that God communicates with humanity. Revelation is understood as God's way of revealing His nature, will, or

plans; either through nature and human conscience, or special revelation through Prophets or Scripture.

In many religions, Scriptures like the Bible or Quran are considered divinely inspired and form a central part of their understanding of God's revelation. 1 John 5:3 “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.” The belief in the Scriptures as being a revelation from God is not a blind belief but is related to the miraculous nature and extreme beauty of these Books themselves. This is stated in Quran 42:51 “It is not possible for a human being to have Allah communicate with them, except through inspiration, or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger-angel to reveal whatever He wills by His permission. He is surely Most High, All-Wise.”

Belief in The Last Day and The Hereafter: Also referred to as The Day of Resurrection, The Reality, The Event, The Day of Judgment. It shall be the gravest and the most fearful day. The more one has knowledge of that day and all related matters, the greater the effect this belief will have on him. In view of this, it is highly recommended that each believer must learn about the events that will occur prior to and on the Day of Resurrection.

A person's new life will be decided on that day; it will mark a new beginning for each soul. This new step may lead to eternal bliss or eternal damnation. There are some general aspects of judgment, resurrection, reward to paradise or hell that every believer should be aware of and believe in with certainty. Indeed, Quran 82:13-14 “The virtuous will be in bliss, and the wicked will be in Hell.”

Quran 22:1-2 “O humanity! Fear your Lord, for the violent quaking at the Hour is surely a dreadful thing. The Day you see it, every nursing mother will abandon what she is nursing, and every pregnant woman will deliver her burden prematurely. And you will see people as if they were drunk, though they will not be drunk, but the torment of Allah is terribly severe.”

The features discussed above are all based on knowledge and an understanding that is consistent with one's human nature. In fact, because they are knowledge-based, any increase in one's knowledge related to these beliefs leads to an increase in one's faith. Thus, knowledge and faith are never battling against each other.

Again, this is because there are no mysteries or absurdities that one is required to believe in. Mysteries and absurdities

require a “leap of faith” which are completely absent and alien from true belief and worship of God.

It is true that there may be many things beyond the realm of human experience and direct comprehension. However, even the belief in those matters is based on beliefs that are justifiable and understandable. Example, some people may not be able to accept the fact that some form of punishment occurs to a person while he is in the grave.

He may argue that he sees dead people rot away in graves and therefore there is no sign that they are suffering any punishment. However, no one can deny the fact that humans can suffer in many ways even if their physical bodies are not being harmed at all. In fact, a person's mind can even experience an imaginary physical pain. In any case such “secondary beliefs” are completely consistent when the proper premises are understood, such as God's great power and ability to create what He wills.

The Scriptures have also emphasized these words: Quran 20:123-127 “We shall raise him blind on the day of judgement, he will say O my Lord! Why have you raised me up blind while I had sight before? Allah will say thus did you, when our signs came to you, disregard them, so will you, this

day, be disregarded."

Paradise on the other hand promises gardens under which rivers flow, for us to dwell in forever. Quran 5:119 Allah will declare, "This is the Day when only the faithful will benefit from their faithfulness. Theirs are Gardens under which rivers flow, to stay there for ever and ever. Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him. That is the ultimate triumph."

Belief In the Purpose of Life:

Applies to humans in three stages:

- Life in this world.
- Life after death and before resurrection.
- Life in permanent abode after resurrection - the opportunity to see God.

Being Rescued from earning God's punishment: Quran 3:185 "Every soul will taste death, and you will only be given your [full] compensation on the Day of Resurrection. So, he who is drawn away from the Fire and admitted to Paradise has attained [his desire]. The life of this world is only the enjoyment of deception (a deceiving thing). Beliefs, attitude, actions will lead them to only one fate – the punishment and wrath of God."

Punishment is not only of the physical, what punishment can be harsher than a constant state of mind of fear, worry, anxiety, torment and torture. This is what external damnation can be. In order to gain insight into what punishment awaits persons condemned to hell, look at what one experiences during a nightmare and the relief one gets when you manage to wake up during sleep paralysis. If this is reality, why should one doubt God's prophesy of punishment after death or judgement day.

When humans try to rule themselves independently of God they are doomed to fail. Jeremiah 10:23 "I know, O LORD, that the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps." It does not belong to man who is walking even to direct his step.

The Pillars of Worshipping God

Pure Monotheism: True worship of God can only be achieved through pure monotheism, which is belief in only one God and associating no partners with Him. It also involves rejecting the worship of any being. This means removing all forms of ignorance, superstition, and false creeds. This is because a human soul cannot rest if it is torn in conflicting directions, seeking after numerous ultimate goals.

When a person is born into God's religion, or is baptized or converts, their heart may be free of evil and disbelief, but

that does not mean they understand the reasons and tenets of worshiping God alone or the components of pure monotheism.

Omnipotent and Omniscient: Omnipotence refers to God's unlimited power or the ability to do anything or everything. It is the belief that God possesses supreme power which is not limited by any condition, including the laws of nature. Omniscience however means God has all knowledge or the ability to know everything, including the past, present, and future. Omnipotence is about power, and omniscience is about knowledge.

The servant's recognition of God's all-hearing, all-seeing and knowledge of even the smallest of physical particles in the heavens, shapes the way he or she conducts themselves. This produces in the person a keen commitment to guard over his tongue, physical limbs, and thoughts in the heart to keep them away from anything that is displeasing to God. Furthermore, it inspires him to involve those body parts in acts that are praise worthy and pleasing to God. This in turn produces an inward sense of disapproval that makes the person avoid the forbidden and evil acts.

Worshipping God Alone and Not Associating Partners: The

concept of pure monotheism is understood and embodied in a person, when there is a certain type of nobility and feeling of purpose that accompanies the soul. The person realizes that he is not to submit to, physically bow down or prostrate to anything or anyone other than God. He does not direct his prayers to anyone other than God, nor can anyone grant him forgiveness except God. He does not turn to dead humans who were no more than humans themselves.

He does not sit at the base of wooden or metal idols that other humans themselves created. He does not fear any form of spirits such that he has to appease them by offering sacrifices to them. Why should a human being demean him or herself to lie, bow down and pray to another human who must eat and drink to survive just like himself? These are great forms of wrongdoing.

Associating partners with God is tantamount to defiling one's own soul. How could anyone claim that another being has any share of divinity with God. Once the concept of pure monotheism is understood all these practices become unacceptable to him.

Gratitude To God That He Is the True Rewarder: This is a process that should come about through the correct belief

in God that should lead to the acts of the heart, these are essential aspects of pure monotheism. When faith enters a person's heart, it causes therein: (a) apparent actions and (b) mental state, both of which are the fruits of true faith. Therefore true faith is in statement and action arising out of personal conviction and belief in God.

Apparent actions include actions of the heart's willingness to submit love etc, and actions of the body such as prayer etc. Statement here as used in true faith includes both statement of the tongue (verbal expression), and statement of the heart (affirmation).

Foremost among mental states in this context is the feeling of gratitude towards God, which could be considered essential to the worship of God. This feeling of gratitude is so important that 'one who denies the truth' and 'one who is ungrateful' cannot be truly devoted in God.

Gratitude to God also emanates from trust in God that He is the provider and this flows from a complete sense of trust, gratitude and true love of God. All these components must be present and in a proper balance. If they are not present at all or if they are not balanced, one's worship becomes distorted and incorrect.

Quran 21:90 “So We answered his prayer, granted him John, and made his wife fertile. Indeed, they used to race in doing good, and call upon Us with hope and fear, totally humbling themselves before Us.” This verse refers to how God accepted Zachariah's prayer for a righteous son and granting him Yahya (John the Baptist) and making his wife fertile. It highlights God's faithful servants' dedication to virtuous deeds and acts of worship, their sincere prayers to God with both hope and fear, humility and gratitude.

There is no real worship unless the heart is filled with true monotheism which flows from the feeling of love, gratitude and glorification for God. Along with this flows the other essential components of having hope in God and fear of God in the heart. Reverential fear of God comes about when one truly glorifies and exalts God.

Hope and Fear of God: A believer loves and is grateful to God for his bounties, but being aware of the fact that his good deeds whether mental or physical, are far from being commensurate with divine favours. He is always anxious of being denied of divine favours because of his sins.

This believer therefore fears God, surrenders himself to Him, and serves Him with great humility. Pure monotheism requires a proper balance of hope and fear of God in the

heart. It has been likened to wings of a bird; the believer flies towards God by his two wings, wings of hope and fear, if they are balanced, he flies properly. If however, one of them is missing he has a shortcoming. If they are both missing, the bird is on the edge of death. Likewise the soul by its inherent nature, yearns for its meeting with its Creator.

A person who practices his faith as described above will base his life on his belief in, there being only one true God. All things unapproved by the scriptures are forbidden to him by the concept of monotheism. But they are more than simply forbidden for him. He understands perfectly well that all these acts are undeserving of a human being that God has created for a special and noble purpose. All these acts are below a human, and, in fact, it is inconceivable that a person who has a good understanding of reality would ever take part in those types of acts.

True belief in God is an affirmation that requires acceptance and submission. If a person believes in something without acceptance and submission, that is not true belief. Once a person understands, accepts, and applies the true concept of pure monotheism in his or her life, the other features and outward deeds are achieved as corollaries to this main goal. On the other hand, without true monotheism, the other

goals cannot be achieved, even at a superficial level.

Faith - True Belief in God: The definition of 'Belief' for many is simply the acknowledgment that something is true. Thus, one can be asked, "Do you believe that God exists?" and the reply may be, "Yes." The same person may be asked a follow-up question, "Does your belief in God have any influence or ramifications upon your life, your deeds and your goals?"
To this question, the same person who says he believes in God may reply, "No." Given this common scenario, the following question must be addressed, could this type of belief be equivalent to the religious expression, 'belief in God'? Hebrew 11:6 "And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him." From this textual perspective, it is impossible to please God well without faith. The point to note in this regard is the crucial role of faith in pleasing God.

It emphasizes that approaching God requires not only a belief in His existence but also a belief in His ability to reward those who seek Him with persistence and dedication. The verse calls us to embrace faith as a fundamental requirement for building our relationship with God. It underscores the importance of believing in His existence

and His rewarding nature as we pursue Him.

True and effective beliefs never remain at an abstract level, but their influence is made manifest on a day-to-day basis. True belief does much more than make a person realize the negative or positive ramifications of an act. Admittedly, beliefs in the heart contribute to the driving force behind everything the individual does. As a person develops in his faith and his beliefs become stronger, his faith moulds the very way he looks at things.

His love for something and his hatred for another is determined by his beliefs about those thing. For example, when he recognizes that God loves something, he is inspired to view that thing as wonderful and deserving of his love. On the contrary, if God dislikes something, the individual will be inspired by faith to abhor and reject same. To take a simple example, the question of cheating and stealing is related to one's overall belief system. If a person believes that these acts are morally wrong and that there is an all-knowing, just God, who will hold him accountable for his deeds, he will refrain from such acts. But if a person does not believe in any eternal ramifications or any day of judgment, his deciding factor may only be the chances of being caught and the severity of the punishment.

Take the example of smoking for the purpose of illustration. Someone may believe that smoking is harmful and wrong by accepting the facts of its harmfulness and yet continue to smoke, failing to let what he recognizes to be true guide his actions. In other words, he does not submit to the truth he sees, nor does he implement what it implies. His factual knowledge about smoking has not permeated into his heart such that he develops a dislike or rejection for smoking due to its detrimental consequences.

In the case of true belief, if the faith is strong and healthy at that moment, then it will put the feeling of dislike in the person's heart for that act that he believes to be wrong or harmful. It will keep the person away from wanting to commit that harmful act. Meanwhile, it will inspire the love for all virtuous deeds into his heart. Such a faith will, therefore, rule his life and guide him in his actions. Psalm 112:7 “He will not fear bad news. His heart is steadfast, trusting in God.”

Quran 49:7 “And keep in mind that Allah's Messenger is still in your midst. If he were to yield to you in many matters, you would surely suffer the consequences. But Allah has endeared faith to you, making it appealing in your hearts. And He has made disbelief, rebelliousness, and disobedience

detestable to you. Those are the ones rightly guided."

Therefore, true belief means that one acts in accordance with that belief when for example an individual claims that he believes in God's Angels, His omniscience and omnipotence. One must also acknowledge that God's Holy Spirit lives in him, and God sees and knows everything, and that one's deeds and thoughts are being viewed and recorded. This should automatically influence one to avoid those deeds that he or she does not want God to see and record.

There is no question that there are differences in the outward deeds of humankind on account of different levels of faith. One must not believe though that, such is the only fluctuation of faith. Indeed all aspects of worship do manifest to this possibility, including or especially the deeds of the heart. Indeed, one's love, fear, and trust in God and other acts of the heart are potentially exposed to change and fluctuation.

There is nothing more liable to changing levels in the heart of man than faith. There are therefore varying levels of faith just as there are varying degrees of love in the heart. It is important to appreciate this fact because love is an essential component of faith.

People recognize their own various levels of love. Love sometimes simply implies a desire to be with or close to your beloved. However, it can reach the level where one cannot live without being in the presence of his beloved.

Similarly, faith, of which love for God is one component, can be extremely variable. This question of faith increasing or decreasing is not simply a theoretical question, over which one can overlook. If a person feels that he has faith and that it is a fixed attribute, he will not strive to increase his faith and he will not fear or notice a decrease in it. This approach can be dangerous to his faith as the person may not recognize the signs indicating a reduction in the degree of his faith.

Every individual does experience this fact of life, perhaps when the affairs of this world are engulfing him. In such circumstances, his remembrance and attachment to God may suffer a serious decline. He does not feel that great feeling of faith in his heart. His behaviour and actions are not of the same quality as they are at other times. When he encounters this stage, and he thinks about getting up at night for prayer or giving charity for the sake of God, his soul becomes too tired or unwilling to sacrifice.

Considering that this trend is a possibility, a person should

learn to appreciate those times when he was at his highest level of faith and seek to maintain them for as much as possible. Even the level of affirmation and knowledge in the heart varies from person to person and time to time in one person. It is therefore imperative not to allow these feelings of personal shortcomings to undermine the efforts to submit to God and act in a manner pleasing to Him.

Matthew 24:13 “The one who has endured to the end will be saved.” Patience is essential for the growth of our faith. Like faithful servants of the past, we need to wait patiently for God to fulfil His promises. Hebrew 6:11-12 “We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, so that what you hope for may be fully realized.” We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.”

The Scripture compares our situation to that of a farmer. James 5:7-8 “Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.”

Likewise, we stay busy in spiritual activities even though we do not know on what day our Lord is coming. Matthew 24:42

“Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.” We wait patiently, confident that in his due time, God will fulfil all that he has promised.

James 5:11 “Look! We consider happy those who have endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome God gave, that He is very tender in affection and merciful. The one who has endured to the end will be saved.” Psalm 51:10-12 “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and put within me a new spirit, a steadfast one. Do not cast me out from your presence, and do not take your Holy Spirit away from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, stir within me a willingness to obey you.”

Likewise, we stay busy in spiritual activities even though we do not know on what day our Lord is coming, or when God will fulfil all that, He has promised. The fruits of your labour in doing God's will can only be achieved through loyal faith and patience. On the other hand, if you want instant gratification, and so pursue ungodly sources of power like deities and spiritism, then God will vomit you out.

True belief in God or faith cannot be something that one claims is in his heart while it has no influence on the person's life and behaviour. This highlights the importance of faith as

the foundation for a relationship with God. It suggests that simply performing rituals or virtuous deeds without truth and just is insufficient to please Him.

The affirmation in the heart of the person who simply knows and performs the ritual and mundane acts of worship, without understanding the articles of faith, will not be of the same status as the person who knows the essential elements of faith.

The Divine Decree is an essential article of faith which is necessary for worshipping God. It refers to the predetermined plan or will of God. It means that everything that happens is part of a divine and eternal plan, often influencing events through both physical laws and moral choices.

This is when the servant knows that God alone is the paver behind afflictions and felicity. He gives and withholds, creates and provides, gives life and brings about death. This dimension of faith produces the acts of worship and engenders complete trust and reliance on God in one's heart.

The faithful servant’s knowledge of God's self-sufficiency,

generosity, graciousness, kindness, and mercy makes the person become very hopeful in God. Furthermore, his recognition of God's grandeur, greatness and magnificence produces in him humility, submission, and love.

The person realizes that everything that occurs is according to God's Divine Decree. Furthermore, there is wisdom behind everything God does. Hence, if the person loses a loved one or something of this world, he does not go insane, despair, or give up hope. Instead, he realizes that such was the will of God, that must be accepted.

He must also realize that such has occurred for a purpose. It did not occur haphazardly or accidentally, without any divine reason behind it. God has said, Quran 57:22-23 “No calamity or blessing occurs on earth or in yourselves without being written in a Record before We bring it into being. This is certainly easy for Allah. We let you know this so that you neither grieve over what you have missed nor boast over what He has granted you. For Allah does not like whoever is arrogant, boastful.”

Hence, it must be logically appreciated that if everything operates under His control and part of His dominion, then nothing occurs in His dominion that He does not want to

cause to happen. Therefore, everything that occurs in His creation is by His Will. Nothing could ever occur unless He willed it. Quran 54:49 “Verily, We created all things with Divine Pre-ordainment.”

This religious expression explains this point by saying, everything is a creation of God, even the deeds of humankind are creations of God. Although they are by man's free choice and will, they are creations of God.

This is because every act of a human is the result of two aspects: (a) a definitive will to do the act and (b) the complete ability to do the act. For example, suppose that in front of you is a stone weighing twenty pounds. I say to you, “Lift this stone,” and you say, “I don't want to lift it.” In this case, your lack of will has prevented you from lifting the stone.

If I said a second time to you, “Lift that stone,” and you said, “Yes, I will listen and do what you have said.” In this case, if you wanted to lift it but you were not capable of lifting it, you would not have lifted it because you did not have the capability to do so.

If said to you a third time, “Lift that stone,” and you complied

and lifted it above your head, that was because you had the ability and the will to do it.

All the deeds that we perform, therefore, are the result of a definitive will and complete ability. The one who created that ability and will is God. If God had made you paralyzed, you would not have the ability. If you turned your attention to some other deed, you would not have done it. Therefore, we say: All the actions of humans are created by God. This is because they are the result of a definitive will and complete ability. The one who created that will and ability is God.

The way in which God is the creator of that will and capability, is that the will and ability are two characteristics of the one who wants something and the one who has ability. But the one who created that person with that ability is God. The One who created the person who has specific characteristics is also the one who created those characteristics. This makes the matter clear and shows that the actions of human beings are the creation of God.

There are a number of questions and misconceptions that have arisen surrounding the concept of Devine Decree (Qadar). Due to brevity considerations, they cannot be dealt with in detail here. However, here are a few frequently asked

questions, that clerics have adequately dealt with using the scriptures.

It has been argued that God decided to create man as a free agent, but He knows (and how can He not know?) before creating every man how he is going to use his free will. "But if we are free to use our will," they go on to say, "we may use it in ways that contradict God's will, and in that case we would not be right in claiming that everything is willed or decreed by God."

The Scriptures answers this question by reminding us that it was God who willed that we shall be wilful, and it is He who allows us to use our will. He could have prevented us from doing evil, yes, indeed He could have willed, all our voluntary deeds to be righteous.

Quran 6:35 "Had your Lord so willed O Prophet, all people on earth would have certainly believed, every single one of them!" Quran 10:99 "And God, if thy Lord had willed whoever is in the earth would have believed, all of them, all together. Would you then force people to become believers?"

"If our actions are willed by God," someone might say," then

they are in fact His actions". This assertion is based on a misconception. God wills what we will in the sense of granting us the will to choose and enabling us to execute that will, that is, He creates all that makes it possible for us to do it. He does not will it in the sense of doing it, otherwise it would be quite naive to say, when we drink or eat or sleep for instance, that God performed these actions. We must understand that God creates them, but He does not do or perform them.

Another wrong assertion is that "if God allows us to do evil, then He approves of it and likes it." But to will something in the sense of allowing a person to do it is one thing; and to approve of his action and commend it is quite another. The Scriptures explicitly states that, one must believe in divine decree, "both the good and the evil thereof," pointing out that what is meant by "evil" is with respect to the human beings and not with respect to God.

The "evil" is the result of the human's act of ignorance, wrong, oppression and sin. However, it was allowed and brought into being by God. But no evil is to be attributed to God because, with respect to God, the act is good and full of wisdom, as it must be a result of God's knowledge and wisdom. Genesis 50:20 "As for you, you meant evil against

me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today." This verse is spoken by Joseph to his brothers, acknowledging their evil intentions but declaring that God meant it for good to bring about the salvation of a great number of people.

Any act of that nature must, in its essence, be good and cannot be pure evil. This is supported by the Scriptures that, "Evil is not to be attributed to You." Quran 4:79 "Whatever good befalls you is from Allah and whatever evil befalls you is from yourself. We have sent you O Prophet as a Messenger to all people. And Allah is sufficient as a Witness."

That is because every act that occurs is the result of some wisdom and goodness and can never be pure evil. The individual himself may think it otherwise, but there is wisdom and good in everything that occurs in our lives. The Scriptures illustrates in Quran 30:41"Evil has appeared on land and sea because of what the hands of men have earned, that God may make them taste a part of that which they have done, in order that they may return by repenting."

In this verse, God states the evil that has appeared, the cause for it and its result. The evil and the cause of it are both evil, however, the goal of it is good, that God may make them

taste a part of that which they have caused. Therefore, enduring the consequences of our action, grows our faith in God through endurance and obedience.

Quran 18:29 states that, “the truth is from your Lord, so whoever wills, let him believe, and whoever wills, let him disbelieve.” They (God) have done, in order that they (you) may return (by repenting).

Hence, there is wisdom and goal behind that evil. This goal and wisdom make the entire action something good and not a necessarily evil. Evil on the other hand, would be one in which there was no benefit or positive result related to it. God's wisdom and knowledge preclude the existence of acts of that nature.

Quran 10:44 “Indeed, Allah does not wrong the people at all, but it is the people who are wronging themselves.” This verse emphasizes that God is not unjust and does not cause harm to people without cause. Psalm 145:9 “The LORD is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made.”

God established duality and mystery in His creation such as, problems and solutions, good and evil, death and life, for us to learn obedience through endurance. God also did this to

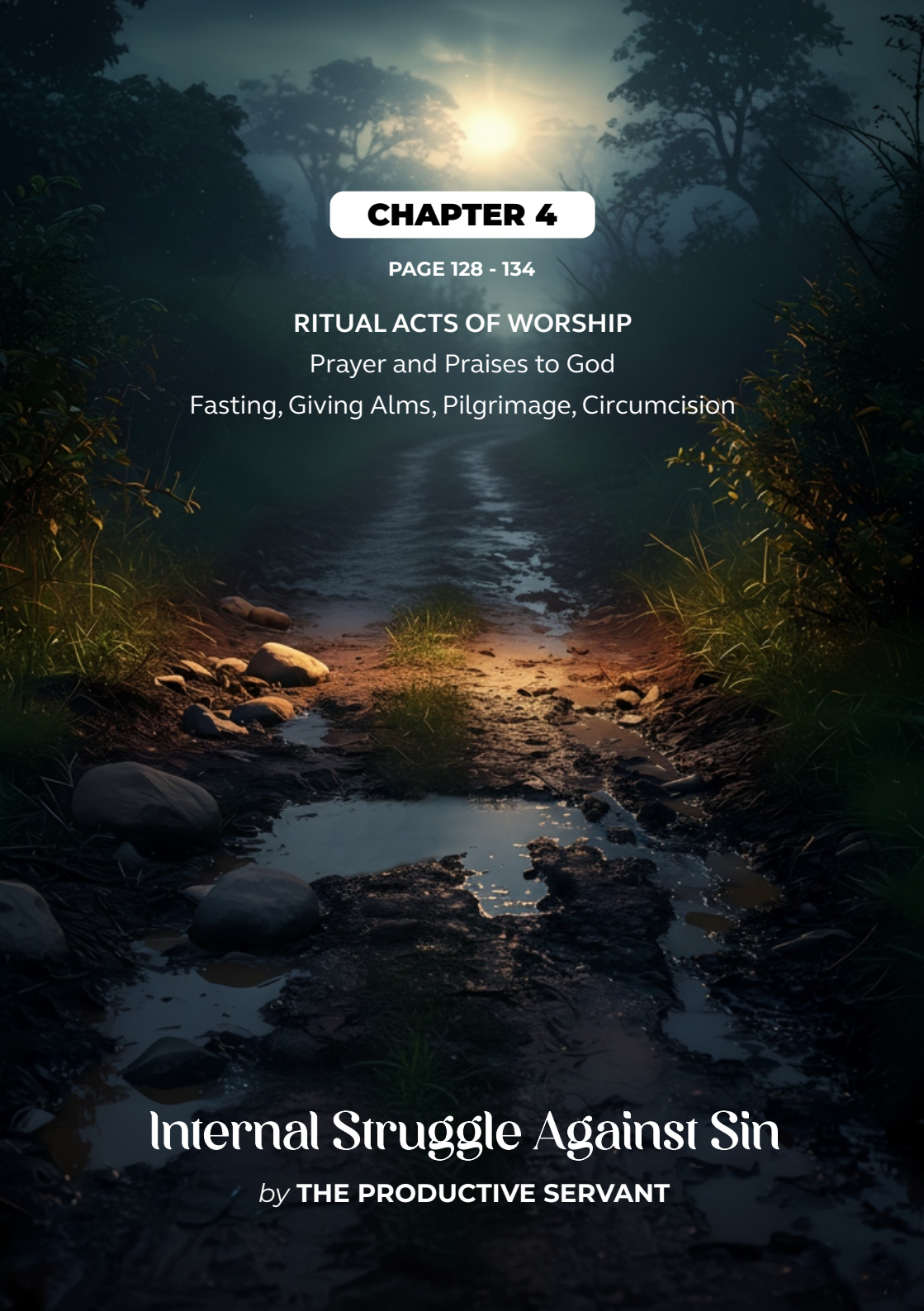
test the faith of humankind through consciously resisting temptations and enduring trials, for the purpose of growth in faith. This can only be achieved by increasing one's knowledge about God's purpose for humankind, like the proper belief in divine decree and true faith in God.

God's Messengers "learned obedience," not from being in ideal conditions, but from the things they suffered. We often learn obedience and grow our faith under challenging circumstances. Just like God's commandments, we are required to obey rules and regulations. Although we might struggle to obey, our obedience and belief in right and wrong guides us to become better prepared to obey any instructions we receive. 1 John 5:3 "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome."

Job 36:11 "If they listen and serve Him, they complete their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasantness." We learn in this verse that obedience brings countless blessings, and we choose to obey God primarily because we love Him and we want to please Him. Yet, He had willed that men shall be free especially regarding matters of belief and disbelief.

The truth is from your Lord, so let whosoever will believe, and

let whosoever will disbelieve. Quran 18:2 “Making it perfectly clear, to warn the disbelievers of a severe torment from Him, to give good news to the believers who do good, that they will have a fine reward.” This verse emphasizes that belief in God is a matter of free will, and those who choose to disbelieve will face consequences.



CHAPTER 4

PAGE 128 - 134

RITUAL ACTS OF WORSHIP

Prayer and Praises to God

Fasting, Giving Alms, Pilgrimage, Circumcision

Internal Struggle Against Sin

by **THE PRODUCTIVE SERVANT**

The most essential element of prayer is truthfulness as opposed to hypocrisy and dishonesty. This means that when one says the testimony of faith, dedication vow, the model prayer etc, one is saying it with understanding and meaning it. One is not simply reciting an incantation, neither should one be gaslighting oneself, since you can certainly not deceive God.

"This people approach me with their mouth, and they honour me with their lips. But their heart is far removed from me, and their fear of me is based on commands of men that they have been taught." Isaiah 28:13

CHAPTER 4
RITUAL ACTS OF WORSHIP



These are obligatory deeds meant to draw one closer to God. They are meant to show reverence, deep love, and devotion to our Father. Obviously, there are many practices concerning the ritual acts of worship that fall beyond the scope of this work.

Prayer and Praises to God: Praying regularly is a powerful way we can develop our love for God and get closer to Him. The more we pray, the more real God becomes to us, and strengthens our resolve to avoid doing anything that damages our friendship with Him. 1 John 5:14 "This is the confidence that we have toward God, that no matter what we ask according to His will, He hears us."

In Isaiah 29:13, "The Lord said: These people approach me with their mouth, and they honour me with their lips. But their heart is far removed from me, and their fear of me is based on commands of men that they have been taught." Daniel 10:12 "Do not be afraid, O Daniel. Your words have been heard from the first day that you gave your heart to understanding and to humbling yourself before your God,

and I have come because of your words."

Psalm 145:18 "The Lord is near to all who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth." This verse assures us that God is present and willing to respond to those who seek Him in prayer. This implies that God's presence and responsiveness is extended to all who call on Him in truth, and highlights the importance of sincere and authentic prayer. It emphasizes the need to approach God with honesty and integrity.

We have the privilege of contributing to God's work of winning souls and spreading the word of God by obeying this simple command. Psalm 113:1-2 instructs us, "Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord, you his servants, praise the name of the Lord. Let the name of the Lord be praised, both now and forevermore."

We please our heavenly Father when we praise His name. Does this mean that the almighty God is like imperfect humans who crave praise because they are needy or insecure? No. Consider the following illustration; A little girl affectionately throws her arms around her father's neck and says "You're the best daddy in the whole world!" The father is pleased, and touched, by her spontaneous act. Why? Should we assume that he is an insecure man who craves, even

depends on praise from his child?

No. Rather, we trust that he is a strong father who is delighted to see his daughter showing love and appreciation. He knows that such quality of gratitude will contribute to her happiness as she grows up. For similar reasons, God the greatest Father, is pleased when we praise Him. Each of us has the privilege of loyally standing up for our Father's name and of pleasing Him by serving Him with integrity, it is truly an honour to do so.

The most essential element of prayer is truthfulness as opposed to hypocrisy and dishonesty. This means that when one says the testimony of faith, dedication vow, the model prayer etc, one is saying it with understanding and meaning it. One is not simply reciting an incantation, neither should one be gaslighting oneself, since you can certainly not deceive God. (refer to examining your motives)

Remember that God sometimes answers our prayers through other people. Proverbs 21:1 “A king's heart is like streams of water in God's hand; He directs it wherever He pleases.” At times, God answers the prayers of his people by moving unbelievers to act in their behalf. Today too, God can move even those who do not worship Him to come to our

rescue when we are in need.

Spend time and discuss your goals with those who will motivate and support you. Folks who have achieved similar goals, so they can give you useful suggestions, ask you about how your plans are coming along and encourage you when you need it.

Examine the reasons why you want to reach your goal with modesty, regularly assess your effort and dedication towards working on your goal. Also, spend time with those who will motivate you. Proverbs 13:20 “Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.” This will require self-discipline, the results are worthwhile.

The Scriptures encourage believers to approach God with confidence, knowing that he is close and ready to hear their prayers and respond to their needs. God tells us that, we can endure any trial we suffer, if we rely on him, and even find a measure of happiness.

We can pray and apply ourselves repeatedly for many years trying to achieve a particular goal, though our prayers may not be answered. In spite of that, we must remain confident

that God knows best. We must acknowledge that God does not always answer our prayers in the way that we expect, but He will answer them in ways that are even better than we could have imagined.

Our prayers are not usually answered in spectacular ways. However we must also be practical, discerning, and modest to acknowledge that when we approach God in earnest prayer and beg Him for help with some weakness, he will give us his Holy Spirit to strengthen us to keep fighting. While these activities will not make wrong desires disappear, they will help us resist the urge to act on those desires.

During trials or your low moments, you might feel anxiety and difficulty in expressing yourself clearly in prayer. You might have lost the zeal to pray but remember that God understands your situation perfectly. He is Omniscient and Omnipotent, so He is aware of your condition and needs, so demonstrate your true faith in God by offering a short direct prayer or even having a quiet moment of reflection with the Lord Almighty.

If for some reason, you are incapable of the above, search through your heart and render any ritual or mundane acts of worship (explained in the next chapter). The purity itself in

your act will avail you into the spiritual and physical provisions that God makes available. You invite Him according to His power of the Holy Spirit that is working in us, to do more than we supplicate. Ephesians 3:20 “Now to the one who can, according to his power that is operating in us, do more than superabundantly beyond all the things we ask or conceive.”

We must show faith, not just by praying to God, but also by accepting his answer to our prayers in whatever form it comes. So be on the lookout for God's answers to your prayers. From time to time, pause and reflect on how God is answering your prayers. While prayer will not miraculously eliminate the trait of doubt, meditation and reflection will bring self-awareness to strengthen you so that you do not give in to doubt.

When you pray, focus on thanksgiving. Psalm 143:5 “I remember the days of old; I meditate on all your activity; I eagerly ponder over the work of your hands.” Meditate on God's creation and His undeserved kindness toward you. This should motivate you to work hard towards pleasing God. Similarly, the more you meditate on what God has done for you, the more motivated you will feel to reach your goal.

Matthew 6:5-6 tells us that “Also, when you pray, do not act like the hypocrites, for they like to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the main streets to be seen or seeking praise from men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your private room and, after shutting your door, pray to your Father who is in secret. Then your Father who looks on in secret will repay you.”

When praying, do not say the same things repeatedly, thinking you will get a hearing for the use of many words, for your Father knows what you need even before you ask Him. You must pray, to appeal to your own conscience to ingrain God's will, which is to be just and truthful. Matthew 6:14 “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, whereas if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither should your Father forgive your trespasses.”

Prayer is an incredibly powerful weapon to resist lies and ignite transformation. The worshipper, for example, should not complete a prayer and not have that prayer have any effect on his or her thinking and actions. Worshipping God is built upon pillars including the pillar of prayer. This means that prayer supports the foundation of our faith. The reward

for ones prayer, is not one for the outside such as the aesthetics, but for the structural integrity of the building. Praise comes from God, not from people.

Fasting, Giving Alms, Pilgrimage, Communion: There is no question that among the pillars of worshipping God, ritual acts rank close to that of faith and is one of the keys to receiving God's mercy in the Hereafter.

When a true believer sets out to perform these ritual acts of worship, he undertakes the hardship and suffers the deprivation of sleep, food, drink and sexual intercourse during a period, as a source of self-restraint, piety and God-consciousness. Quran 2:183 "O believers! Fasting is prescribed for you as it was for those before you, so perhaps you will become mindful of Allah."

The deeds must be in accordance with truth and just and done solely to satisfy the will of God. The Scriptures encourage giving without seeking recognition, allowing the act of kindness to remain between the giver and God. The essential components of the perfection of faith in the deed is a combination of intent and distinct quality of the deed. God encourages believers to perform the deeds in a way that is not noticeable to others but to rather focus on their

relationship with God.

The Scriptures say that God has a special reward for those who do not allow the pursuit of a comfortable lifestyle to distract them, which causes them to relegate worshipping Him to second place.

The man who offers his resources for the sake of God purifies his heart of the love of material wealth. The man who performs these deeds offers his resources and sacrifices as a humble gift before the Lord and thus affirms the truth that nothing is dearer to him in life than the love of God and that he is fully prepared to sacrifice everything for God's sake.

To achieve this, the person must have the intention of performing the deed for the sake of God. In the case of abstaining from the forbidden acts; if a person simply goes without eating or fasts for the sake of losing weight, or lack of time, such would not be an act of worship.

The essence and purpose of ritual acts go beyond outward deeds but must result in inward transformation. This calls for removing any spiritual blockages or resistance to God's word and will, just like physical circumcision removes the foreskin and promotes personal hygiene. Let your emphasis be placed on true worship and service to God which require a

change of heart, not just outward ritual performances.

The quality of the act is poor, if the motive does not matter much to the worshipper because they are doing it to just finish. Deuteronomy 10:16 "Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart and be no longer stubborn." This verse calls for a change of heart, urging one to remove spiritual barriers and stubbornness from their hearts, and to embrace a more receptive and obedient attitude towards God.

One of the benefits and purposes of fasting is that the spirit of man is released from the clutches of desires. This allows moderation to prevail in one's carnal self, so that through this, one could realize the goal of purification and everlasting felicity. It is aimed at curtailing the intensity of desire and lust by means of hunger and thirst. It induces man to experience the empathetic experience of how many were there in the world like him who had to go without even a small quantity of food. Fasting, thus, is the bridle of the God-fearing, the shield of the crusaders and the discipline of the virtuous.

So, in an instance where a person forgetfully eats or drinks, he does not have to make up for the fast nor is there any expiation in this case. But intentionally breaking fast or

performing for human glorification invalidates the spiritual worth of the deed. There is the need for sincerity and humility. The Scriptures advises against seeking public praise for charitable acts, stating that those who do so have already received their reward in the eyes of other mortals.

Matthew 6:16-18 “When you fast, stop becoming sad faced like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so they may appear to men to be fasting. Truly God says to you, they have their reward in full.” But you, when fasting, reflect on human starvation, strife, and involuntary deprivation. So that you may not appear to be fasting to men but only to your innermost self, then your Father who looks on in secret will repay you.” Fasting is an act that demonstrates one's sincerity to God. Only God is aware if a person truly fasted or not.

Matthew 6:1-4 “Take care not to practice your righteousness in front of men to be noticed by them, otherwise you will have no reward with your Father who is in the heavens. So, when you make gifts of mercy, do not blow a trumpet ahead of you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be glorified by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But you, when making gifts of mercy, do not let your left hand know what your right

hand is doing, so that your gifts of mercy may be in secret. Then your Father who looks on in secret will repay you."

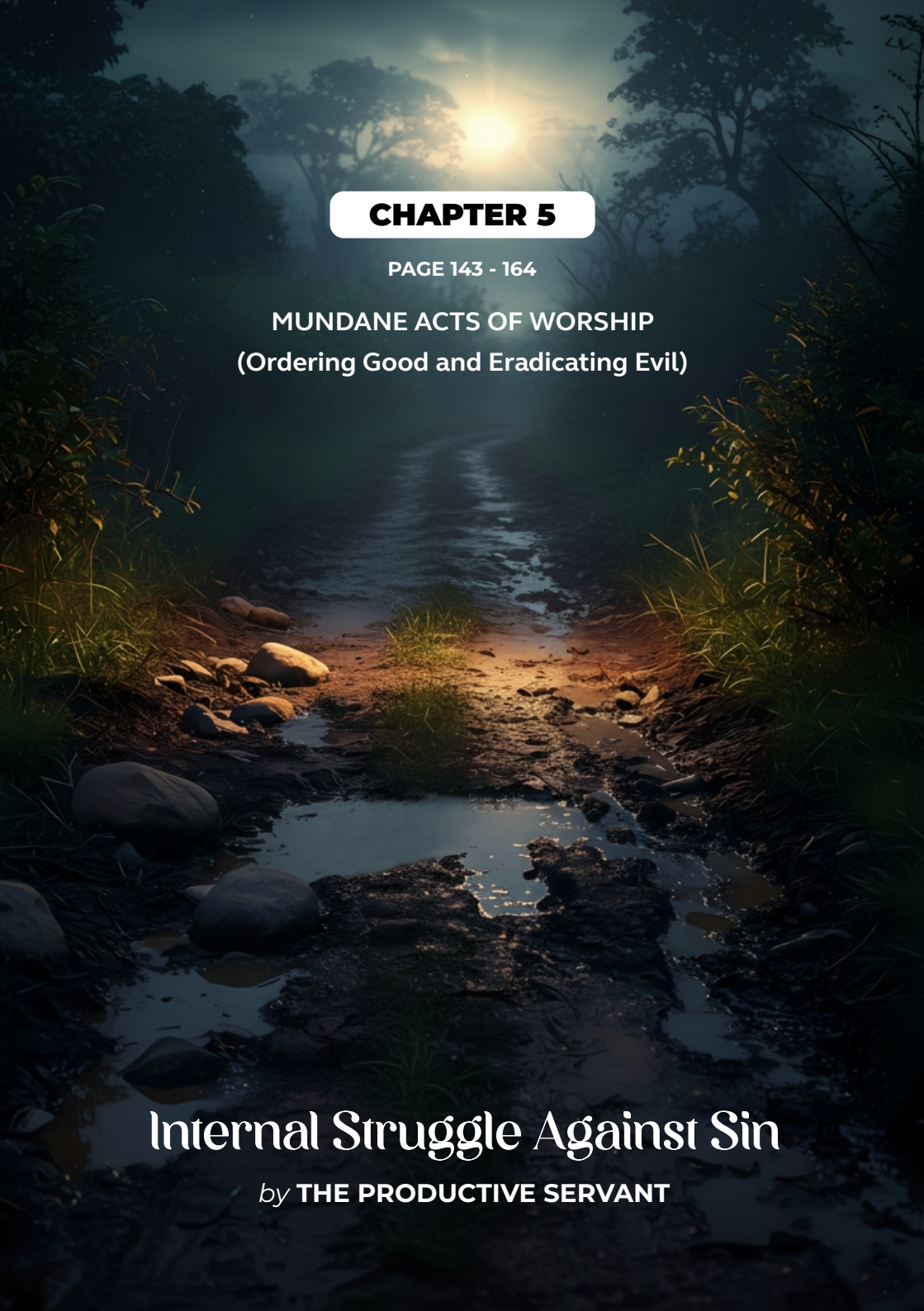
Instead, it encourages secret giving, where the motive is solely for the benefit of the needy and the divine pleasure of God, who will reward those who give in secret. God, who sees all things in secret, will reward those who perform ritual acts generously and sincerely, not for the sake of public praise and self-aggrandizement, but out of love and compassion.

Those who give publicly to gain recognition from others have already received their reward in the form of praise and admiration from people.

In fact, physical pilgrimage is a prelude to spiritual pilgrimage to God, where man would bid goodbye to everything of the world and present himself before Him as His humble servant saying: 'Here I am before Thee, my Lord, as a slave of Conclusions.' This is the aim of the life of a faithful servant, and this practice encourages humility in the believer's life.

If a person fulfils the obligatory acts in their proper fashion, he should be able to reach a certain level of spiritual purification. However, the process of purification will not

stop at the obligatory deeds alone. The feeling and love for more purifying acts will flow and the believer will seek other righteous deeds that will bring him even closer to God. These deeds are voluntary in nature and have some sign that they are praiseworthy acts.



CHAPTER 5

PAGE 143 - 164

MUNDANE ACTS OF WORSHIP
(Ordering Good and Eradicating Evil)

Internal Struggle Against Sin

by **THE PRODUCTIVE SERVANT**

In the Scriptures, God places great emphasis on 'ordering good and eradicating evil.' This leads to purifying one's soul. This concept is encapsulated in Mark 12:31 "You shall love your neighbour as yourself, there is no other commandment greater than this."

Also known as the 'royal law' this verse emphasizes the importance of kindness and generosity, compassion, and forgiveness, and treating others with love, the same way one expects to be treated.

CHAPTER 5
MUNDANE ACTS OF WORSHIP (ORDERING GOOD AND ERADICATING EVIL)

Worshipping God cannot be restricted to only ritual acts of worship, like praying, fasting, giving alms, while neglecting other social domains like marriage, business dealings, alcohol, and drugs etc. One's goal is to attempt to perform every deed with the intention to please God within the right state of the heart. In this way, even the most mundane activity or simplest of deeds becomes an act of worship.

Thus, in the Scriptures God places great emphasis on 'ordering good and eradicating evil.' This leads to purifying one's soul. This concept is encapsulated in Mark 12:31 "You shall love your neighbour as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than this."

Referred to as the 'royal law', this verse further emphasizes the importance of kindness, generosity, compassion, forgiveness, and treating others with love, the same way one expects to be treated.

This verse is a call to action, urging people to demonstrate

love through tangible voluntary deeds of kindness and desist from acts that go against God's will, like wronging others. Supererogatory or voluntary acts go beyond obligatory ritual acts of worshipping God. These acts when performed with the intention of doind good and eradicating evil, does not only provide eternal salvation but also vitality and purity in our day-to-day activities.

Hadith 38:40 “Verily God has said, Whosoever shows enmity to a friend of Mine, then I have declared war against him. And My servant does not draw near to Me with anything more loved to Me than the religious duties I have obligated upon him. And My servant continues to draw near to me with supererogatory deeds until I Love him. When I Love him, I am his hearing with which he hears, and his sight with which he sees, and his hand with which he strikes, and his foot with which he walks. Were he to ask (something) of Me, I would surely give it to him, and were he to seek refuge with Me, I would surely grant him refuge.”

Worshipping God, therefore, goes well beyond compulsory ritual acts of worship. All of a believer's behaviour, manners, ethics, and practices must be intended for promoting good and eradicating evil. It is inconceivable that someone should claim to be God fearing while at the same time he mistreats

his fellows, cheats another person and harms yet a third. This kind of behaviour would demonstrate that his claim to belief in God is either outright false or deficient.

Performing good deeds without faith is a good start, but not enough to merit a righteous deed. God clearly relates righteousness to the performance of good deeds along with faith. For example in Quran 21:94, He says, "whoever works any act of righteousness and has faith, his endeavour will not be rejected, We shall record it in his favour."

Hebrews 6:10 "For God is not unjust to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do." The more virtuous a voluntary deed, the closer it takes a person to God.

Indeed, the only way to be saved from perdition is through faith and good deeds. As God says in Quran 103:1-3, "by (the token of) Time (through the ages), verily man is in loss, except those who have faith, do righteous deeds, (join) in the mutual teaching of truth, and of patience and constancy."

This places huge importance of giving and doing good deeds with the right motives. A doer of righteous deeds cannot fulfil this condition unless there is purity of intent with which

the act is performed. It is fundamental to believe that God is the sole rewarder, and still, perform the deed unconditionally. Although this purity is reflected in the deed itself, it is the purity and quality that is the key to God being pleased with a certain act.

When we understand the importance of our closeness to God and the ability to transform even the most mundane activities into acts that are pleasing to God, our whole outlook and behaviour completely changes. We begin to perform each act conscientiously, realizing that we are doing it for the sake of God. Unfortunately, there are many people in this world who are completely negligent of this point.

The most exclusive group of people who get close to God are those who change the nature of their permissible deeds into acts of obedience to God. The customary-mundane deeds of those who truly know God are acts of worship (for them). While the ritual acts of worship are customary deeds for the masses. Acts of worship like fasting and prayers become daily ritual or common practices that they must perform simply because it is part of their culture or way of life. (Not for the sake of God)

In Quran 2:81-82, God clearly shows that it is faith and deeds that lead one to Paradise or the Hellfire. “Nay, whoever earns evil, and his sin has surrounded him, they are companions of the Fire: therein shall they abide (forever). But those who have faith and work righteousness, they are companions of the garden, therein shall they abide (forever).”

Faith and good deeds have a particularly important dynamic relationship in achieving spiritual and emotional growth, that leads to a life of fulfilment. This is difficult sometimes to fathom, but this becomes clear to the person practising purification of the soul. This is discussed in a subsequent topic.

It is not by deeds alone that one is entered into Paradise. Indeed, ones greatest deeds alone is not justification for entry into paradise. However, through the performance of righteous deeds, God showers the person with His grace and mercy. It is this grace and mercy that allows the person to be entered into Paradise. This is the great reward from God.

It is not by deeds alone that one achieves success with true peace of mind. Indeed, the greatest deeds that one can perform does not guarantee success and true peace of mind. However, performing the deeds with the right motives, is

what protects your peace of mind from agitation and anxiety of succeeding or failing.

If you do not find any sweetness and relaxation in your heart from a good deed, then you should suspect your heart. This is explained in Quranic verses as: “Allah is grateful, that is He must reward the doer of a good deed for his deeds in this world by a sweetness he finds in his heart, a strange feeling of relaxation and a joy in his eyes. If a person does not find these things, it means something negative has affected his deed (and rendered it impure for Allah's sake).”

James 2:14-18 “Of what benefit is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith, but he does not have works? That faith cannot save him, can it? If any brothers or sisters are lacking clothing and enough food for the day, yet one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but you do not give them what they need for their body, of what benefit is it? But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.”

True faith should motivate believers to actively help those in need, demonstrating their love and concern for others. The earlier passage from the book of James challenges believers

to consider the practical implications of their faith. It encourages them to move beyond mere belief and to manifest their faith through acts of service and compassion.

A mere claim of faith or gesturing goodwill without corresponding actions is ineffective and cannot lead to salvation, nor save someone from harm. Of what benefit are the empty words without providing any practical assistance. A faith that does not translate into practical care for others is considered 'dead' or ineffective.

James 2:24 "You see that a man is to be declared righteous by works and not by faith alone." James 2:25 "In the same manner, was not Rahab the prostitute also declared righteous by works after she received the messengers hospitably and sent them out by another way?" Indeed, just as the body without spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

When a person practices the principle of 'seeking good and eradicating evil' in his life, the heart's condition improves and bears the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, and strong faith in God. But all of this must start with sincerely and devoutly submitting to truth and just. This is achieved by exerting oneself to accept wholeheartedly

what God has revealed and to do what is pleasing to the Lord, whiles rejecting anything that displeases Him.

1 Corinthians 6:12 “Everything is permissible for me, but not everything is beneficial. Everything is permissible for me, but I will not be dominated by anything.” This verse introduces the idea that while certain actions might be permissible, they may not always be beneficial or helpful for one's spiritual growth or well-being. Intemperance is the lack of moderation or self-control. It is characterized by extravagance, excessive indulgence or over consumption and self-gratification.

The verse highlights the importance of self-control and avoiding anything that could enslave or control one's life, even if it is permissible. This is why the Scriptures forbid or caution against the use or abuse of addictive substances and habits that can get one hooked, enslaved or overly dependent on pleasures, desires, or possessions. Like alcohol, drugs, nicotine, sex and gambling.

Human rights and God's gift of free will, when misplaced, are responsible for humans' newfound freedom where human rights have dominance over anything else, even the right of God. People refuse to accept God's commandments on

issues like sexual orientation, and one's rights over one's own body.

This misguided notion that humans have the freedom to engage in unrestricted activities regarding their bodies, so far as it is permissible under their traditional or constitutional rights, needs to be addressed by understanding that God has overall rights over our bodies.

The human body is the temple of God, divinely created such that with all of human's scientific advancement, the human body tissue and animation of life has not and cannot be reproduced in laboratories. When one observes the completeness and mystery of God's creation and the various natural cycles at work, one appreciates the preciousness of "life" in any animate creature.

Eradicating evil must be understood and practised in a broader context. Believers should not engage in behaviour that harm themselves or others. This topic emphasizes the importance of exercising freedom responsibly, with a focus on what is beneficial for oneself and others, as well as what brings glory to God.

Galatians 5:19-21 "Now the works of the flesh are plainly

seen, and they are sexual immorality, uncleanness, brazen conduct, idolatry, hostility, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, dissensions, divisions, sects, envy, drunkenness wild parties, and things like these. I am forewarning you about these things."

Ephesians 5:3-4 "Let sexual immorality and every sort of uncleanness or greediness not even be mentioned among you, just as is proper for faithful servants. Neither shameful conduct nor foolish talking, nor obscene jesting, things that are not befitting, but rather the giving of thanks."

Deuteronomy 6:6-9 emphasizes this point, "These words that I am commanding you, today must be on your heart, and you must inculcate them in your sons and speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road and when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as a reminder on your hand, and they must be like a headband on your forehead. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

When used positively with good motives, speech can impact the lives of many. Consider how as a father or leader, your dependants are guided and shaped by your utterances and behaviour. Acknowledging God and giving thanks through

public declaration, demonstrates our reliance and appreciation for His wonderful traits. 1 Corinthians 9:27 “but I pummel my body and lead it as a slave, so that after I have preached to others, I myself should not become disapproved somehow.”

James 3:3-6 explains that, “When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. Or take ships as an example, although they are so large and are driven by intense winds, they are steered by a small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. Consider how a great forest is set on fire by a small spark, likewise the tongue also is a fire, The tongue is a small part of the body, but that can corrupt the whole body; setting the whole course of one's life on fire.”

This means that when we say, ‘by God's will,’ it is a condition precedent for an action to take place, if God permits. Additionally, prefixing my statement of an intention to carry out an action with “by God's grace I will return tomorrow” reminds me of my limitations as a mere mortal. The only certainties in life are said to be death and taxes. Each day you must demonstrate seriousness and intentionality of praising and honouring God.

James 4:13-14 goes further to say, “Come now, you who say, “today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there, and trade and make a profit'”. Yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. This verse emphasizes the transient nature of life, comparing it to a "mist" or "vapour" that quickly disappears.”

It warns against taking the future for granted, reminding believers that their lives are not solely dependent on their actions. This verse highlights the naivety in making plans without acknowledging God's sovereignty.

1 Corinthians 4:7 “For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?” This verse emphasizes the idea that all we have, including our abilities and gifts, are given to us by God, not earned, or deserved. Therefore, boasting or pride is inappropriate, as it implies that we are self-sufficient and do not need God's presence in our life.

Hebrews 13:15-16 reminds us that, “Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the

fruit of lips that acknowledge His name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased." Proverbs 23:15-16 "My son, if your heart becomes wise, then my own heart will rejoice. My innermost being will find joy when your lips speak what is right."

These verses call for believers to offer God a continual sacrifice of praise, which in this context is described as "the fruit of lips that confess his name" Our God is a jealous God and demands of us to continually profess our appreciation for the undeserved love we enjoy.

How else can we recompense for God's love for us?

There are countless ways to show love to your neighbour. One way is by applying the counsel found at Leviticus 19:18 "Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord."

To show compassion and forgiveness, it is important to exhibit patience and self- control over one's emotions, particularly anger. Ecclesiastes 7:9 further says, "Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger lodges in the heart of fools." This verse encourages a more mindful and reasoned approach to life's challenges, suggesting that

uncontrolled anger is a sign of lack of wisdom and understanding of God's purpose.

Proverbs 19:11 “A person's wisdom yields patience; it is to one's glory to overlook an offense.” This verse emphasizes that having good sense and discretion leads to patience, and it is considered honourable to overlook someone else's mistakes or wrongdoing. Titus 3:2 “To speak evil of no one, to avoid quarrelling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.”

In your response to an offence ask yourself the following questions:

- Why does what he did bother me so much?
- Does it reveal a negative trait that I need to work on?
- Could it be that the person who upset me is dealing with a difficulty?
- Even if I am justified for being upset, can I show selfless love by overlooking the offense?

The more we pause to introspect and reflect with the knowledge of the pillars of worshipping God, like the divine decree and promoting good and eradicating evil, our reaction and approach to taking decisions become based on sound principles capable of withstanding the test of

changes in circumstances, regardless of whom or what we are dealing with.

Our harbouring resentment will not affect the offender any more than our drinking poison would harm the one who offended us. Rather, when we forgive others, we are giving ourselves a gift. We find peace of mind and heart, and we can move ahead in our pursuit of true peace. Forgiveness shows our confidence in God's justice, by leaving matters in God's hands. We show that we are confident that God will undo all the harm that has been caused to us.

When we do that, we can be loyal to God, to our marriage mate, and to fellow believers. The more closely we conform to God's standards while living in this wicked world, the easier it will be for us to live by them in the Hereafter. So, consider this journey in life as a rehearsal and training for eternal life. Because there will be no place nor use of negative emotions like pride, envy, greed, hypocrisy, pull-him-down (PHD) syndrome or superiority complex.

God placed between husband-and-wife affection and mercy, and laid down stringent laws that protect the sanctity of the home. These laws include those on adultery, fornication, and slander. The reason is that the home is truly the foundation

of a society. If there is no peace in the home, one can hardly expect people to exit their home in a happy state and be peaceful members of society.

Malachi 2:15-16 "So guard yourselves respecting your spirit, and do not deal treacherously with the wife of your youth. For I hate those who treacherously scheme to divorce their innocent marriage partner. God rejects their worship and will call them to account for their conduct."

Hebrews 13:4 "Let marriage be honourable among all, and let the marriage bed be without defilement, for God will judge sexually immoral people and adulterers." This is also stated in 1 Peter 3:7 "Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honour to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered."

God detests hypocrisy, pride, the feeling that one person is better than another, greed, the excessive desire to have more money, power, immoral sex, and other things such as showing favouritism. For if a man with gold rings on his fingers and in splendid clothing comes into your meeting, but a poor man in filthy clothing also enters, do you look with favour on the one wearing the splendid clothing and say,

'You take this seat here in a fine place,' and do you say to the poor one, 'You keep standing' or, 'Take that seat there under my footstool'

James 2:8-9"If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbour as yourself," you are doing right. But if you show favouritism, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as a lawbreaker." If so, do you not have class distinctions among yourselves, and have you not become judges rendering wicked decisions?

James 2:5-6 "Did not God choose those who are poor from the world's standpoint to be rich in faith and heirs of the Kingdom, which He promised to those who love Him? But you have dishonoured the poor." We do not discriminate against anyone because of his race, tribe, financial position, or social background.

Proverbs 11:2 states that "When pride comes, then comes shame; but with the humble is wisdom." This verse contrasts the consequences of pride with the benefits of humility; it suggests that humility is a source of wisdom. Those seeking wisdom are open to learning and open to righteous perspectives, while pride leads to shame and dishonour. Psalm 15:4 "God rejects anyone who is contemptible, But He

honours those fearing Him. The one who does not go back on his promise, even when it is bad for him."

Listen, my beloved brothers, do not love either the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him, because everything in the world, the desire of the flesh and the desire of the eyes and the showy display of one's means of life, does not originate with the Father, but originates with the world.

True richness is not through much property and belongings, but true riches is in self-contentment. True richness is in the riches of the heart; and truly, poverty is the poverty of the heart. Have you ever wondered why rich and famous people commit suicide, without any terminal condition? 1John 2:15-17 "Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever."

James 5:1 warns, "Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you." The scripture instructs the rich to 'weep and howl' or 'weep and wail' over the

coming misery. This verse addresses the rich and wealthy, warning them about the consequences of their actions and their unjust accumulation of wealth.

It suggests that their wealth is a potential source of corruption and that they should consider and mourn the suffering they will endure because of their actions that lead to the mistreatment of others. The 'miseries' mentioned are the consequences of their wealth and how it was acquired, warning them about the judgment they will face for their selfishness and exploitation of fellow human beings.

This is not an outright condemnation of wealth or owning possessions. It is about ensuring that the means of acquiring material possessions align with God's will (truth and just). By primarily focusing on spiritual health and true peace of mind, material wealth becomes corollary effects. It encourages believers to seek God's kingdom and righteousness more than anything else.

Revelation 3:16-17 "So because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I am going to vomit you out of my mouth. Because you say, "I am rich and have acquired riches and do not need anything at all" but you do not know that you are miserable, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked." Matthew

6:24 “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”

Matthew 6:25 “On this account I say to you, stop being anxious about your lives as to what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your bodies as to what you will wear. Does not life mean more than food and the body than clothing?” Matthew 6:31-34 “For all these are the things the nations are eagerly pursuing. Your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. “Keep on, then, seeking first the Kingdom and his righteousness, and all these other things will be added to you. So never be anxious about the next day, for the next day will have its own anxieties.”

Matthew 6:26 “Observe intently the birds of heaven, they do not sow seed or reap or gather into storehouses, yet your heavenly Father feeds them.” Matthew 6:27 “Who of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his life span?” Philippians 4:6 “Do not be anxious over anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving, let your petitions be made known to God.”

Matthew 6:19-21 “But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and

where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

This passage warns against focussing on accumulating earthly possessions because they can be destroyed or stolen. The passage emphasizes the importance of spiritual wealth over material wealth, urging believers to prioritize integrity and moral conduct over earthly possessions.

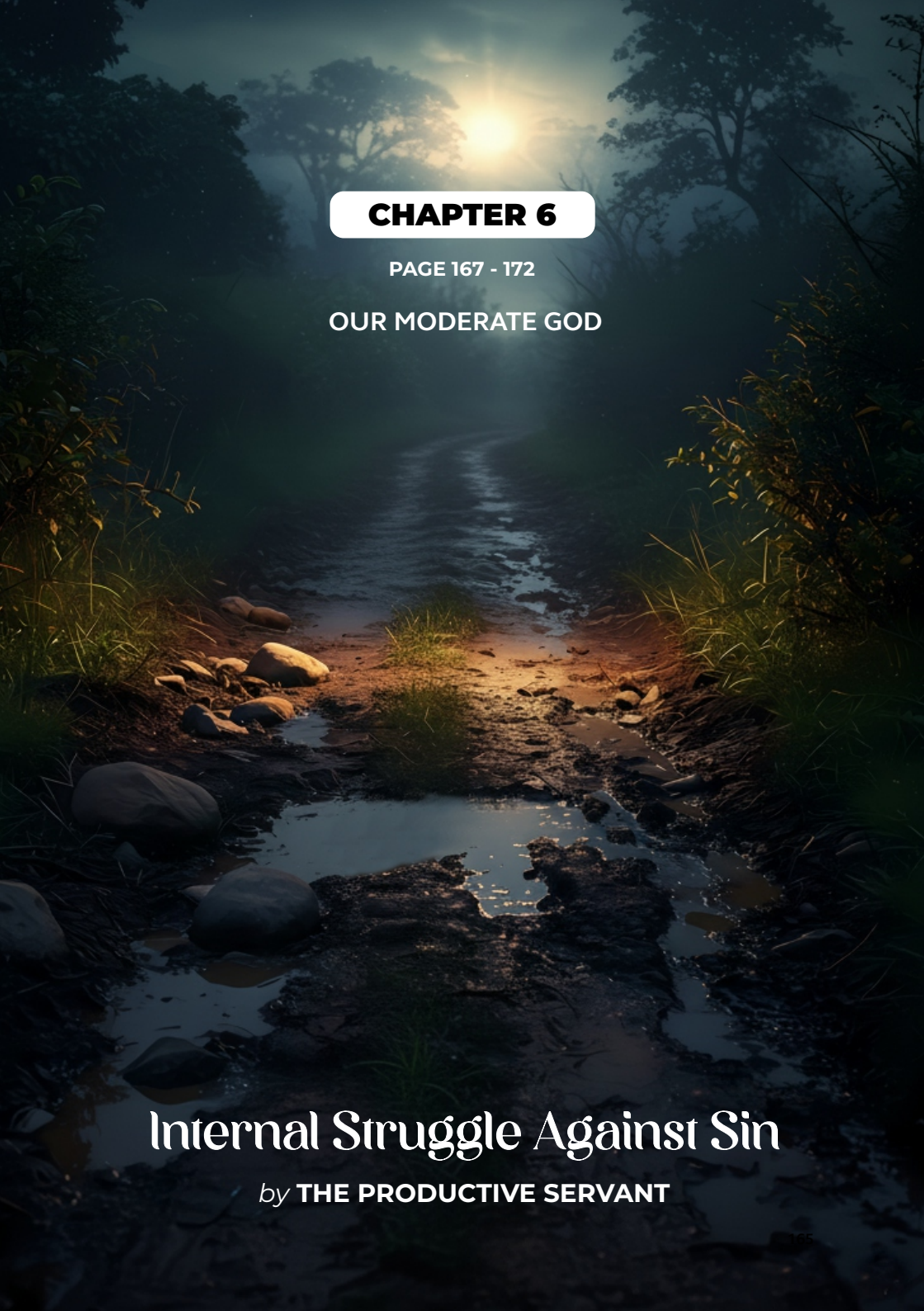
Believers are encouraged to focus on building up their spiritual and physical wealth through faith, good works, and devotion to God's will. "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be" enjoins us to safeguard what we consider valuable. After all, acquiring material wealth through legitimate means, enhances the measure of enjoying the fruits of your labour.

Psalm 128:1 "Happy is everyone who fears God, who walks in His ways." Never would we want to allow the pursuit of a comfortable lifestyle to distract us, causing us to relegate spiritual activities to second place. The verse brings to mind that true happiness and blessing come from a life of reverence for truth and just, and adherence to God's teachings.

This illustrates the connection between endurance and success. There is an exceptional feeling of accomplishment when success or objectives are achieved through integrity and constancy, and not by compromising one's moral or righteous values. The primary focus should be on seeking God's kingdom (true peace of mind) through righteousness (truth and just).

Proverbs 13:12 “Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but when the desire is fulfilled, it is a tree of life.” This proverb encourages patience and perseverance in staying the course of obedience and discipline, reminding us about the rewards and the joy of finally receiving what one has hoped and sacrificed for.

Trusting in God's promises is cardinal in overcoming the feeling of frustration and despair when one's hopes are delayed or not realized. This can lead to anxieties, weighing down on one’s faith in God, thus compromising one’s zeal for spiritual nourishment in life. Having a moderate view about oneself, helps to resolves anxiety, but it is impossible to be moderate without embodying truth and just in various aspects of one’s life.



CHAPTER 6

PAGE 167 - 172

OUR MODERATE GOD

Internal Struggle Against Sin

by **THE PRODUCTIVE SERVANT**

Micah 6:8 "He has told you, O man, what is good, and what is God requiring of you? Only to exercise justice, to cherish loyalty, and to walk in modesty with your God." This is a verse that often serves as a summary of what God requires of humanity, emphasizing justice, mercy, and humility. This is a call to action, not just a passive understanding of what is good, but a call to live it out through actions that demonstrate justice, mercy, and a humble relationship with God.

CHAPTER 6
OUR MODERATE GOD



God values your efforts. Of course, he does not expect more from you than what you can give. Simply, even setting a simple goal often requires time and dedication. The fact that you still want to reach your goal shows that you treasure your relationship with God and want to give Him your best. If you currently have a goal that you have not yet achieved, rest assured that you are not a failure. In this regard, you will find it easier if you focus on what you can accomplish, instead of what you were not able to accomplish.

As events unfold, our God continues to cause His purpose to be realized. God created humans in His image with the ability to adjust to changing circumstances. He provided clear principles in the scriptures that help us to make wise decisions no matter what challenges we may face. God's own example and the principles He has given us are evidence that while being "the Rock," He is also reasonable.

Be assured that God does not compare what you do with what others do. Do not expect more of yourself than what

God requires. He never expects you to give what you do not have. To accomplish what others have achieved; we may push ourselves beyond what our abilities and circumstances permit. And if 'expectation postponed makes the heart sick,' how much more disheartening it is to set expectations that we can never meet.

Galatians 6:4 "But let each one examine his own actions, and then he will have cause for rejoicing in regard to himself alone, and not in comparison with the other person." He treasures your whole-souled service through your faithfulness, endurance, and your obedience. Luke 16:10 "One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much."

A modest person acknowledges his limitations. Modesty moves him to adjust his expectations of how much he can do. As a result, he will remain happy and productive. Modestly accept that your age, health, and circumstances may limit what you can now do. Be willing to decline privileges when physical limitations become a problem. Like Moses, accept help and delegate responsibilities to others when appropriate.

Such modesty will prevent you from setting unrealistic expectations that could wear you out in your race for life. Doing so can sap your strength and slow you down in your spiritual and mental transformation. Deuteronomy 16:17 states that “everyone should bring a gift proportionate to their blessings received from the Lord.” This principle of proportional giving highlights the importance of giving according to one's ability and resources, reflecting God's understanding and fairness. The verse emphasizes that not everyone has the same means, and giving should be based on an individual’s capacity.

Micah 6:8 “He has told you, O man, what is good, and what is God requiring of you? Only to exercise justice, to cherish loyalty, and to walk in modesty with your God.” This is a verse that often serves as a summary of what God requires of humanity, emphasizing justice, mercy, and humility. This is a call to action, not just a passive understanding of what is good, but a call to live it out through actions that demonstrate justice, mercy, and humility in relationship with God.

Psalm 103:8-13 “God is merciful and compassionate, Slow to anger and abundant in loyal love. He will not always find fault, nor will he stay resentful forever. He has not dealt with

us according to our sins, nor has he repaid us what our errors deserve. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so great is His loyal love toward those who fear Him. As far off as the sunrise is from the sunset, so far off from us He has put our transgressions. As a father shows mercy to his sons, God has shown mercy to those who fear Him."

The Scripture states that God in His wisdom does not make certain consequences necessarily follow from one's sins, and that man must in all cases bear the consequences of his sin. If it were true it would mean that a sinner would never have the opportunity to have his repentance accepted, and thus prevent and discourage the sinner from trying to improve.

On the contrary, the reward for good actions and punishment for bad ones rests entirely with God. The reward that one receives for good acts is not the natural consequence of those acts; it is rather due to the grace and benevolence of God and it is entirely up to Him to reward one or not. Likewise, punishment for evil deeds is not a natural and unalterable consequence of man's acts. God has full authority to punish man for his sin as well as to pardon him.

God's grace and mercy, however, are interrelated with His wisdom. Since He is wise, He does not use His power

arbitrarily. Hence, whenever God rewards a man for his good acts, He does so because the good was done with purity of intention and for the sake of pleasing God. And if God refuses to accept an act of apparent goodness, He does so because that act had merely the form or appearance of goodness, and was not motivated by the desire to please God.

In the same way God punishes man for those sins which he commits with rebellious boldness, and which whet his appetite for more rather than lead him to repentance. Similarly, in His mercy God pardons those sins which are followed by genuine repentance and readiness on the part of the sinner to reform.

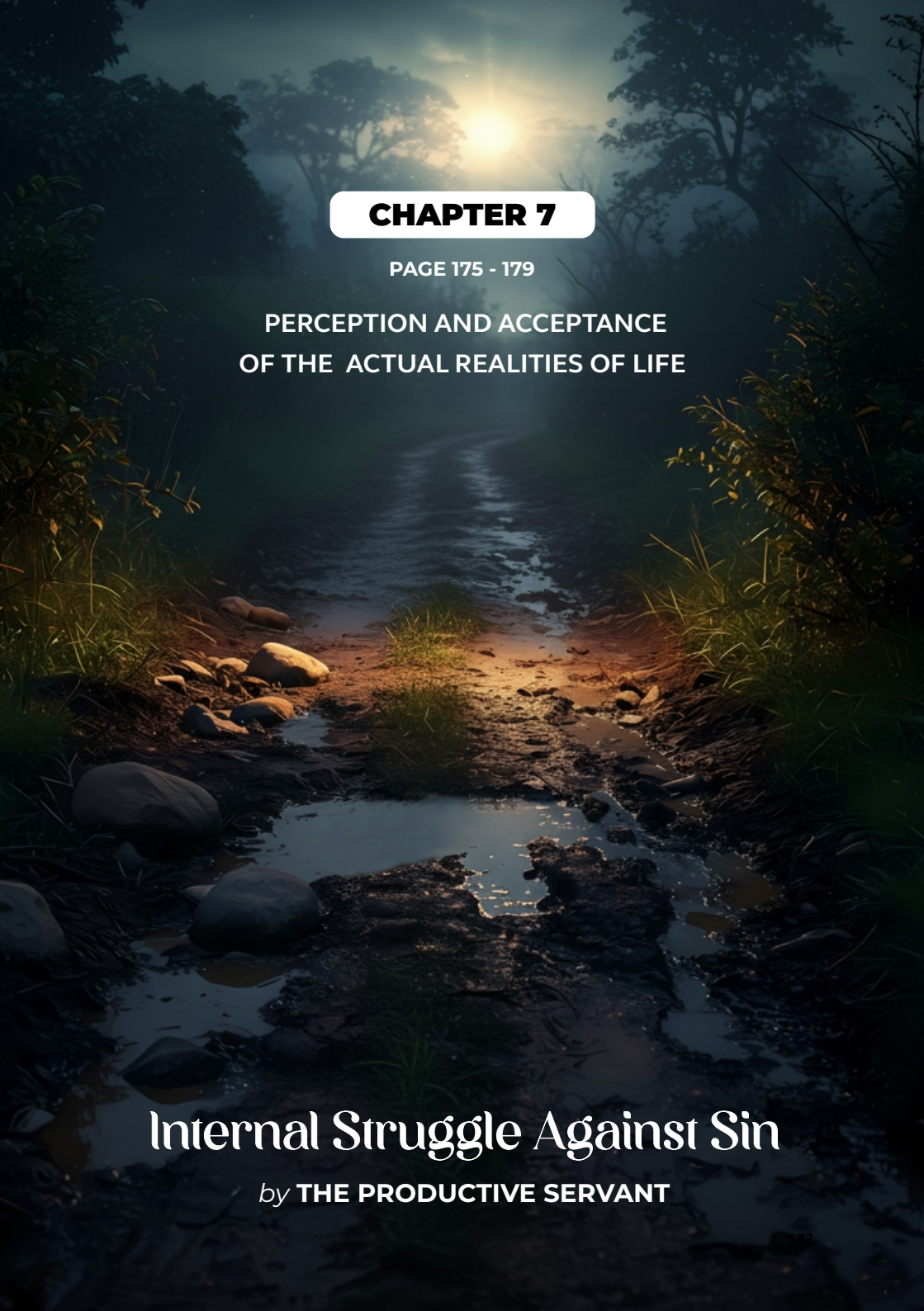
There is no need for a criminal to despair of God's grace and mercy, no matter how great a criminal he is. Nor is there any reason for even the most rabid disbeliever to despair, provided he recognizes his error, repents of his disobedience and is ready to replace his former disobedience with obedience.

This signifies that God is not distant or indifferent to those who seek Him, but rather He is actively involved in their lives and is readily available to help, regardless of their background or circumstances. When we fall short, God

knows the goodness in our hearts, so He patiently helps us overcome our inherent evil nature.

Consider it all the tested quality of your faith when you meet various trials with endurance, knowing that this tested quality of your faith produces wisdom.
James 1:3 "For you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness."

Moses and Joshua erred at times, as did the apostles. Romans 3:23 "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Numbers 20:12 "Jehovah later said to Moses and Aaron: "Because you did not show faith in me and sanctify me before the eyes of the people of Israel, you will not bring this congregation into the land that I will give them." Of course, these elders were imperfect and made mistakes.



CHAPTER 7

PAGE 175 - 179

PERCEPTION AND ACCEPTANCE
OF THE ACTUAL REALITIES OF LIFE

Internal Struggle Against Sin

by **THE PRODUCTIVE SERVANT**

One does not become arrogant and boastful, if he achieves any goal that he desired, he knows that such an achievement came about not only from hard work and one's superior characteristics. But because God, in His mercy, had decreed it for him. If God had so wished, He could have put many obstacles in his way and prevented him from reaching his goal. Therefore, instead of becoming full of himself and arrogant upon reaching his goal, the person who imbibes both concepts becomes well grounded.

CHAPTER 7

PERCEPTION AND ACCEPTANCE OF THE ACTUAL REALITIES OF LIFE



Life presents both challenges and opportunities, no matter who you are and what you have done or how great you try to make life. Things happen and that is a fact. Some occurrences are to some extent within our control like expecting positive results through hard work and dedication. The other occurrences beyond our control are like one's own mortality and the impermanence of life.

This is the actual reality of life, how we perceive and accept these occurrences around us depends on our orientation, which then determines how we approach and respond to what life throws at us. One's perception and acceptance of actual realities of life is based on their spiritual or physical orientation and understanding.

For the person with a solely spiritual orientation, events that transpire are preordained. Every moment God is creating, distributing, providing, bringing forth life and death and so on. God’s will is the sole explanation for his perception and acceptance of things that occur in his life. His belief is that

the outcome of his actions and external influences is just not within his control. This implies consciousness of God's presence and a feeling of His love and awe that permeates in all activities around Him.

The individual with the physical orientation relies on science 'cause and effect' as strictly the explanation for activities around him. Also taking personal responsibility for the outcome of his actions without recourse to divine influence. Believing in the laws of nature and physics to be the causal explanation for all incidents around him.

Many unbelievers or passive believers do not see God's involvement in this world and therefore they do not feel any direct relationship with God. The one with solely spiritual orientation is at the opposite extreme, everything in the universe depends on God, and He is constantly managing and creating. Quran 55:29 states that, "all those in the heavens and the earth ask of Him, every day He is engaged in some (new) affair."

It must be appreciated that the empirical causality has a role to play in the phenomena. However, one must realize that activities taking place around, are not solely dependent on science, after all, the cycle of nature was created. Causes and

effect will not bring about any ends unless God so wills them to do so.

Look at the biogeochemical cycles of nature, it is the continuous and self-sustaining processes that ensures the balance in the natural world. One realizes the infinite nature of God's existence, power, and wisdom. The completeness of His creation such that everything in nature has a purpose and there is no waste. This is not supposed to be a scientific exercise but to tie your heart and everyday activities to your Lord and Creator.

However, in general nowadays, the individual does not see God behind all these actions around him. The individual has become desensitized and thinks that all these things simply occur on their own due to some independent laws of nature. These laws of nature are nothing more than God's activity at every second and moment.

Humankind's concentration on apparent causes has distracted them from seeing the greater reality behind the will of God who says to something “Be” and it is. They ignore that greater will and call the laws ‘natural laws’.

They say that they are fixed and immutable, they are stupefied by such limited experiences and therefore God is

distanced from their hearts.

The ‘productive servant’ needs to apply guidance from both spiritual and physical perspectives of occurrences in this life, otherwise one will dominate or conflict with the other and the individual may not achieve the balance needed for living a fulfilling and sound life.

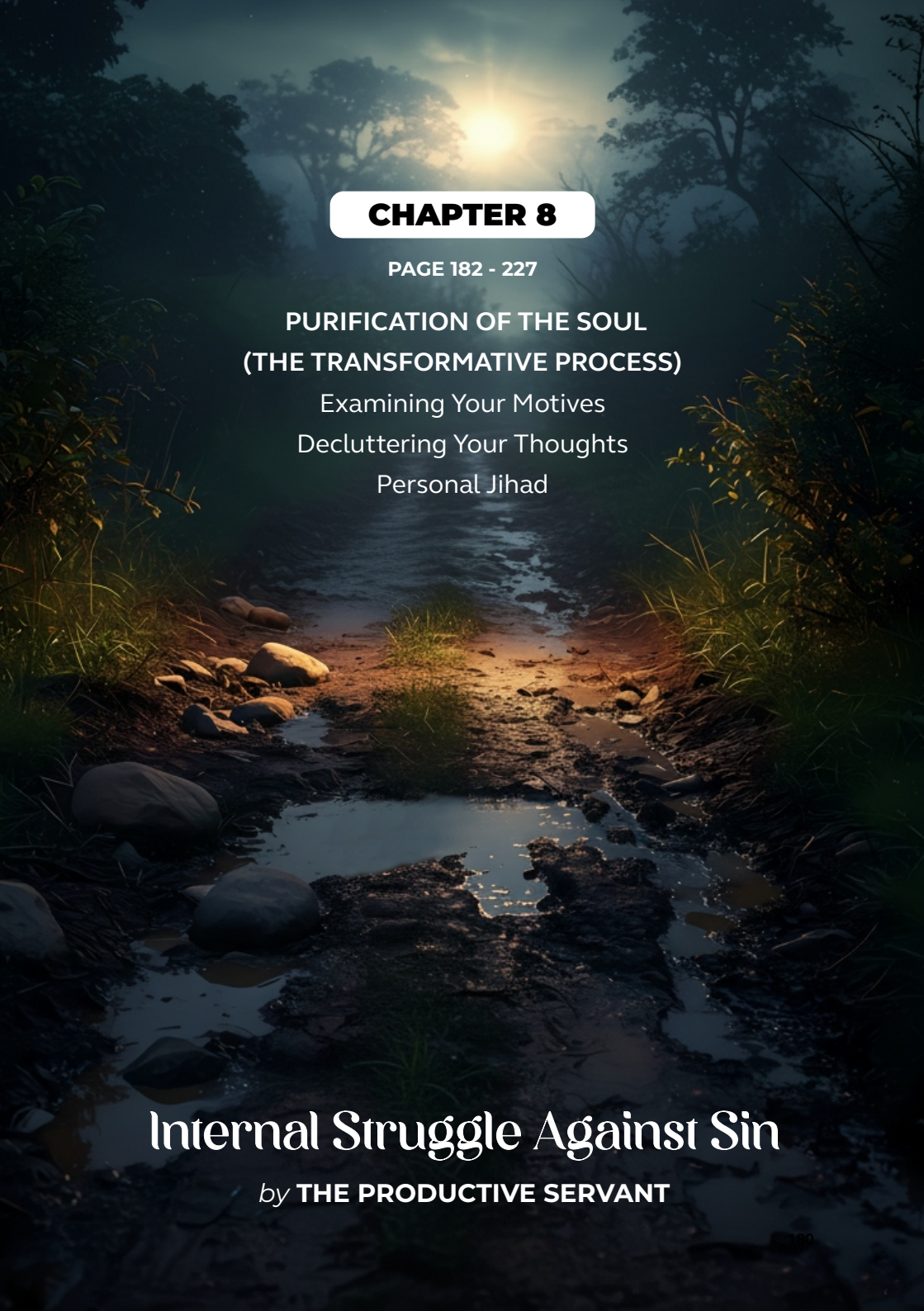
This approach will bring about tranquillity and peace of mind, knowing that all your decisions are based on both righteous and practical moral standards. Shielding one from complacency and laziness. Romans 12:11 “Be industrious, not lazy. Be aglow with the spirit.” This verse encourages believers to be enthusiastic and diligent in their service to God and others, avoiding laziness or complacency in their faith.

The dual approach of both physical and spiritual orientation provides a comprehensive and all-encompassing effect on one's overall perception in life. The result of this is a new way of seeing life such that if your eye and mind is focused on being a faithful and productive servant of God, your understanding and perception will align.

One does not become arrogant and boastful, if he achieves

any goal that he desired. He knows that such an achievement came about not only from hard work and one's superior characteristics. But because God, in His mercy, had decreed it for him. If God had so wished, He could have put many obstacles in his way and prevented him from reaching his goal. Therefore, instead of becoming full of himself and arrogant upon reaching his goal, one should recognize the unseen power beyond and submit.

The dual approach gives a person strength and courage. He knows that God has recorded his life and his sustenance for him and upholding the conviction that such comes only from God and is already decreed. Plus, he need not sacrifice his vows of dedication to truth and just for anyone threatening to cut off his sustenance and livelihood. Hence, he need not fear struggling and fighting for what is true and just, for the sake of God.



CHAPTER 8

PAGE 182 - 227

PURIFICATION OF THE SOUL
(THE TRANSFORMATIVE PROCESS)

Examining Your Motives
Decluttering Your Thoughts
Personal Jihad

Internal Struggle Against Sin

by **THE PRODUCTIVE SERVANT**

Remember that being a 'productive servant of God' is a state of becoming and not a state of being. Each day, you must strive to improve and better yourself and you will improve God willing. Once you have committed yourself to the spiritual, mental, and physical regiments of being productive, all that you have must be spent in His way. This is the ideal and the ultimate.

CHAPTER 8
PURIFICATION OF THE SOUL (THE TRANSFORMATIVE PROCESS)



This is the process in which the healthy elements found in one's thoughts and heart are fostered, built upon, and added to while any invading contaminants are removed or controlled. Such that the person performs one's duties and undertakes responsibilities to the best of his or her ability, with truth and just, and with the intention of pleasing God. This will culminate into the pursuit of the ultimate stage of God's purpose for humankind, which is piousness.

Piety is where the believer's responsibility is to obtain perfection, or excellence, in worshipping God, such that the faithful servant tries to live life as if they see God, and although they cannot see Him, they undoubtedly believe that He is constantly watching over them. Embrace truth and just, the rest shall come by increasing one's knowledge, faith, and attachment to God.

This process leads to inward transformation contrasting it with the physical act of say circumcision with emphasis on both the spiritual and physical dimensions of the objectives

of this transformation. Colossians 2:11 “In Him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ.”

This verse speaks of a circumcision (cleansing) made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ (truth). The statement suggests that a life centred on truth, just, and a strong spiritual foundation will naturally lead to a more fulfilling and successful life, though it does not specify what those successes will look like. It implies that these are the key elements that should be focused on, and the rest will fall into place.

In conventional interpretation, ‘circumcision’ is linked to the covenant relationship with God, where it signifies a deeper, more meaningful connection of circumcising the heart to prevent evil from taking root, rather than the physical earthly benefits of the act of circumcision. In Jeremiah 4:4, “Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, circumcise your hearts, you people of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, or my wrath will flare up and burn like fire because of the evil you have done, burn with no one to quench it, the Prophet speaks.”

Quran 87:14 God says, "He has certainly succeeded who has purified himself." A person's goal is to be moving closer on the road to piety, which is the key to real success and happiness in this life and in the Hereafter. Just like faith, purification of the soul is a 'process.' In other words, it is not something static. It is, in fact, dynamic and it can be volatile.

Purification of the soul permeates every part of a person; it touches upon one's internal characteristics as well as one's outward actions. It deals with all the apparent and hidden aspects of one's thoughts, apprehensions, inclinations, movements, eating and drinking, engagements, hobbies, interests including the daily routines in our lives. In short, no department and nothing that touches one's life is outside the work of purification of one's soul.

Remember that being a 'productive servant of God' is a state of becoming and not a state of being. Each day, you must strive to improve and better yourself and you will improve God willing. Once you have committed yourself to the spiritual, mental, and physical regiments of being productive, all that you have must be spent in His way. This is the ideal and the ultimate.

Ideals, however, are always difficult to achieve, and this you

must understand and accept. Ideals are always to be pursued; if they are easily and always achievable, they can hardly remain as ideals. Keeping to your side of the bargain mentioned in this transformation is now an ideal that you must always seek to maintain. It is the process of seeking and striving to spend all that we have, with the aim of being a productive servant of God.

As you embark upon this road you may come to feel that your focus and priorities are geared towards attaining those heights of submission and purification that you desire, or others expect of you. This step is so necessary, to the extent that any other activities that do not conform to striving for the sake of God, will be reduced to emptiness, thus of no benefit to you.

This transformation is not an exercise in which one purifies one's own soul while ignoring or not helping others as well along the path of purification. It stresses the proper interactions and relationships between individuals and the society, directly encouraging you to do what is good while prohibiting or preventing that which is evil. No one can run this race for you, but with the knowledge of God's attributes and His expectations of us, you can succeed.

It is crucial to also be minded along this transformation that our God is a moderate God, and we must imitate His attributes and the traits of His faithful servants that have come before us.

Moderation can help you carry your load and throw off unnecessary weight of anxiety you get from lofty expectations of yourself and from others. Let truth and just be your compass to navigate this course, then you will be able to run your race with endurance and find joy and harmony in your life.

The ‘Path to Increasing One's Faith and Purifying One's Soul’ is amazingly clear and easy to follow for all those whose intentions are pure. Indeed, it is a path that is open for all humans to follow. It comprises three steps: (1) Examining your motives (2) Decluttering your thoughts and (3) Personal Jihad.

You will readily note that all the three steps are highly interconnected. This is quite logical, because they all flow from the foundation of seeking good and eradicating evil, which requires being truthful and just. Once a person understands and devoutly practices these three steps in his life, he will lead his life in this world in a way that is best for

society and civilization. He will embody truth and stand for justice to the extent that he would not wrong others. Proverbs 20:5 “The purpose in a man's heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out.” This proverb uses the analogy of “deep water” to describe how challenging it is to gain access to the motives and contents of a person's heart. The heart is the make-up of a person's soul. It determines the direction of one's faith which leads to behaviour. Ironically the heart is the most malleable part of a human being, which causes one's faith to increase or decrease.

God lives in us, He sees and knows everything we think and do. If God represents truth and just, and we must seek refuge in Him, then we must always seek guidance and direction by examining our motives to ensure it aligns with truth and just. Our motives are important to Him because he expects our thoughts and deeds to be based on faith which is driven by our deep love and reverential fear for His will.

Galatians 6:7-8 “Do not be misled, God is not one to be mocked. For whatever a person is sowing, this he will also reap, because the one sowing with a view to his flesh will reap corruption from his flesh, but the one sowing with a view to the spirit will reap everlasting life from the spirit.”

Deuteronomy 32:4 “The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he.”

God is called “the Rock” because he is steadfast, immovable. However, he is also reasonable. Our moderate God is interested in not only what we do but also why we do it. This means more than not lying, God wants us to be honest through and through. That is important because God detests a devious person. Your dedication to be just and truthful is a way to show your appreciation for the greatest expression of love ever made, which is the gift of life and choice.

Proverbs 16:2 “all a person's ways seem pure to them, but motives are weighed by the Lord.” A person's deed may have an outward appearance of goodness, however, when examined internally, will reveal hidden motives, which may be selfish, deceitful, or impure. With the knowledge of God's ultimate measure of judgement being truth and just along with our faith, this process encourages self-reflection and a deeper examination of our own motives.

Examining Your Motives: In their own minds people often believe that their actions are justified and pure in their own minds. Sometimes one may even have rationalized their

behaviour to make it seem righteous. Proverbs 3:5-7 “Trust in God with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding. In all your ways take notice of Him, and He will make your paths straight. Do not become wise in your own eyes, fear God and turn away from bad.”

Truth and just is simply the source of what God considers law; thus one's personal reasoning, moral and ethical codes, must also be subjected to the same source. Thus, for example, how to behave towards one's parents,' neighbours and others are also covered by the Scriptures.

As simple as it is, truth and just is what God intended to be the basis for all laws. They guide and encompass every aspect of human behaviour, including public and personal laws made by humans. Unfortunately, written statutes today place truth and just secondary to evidence and logic.

There are many things that humans tend to ‘worship’ or get enslaved to, ranging from one's own passions, the state or nation to insignificant material wants. God describes those who take their own desires as a god, as falling in servitude to something other than God. This is tantamount to idolatry.

Examining motives is the first step in purifying your soul. It

guides you from all such false forms of worship. Constantly questioning the basis of your reasoning and your true motives, to ascertain whether it is borne out of truth and just that aligns with God's will. It then frees the heart from such enslavement by reigniting the conscience to dominate the carnal mind. The individual is then in a state ready to simply aim at pleasing God.

It is important for the believer to always remember that one's goal is to follow the truth. This must be consistent with your innermost voice, the original voice of God from your conscience.

Some might misunderstand or misconstrue your decision and its resultant action; this may likely occur. However so far as you seek to be truthful and just, the outcome of your action, is acceptable in God's eyes.

In fact, your mistake deriving judicial ruling will be rewarded by God, so says the Scriptures in the book of judicial decisions chapter six: dealing with the reward of the judge if he strives to reach a decision, whether he gets it right or wrong. Sahih 1716a "If a judge exerts himself and comes to a correct conclusion, he shall receive two awards. If he exerts himself and comes to an errant conclusion, he shall receive

one award".

God does not preserve our lives miraculously nor unconditionally. He expects us to care for our mental, physical, and spiritual health to the best of our ability, by having faith that He rewards the faithful and productive servant. Honest hard work pays, so does patience, endurance, and discipline. This is comprehensively explained in Proverbs chapter 2:

"My son, if you accept my words, and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom, and applying your heart to understanding. Indeed, if you call out for insight, and cry aloud for understanding. And if you look for it as for silver, and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom, from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. He holds success in store for the upright, He is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones.

Then you will understand what is right, just, and fair, every good path. For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul. Discretion will protect you, and

understanding will guard you. Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men, from men whose words are perverse, who have left the straight paths, to walk in dark ways. Who delight in doing wrong and rejoice in the perverseness of evil, whose paths are crooked, and who are devious in their ways.

Thus you will walk in the ways of the good and keep to the paths of the righteous, for the upright will live in the land, and the blameless will remain in it, but the wicked will be cut off from the land, and the unfaithful will be torn from it."

The productive servant must work diligently to codify and imprint the relationship between his thoughts and deeds with truth and just such that this code will permeate in his personal reasoning beyond situations not explicitly covered in this work or any other book.

Decluttering Your Thoughts: This is a key step in the transformation to become a productive believer. It requires one to strive to achieve true peace of mind. This can only be achieved by focusing your mind on what is beneficial and decluttering it from unproductive thoughts. How do you know if you have so much clutter?

Consciously note your actions and speech. If you recognize that they are focused, productive, thoughtful, and containing less gossip, then your mind is more decluttered than others. If on the other hand you see yourself all over the place and your tongue is out of control, then your mind needs a clean-up exercise.

Romans 12:2 “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” Be transformed by ‘renewing of your mind’ may be understood to mean making your mind over or renovation of your mind.

We cannot simply decorate our life with a few good works, rather, we must examine ourselves from inside and make the needed changes. Instead of passively allowing ourselves to be moulded by worldly desires (empty deception), we must first examine ourselves to determine how much we are allowing God's will (not this world's) to influence our thoughts, deeds and speech.

Distractions can take away a great deal of our time and attention from more beneficial pursuits. Ordinary features of life such as eating, drinking, recreation, and secular work

can become extremely distractive if we allow them to become the focus of our life. Luke 21:34-35 “Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you suddenly like a trap. For it will come on all those who live on the face of the whole earth.”

In addition, on a daily basis we are bombarded with news reports about social disputes and political issues. We cannot afford to be distracted by these. Experience has shown that the more a person looks at, listens to, or talks about unclean, immoral things, the easier it will be for him to fall into wrongdoing. Ephesians 5:3 “Let sexual immorality and every sort of uncleanness or greediness not even be mentioned among you, just as is proper for holy people.” Ephesians 5:11 “And stop sharing in the unfruitful works that belong to the darkness; rather, expose them for what they are.”

Ephesians 5:7 “Therefore do not become partners with them.” Do not be sharers with those who practice what is wrong in God's eyes. We need to remember that our wrong association is not limited to those we spend time with in person. It includes those we interact with on social media, and what is fed to us, as a target group.

We must be awake and be alert to the trap of our senses being subtly numbed to unscriptural things that displeases God. The people of the infamous city of Ephesus were not exposed to the dangers of social media yet this ancient prominent Roman city was so bad that it was said that “No one could live in Ephesus and not weep over its immorality.” Today Ephesus is a major archaeological tourist site with well-preserved ruins of a large ancient city, offering a glimpse into the past.

Guilt can take a toll on our peace of mind and obstruct our path to transformation. It is natural to feel guilty about a wrong you committed, humbly turn to God in prayer and admit your error, asking God to forgive you. Psalm 25:11 “For your name's sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great.” Psalm 51:3-4 “For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge.”

In these prayers, emphasis is placed on recognizing and acknowledging one's wrongs. With the knowledge that forgiveness of sin is the sole preserve of God, you should only appeal to God and trust in the Lord's merciful and compassionate nature. God's name and reputation act as

motivation for us to also forgive others, which is important in shedding off our mental load and anxiety.

God does not treat humanity always on account of their sins. But that His love for those who fear him is immeasurable. Psalm 103:8-13 "The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will He harbour his anger forever, He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His love for those who fear Him, as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him."

How can you declutter your thoughts, if you cannot undo a poor decision; accept your current situation and recognize that you cannot change the past. Do not waste your emotional and mental energy justifying yourself or blaming yourself or others for your bad decisions. Instead, acknowledge your mistakes and work to make the best of your present circumstances, and apologize to those you may have wronged.

Learn from your mistakes, and try to avoid repeating them.

As you do, you can be certain that God will show you mercy and provide you with the support you need. Knowing that we are accountable for our decisions and that God lives in us can prompt us to confess our sins, correct our errors, and avoid repeating our mistakes. Taking such actions can help us to declutter our thoughts and stay on course for transformation.

Core to this process is to pause and ask yourself: 'How do I respond to counsel? Do I quickly acknowledge my mistakes, or do I try to justify myself? Am I quick to blame others?

Proverbs 19:11 “Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is His glory to overlook an offense.”

This suggests that showing forgiveness and refraining from dwelling in past grievances is a commendable trait and a sign of strength and maturity. It is a way to benefit oneself and the other person involved.

Proverbs 29:22 “A man prone to anger stirs up strife, anyone disposed to rage commits many transgressions.” Ephesians 4:31–32 “Put away from yourselves every kind of malicious bitterness, anger, wrath, screaming. And abusive speech, as well as everything injurious, but become kind to one another,

tender-hearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you."

The Scriptures tell us that judgment and punishment are for the authorities and our Creator. Grief and pain are unavoidable but can become destructive when unguided and unbridled.

Ephesians 4:22-24 "Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always having plenty to do in removing troublesome things from your mind, and ward off harmful things from your thoughts, knowing that your labour is not in vain in connection with finding true peace. And you should continue to be made new in your dominant mental attitude and should put on the new personality that was created according to God's will in true righteousness and loyalty."

Matthew 6:22-23 "The lamp of the body is the eye. But if your eye is envious, your whole body will be dark. If the light that is in you is really darkness, how great that darkness is?" The result is a spiritual and physical life on a special plane that only those who continue to grow their spiritual understanding and awareness beyond the ordinary physical life can experience and enjoy.

This means one can be transformed by a new way of thinking and move away from this world's allurement and deceptive perceptions of what is enjoyment or success. The result of this transformation brings peace and joy which is distinct from the fleeting happiness or temporary relief that the world offers. It acts as a guard for the heart and mind, protecting against anxiety and fear, allowing individuals to trust in God's control and unfailing love.

It is a deeper, more profound sense of well-being that transcends circumstances. It provides a deep and lasting sense of calm, security, and hope that surpasses anything fleshly desires can offer. It is the calmness that comes from having a precious relationship with truth and just. You will no longer be negligent of God and your duty towards Him. You will be then God willing living your life in a manner quite different from your previous life.

Life's challenges and opportunities are part of the plan of God in the cycle of nature designed for growth and learning. Navigating these, equips one with resilience, adaptability, and a willingness to embrace new experiences as one's knowledge of the actual realities of life grow. Regularly evaluate if your thoughts are primarily focused on being

productive and your actions align with the values you have set for yourself.

When faced with trials and temptation, our decision or response must be guided by the spirit of truth and just. If a person's motive leading to taking a decision does not contradict God's will, he as a person must be respected. This is according to the Scriptures. In fact, even if the result of the individual's decision is a mistake or which another finds weak or unacceptable, he will be rewarded by God for his efforts if he was sincere. Such ‘acceptable differences’ may never be allowed to strike at the root of one's faith in God's view.

The goal of this step in your transformation, is the process of striving to find solutions to what interrupts or hinders serenity in your thoughts, ensuring that your decisions and actions reflect a commitment to God's will of truth and just.

1 John 5:3 “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.” Note that this verse connects obedience of God's commands to an expression of love for Him. Furthermore, these commands are not meant to be a heavy or oppressive load. God's commandments benefit us by providing guidance for our everyday affairs and protect us in

this Life and the Hereafter. God's will is not to restrict or cause undue hardship to us, but to benefit ourselves and others.

Personal Jihad: The third step in your transformation is personal jihad. In the context of this book, Jihad is the internal spiritual struggle within oneself against sin. This is a perpetual battle to let your conscience (mind) dominate your carnal mind (flesh). This is the struggle between the conflicting forces that reside in you, and your goal to overcome temptation which leads to sin.

As discussed earlier, our conscience is God's original voice in us that gives us the feeling of an obligation to be good, both morally and righteously, focusing on higher values, spiritual growth, and a connection to a higher power of truth and just. Religious clerics describe this voice as a little white flower (truth and just) in the wilderness. This little white flower is constantly choked by errant weeds of error. It is therefore critical that you always water your white flower to ensure it grows resilience, so that it is not dominated by the luxuriant growth of weeds and errors.

In contrast, the carnal mind is a mind-set that focuses on physical desires and the wants of the body, such as pleasure,

comfort, and material possessions. It essentially prioritizes the satisfaction of the ‘flesh’ to the neglect of spiritual growth in the ‘minds’ connection to God's will, which is our conscience.

Romans 7:21-23 “I have discovered this principle of life, that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. I love God's law with all my heart. But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me.”

This passage describes the internal conflict between a person's desire to do good and the power of sin. It highlights a principle where, despite wanting to obey God's law, there is a part of the individual that is enslaved by sin and opposes their better intentions. This creates a struggle where the desire to do right is thwarted by an inner conflict.

When one speaks of the body usurping the essential role of the mind in a person, in fact one is describing a reversal of priorities in the mind itself, such that the needs of the physical being are placed above the needs of the spiritual being, contrary to the original order of God's creation. In this state, people lose their value of and as human beings, since it is the spirit-mind or conscience that makes humans unique

and central in creation.

This makes one alienated from God and prone to errors and sin. It is therefore part of human tendencies to disregard or minimize the importance of spiritual matters, such as faith, being truthful and just. It takes true faith and constant practical effort to extricate oneself from this predicament and stay disciplined by practising the three steps of purifying the soul.

It is worth it to reflect on a question like: "How do you let your conscience mind dominate your carnal mind when you notice one of those false beliefs or negative thoughts creeping in?" You can decide now what you will do if a temptation arises. Learn to say no immediately to things that God hates, even refusing to dwell on them. Proverbs 22:3 "The shrewd one sees the danger and conceals himself, but the inexperienced keep right on going and suffer the consequences."

It is important to note that all the benefits of God's commandments accrue to the human. It is solely for his own benefit that God has provided guidance to humankind. God Himself is not in need, but in His mercy, He has shown humankind the proper mode of behaviour to meet His

approval.

Mindful of the relevance and value of divine commandments. Each day, you will find it easier to be obedient even when faced with temptation. The Scriptures tell us of a number of people who did that, even though they too were imperfect humans. For example, Potiphar's wife repeatedly tried to seduce Joseph. But he did not have any doubts about the stand he would take. The Scripture tells us that 'he refused,' and he stated: "How could I commit this great badness and actually sin against God?"

Joseph knew how he would react even before she tried to seduce him. That made it easier for him when he was faced with temptation. Genesis 39:9 "No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?" Joseph's response was to tell her that to have sex with her would be great wickedness and sin against God.

This was the main motivation for Joseph to abstain from committing adultery and violate his master's trust in him. Joseph believed this sin would deeply offend both God and his master Potiphar. How can you show a resolve similar to that of Joseph?

To do so, you must listen to your inner voice and stir up your conscience. You can decide now what you will do when temptation arises. Learn to say no immediately to things that God hates, by even refusing to dwell on them. Psalm 97:10 “Let those who love the LORD hate evil, for He guards the lives of His faithful ones, and delivers them from the hand of the wicked.”

That way you will not waver when tempted. You will know before hand how you will respond. You would already have settled on your course. Psalm 119:165 “Great peace have those who love your law; nothing can make them stumble.” We can strengthen that belief by comparing the results of obedience with those of disobedience.

Observe the kinds of problems people bring on themselves because they foolishly reject God's wise counsel, then consider how much better your life is because you obey God. Psalm. 32:8 “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go, I will counsel you with my eye upon you.”

A person may know that God has the authority to decide what is right and what is wrong, but he must also accept God's standards for himself. Moreover, God lives in us, and we

are His vessels. We show by our conduct that we genuinely believe that following God's standards is the best way to seek God's pleasure and reward for both this life and the Hereafter and avoid His wrath.

This knowledge and acceptance should fight and thwart the desire of sexual immorality, uncleanness, uncontrolled sexual passion, hurtful desire, and greediness. But if you fail to overcome the temptation, and end up acting upon your desires; anxiety and profound sense of guilt will dominate your mind and you will feel the need to seek forgiveness or be rescued from backsliding that was caused through the power of temptation.

You have by now learnt how to examine your motives and declutter your thoughts. Also, your mind is now in a state that can discern the ability to spot contaminating elements that retard the progress of purifying your soul. You must now constantly cleanse your thoughts by deliberately taking practical steps to dominate your mind with productive thoughts based on truth and just.

We are imperfect, so none of us can completely remove all bad thoughts and desires from our heart and mind. However, whether you act on temptation is a choice, your choice. The

fact is that you are the one who is responsible for how you will live. James 1:14 “But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.”

God is interested in our effort and not necessarily the result. Similarly, the outcome of a decision based on truth and just is equally important as the motive. Many mistakes or errors have turned out to be a blueprint or led to major discoveries especially when due process was followed. Examples abound in sport disciplines, where a mishit or missed stroke, inadvertently produces a masterclass of a shot.

A person who pays attention to himself is alert to dangers caused by external influences of the world and threats from within oneself. Colossians 3:5 “Put to death therefore what is earthly in you, sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.” This means to actively resist and overcome these sinful desires. ‘Deaden’ or ‘put to death’ by examining your motives, decluttering your thoughts and making a deliberate effort to exercise self-control, overcome intemperance and not giving in to these desires.

This is necessary as can be seen in the warning recorded in Luke 21:34 “Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down

with carousing, drunkenness, and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you suddenly like a trap." The verse advises believers to be vigilant and remain alert against being overtaken by the dangers of bad behaviour that can lead to sin; behavior such as excessive partying and alcohol consumption, which can cloud judgment and lead to spiritual apathy.

We must therefore keep working toward our goal which may require reassessment of our associations, routines, and habits. We must keep our senses by remaining calm, thinking clearly, and striving to see matters from both spiritual and physical perspectives. When we do that, our thoughts, speech and deeds will not be controlled by raw emotions. Psalm119:99-100 "I have more insight than all my teachers because I ponder over your reminders. I act with more understanding than older men because I observe your orders".

One must constantly acknowledge that overcoming sin is a spiritual battle that requires God's grace and power. Be mindful of your thoughts, words, and actions, and ensure that they align with God's will, in order to control the sinful aspects of your earthly nature - the carnal mind. This means one must choose to actively reject these things and not

allowing them to control our thoughts or actions.

Psalm 139:2 “You know when I sit and when I rise, you perceive my thoughts from afar.” This verse explains God's intimate and comprehensive knowledge of a person's actions and their thoughts. It also highlights God's awareness of a person's daily activities and routines, from the most mundane to the most significant, as well as God's ability to understand a person's thoughts, even before they are fully formed or expressed.

This can be explained by that feeling of guilt and shame when we kneel or bow our head to pray for forgiveness, for a sin we committed. This drowning feeling of guilt is even more heightened when we know our repentance is not honest, and that we have plans of repeating same.

In Psalm 139:23-24, David felt that way, for he said “search me, O God, and know my heart, try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” This passage is a prayer asking God to examine one's heart and mind thoroughly, to reveal any hidden sin or wrong motives, and to guide them on the right path.

There is no doubt that God will hear your prayer and respond. Your approach to prayers must be like a mission statement, with sincere admission of your failings and a clear cause of action.

Philippians 2:13 “For it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfil his good purpose.” God works within believers to both have the will and the ability to accomplish what pleases Him. The motivation and ability to do God's will come from God Himself, not from human effort alone. It is reassuring to know that God is actively at work within the hearts of believers.

Instead of being overwhelmed by worry, believers are called upon to turn to God in prayer, acknowledging His power and sovereignty.

Philippians 4:6-7 “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

This verse instructs us to present our requests to God honestly and with gratitude. It also says God promises that

His Holy Spirit will guard our hearts and minds in relationship with the truth. The peace offered by God is not the transient feeling of worldly happiness, but a fundamentally abiding sense of well-being that transcends circumstances.

God blesses those who are earnestly seeking Him. Your true repentance and sincere prayer for forgiveness proves your faith in God. 1 John 5:14 "And this is the confidence that we have toward Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us." This confidence in God hearing and answering our prayer is key to protecting your peace of mind. Proverbs 1:3 "But the one listening to me will dwell in security and be undisturbed by the dread of calamity."

Galatians 5:16 "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh." This means when we let the Holy Spirit guide our lives, we will be cautioned from acting on our sinful desires. The passage emphasizes the conflict between the flesh and the mind and advises against being driven by the fleshly desires. The spirit, of course, is eager, but the flesh could be weak.

Once we have established a wholesome routine of spiritual activities, it is essential that we maintain that routine and

keep cultivating proper desires. Since your mind is God's medium of communicating His directions and guidance to you, it is important that you constantly examine your motives and sanitize your mind from negative emotions and unproductive thoughts. It is an active choice you must make in order to align with God's will.

Truth and just in our thoughts and deeds can become intrinsic if we continue to be made new and allow our thoughts to be dominated with virtuousness and righteousness. In any holding vessel, empty space must be filled with matter. Similarly, our thoughts cannot stay fallow, even partly, as the empty space needs to be filled. We cannot wait for only when we have a crucial decision to make before we settle inner conflicts we should occupy our thoughts with the true source of knowledge from the Most Holy One.

This can be achieved by letting our thoughts, speech and deeds be dominated by love and wholesome fear of God, which increases our knowledge, and leads to discernment. We should continue to be made new in our dominant mental attitude of being productive and guided by truth and just.

Matthew 7:24-25 “Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, who built his house upon a rock, and the rain

descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock."

James 3:2 "For we all stumble many times, if anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able to bridle also his whole body." Ecclesiastes 7:20 "For there is no righteous man on earth who always does good and never sins." Surely, no one is perfectly righteous and free from sin, implying that even those who strive to do good are not immune to immoral thoughts.

However, whether or not you act on temptation is a choice, you make. There is another dimension in the concept of the divine decree, as explained in an earlier chapter. This knowledge of divine decree gives us a better understanding and direction by showing us how to handle being offended by someone or when we are faced with trials.

Evil itself exists in all of us, it is one allowing oneself to act on temptation which makes one sinful. This understanding stops one from blaming spiritual forces for our sins. It also helps us to desist from being consumed by vengeance, and thereby seek to exact punishment or wish ill for persons who offend us.

To purify ones soul, one must inculcate the concept of being responsible for the consequence of one's actions or inactions. At the same time, one must approach life with the love and wholesome fear of God.

Mark14:38 "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." When we study God's Word, we are placing ourselves under the influence of the spirit of truth.

This transformative process requires a shift in focus from worldly pleasures and desires to spiritual pursuits, such as prayer, meditation, and service to others. This involves actively resisting and mortifying desires and actions associated to lies, stealing, envy, pride, intemperance, greed, hypocrisy, adultery, idolatry, bearing false witness among others.

Furthermore, renew your mind with positive and uplifting thoughts, replacing sinful thoughts with righteous ones. Cultivate Godly virtues like love, compassion, and kindness, which can help counteract sinful tendencies. Control your 'flesh' in this internal battle by deliberately abstaining from activities or situations that tempt you to sin. Psalm 101:3 "I will not set before my eyes anything that is worthless. I hate

the work of those who fall away; it shall not cling to me."

We are imperfect, so none of us can completely remove all bad thoughts and desires from our heart and mind. Always remember that your thoughts, speech, and deeds should now be guided by truth and just and not influenced by uncontrolled negative emotions. Moreover, the fruit of righteousness is sown in peaceful conditions for those who are making peace.

Psalm 15:1-5 "Lord, who may dwell in your sacred tent? Who may live on your holy mountain? The one whose walk is blameless, who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from their heart, whose tongue utters no slander, who does no wrong to a neighbour, and casts no slur on others, who despises a vile person. But honours those who fear the Lord, who keeps an oath even when it hurts, and does not change their mind. Who lends money to the poor without interest. Who does not accept a bribe against the innocent. Whoever does these things will never be shaken."

James 3:18 states, "And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace." This refers to the positive outcomes and blessings that come from living in accordance with God's will and principles. And these are sown in

peaceful conditions like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

These verses emphasize that producing positive results in one's life and relationships, is cultivated by those who actively seek and promote peace. Philippians 2:3 “Do nothing out of contentiousness or out of egotism, but with humility consider others superior to you.” A major way we show that we are listening to our Creator's voice, is by applying His teachings in our life.

Purification of the soul is not a passive endeavour. It is not enough to simply desire peace, it requires intentional effort and action to create a peaceful environment. One must question the completeness or true richness of the heart when one treats close relations poorly, without experiencing internal agitation. But naturally treats extended relations better, given similar circumstances. Thus, God's Scriptures establishes an entire social structure in which people interact with others, based on relationships, rights and obligations.

Once an individual is at peace with himself and free of any internal agitations, he can then enter truly peaceful relations with others. This starts with those closest to him in his family

and extends to his neighbours and others in the community, eventually extending to humankind. 1 Peter 1:22 “Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart.” This verse shows that obedience to the truth, with reference to the word of God, leads to a purified soul and a genuine love for fellow humans.

One undergoes a transformation that seeks to promote a dual perception and approach to taking our day-to-day decisions, applying both spiritual and physical reasons to occurrences. For that reason, we accept the consequences of our poor choices, thoughtless words, and hasty actions.

This balanced view guides us in approaching life with emphasis on performing actions with sincerity and excellence, with the goal of pleasing ourselves because God lives in us. After all since He is Omnipotent and Omniscient; one need not put up a show for God to see, or for human praise.

Apart from God's blessings and His eternal reward or punishment, there is also the physical consequences of our choices we make. Doing virtuous deeds generate good vitality elements that build a strong foundation for both

spiritual and personal growth. People feel good when they do good, but conversely, feel bad when they disobey God. This is because the spirit recognizes the quality of virtuous elements, receives and reacts favourably. However, the spirit disapproves and agitates to bad elements.

The true beauty or ugliness of a person's spirit is determined by his or her relationship with God and truthfulness in word and deed. This quality is reflected directly in spiritual vitality; higher spirits are brighter than lower spirits. Love is important in this regard as love is the source of spiritual light.

An insincere smile cannot disguise a low spirit for long, while the goodness of even the humblest person will sooner or later shine through, irrespective of external circumstances. In the same way that an unhealthy diet damages the body, malevolent elements damage the spirit. Therefore, the spirit of a person who has lived an evil life is ugly. The spirit gives energy and vitality to the body in the sense that when inspired by love and truth, the spirit generates spirit elements that energize the body to do good.

Depending on what we have done, we may be troubled by our conscience. However, knowing that we are physically and

spiritually accountable for our decisions can prompt us to correct our errors, and avoid repeating them, rather than solely relying on God's merciful and compassionate intervention.

You can be comforted by the fact that the carnal elements of the world, that you are often enslaved by, will become weak and worthless in your eyes. It is worth noting that, even when you are on course to be transformed by purifying your soul, you will be constantly faced with the risk of losing your personal and intimate relationship with God, and returning to previous ungodly ways. Note that this is an indication that your carnal mind is dominating your mind to be enslaved by worldly desires all over again.

Instead, when motivated by love and fear for God, obeying God's commandments becomes a source of joy and fulfilment. God's moderate expectations of us makes His commandments attainable and feel less burdensome, especially, since all of His commandments are for our own benefit.

1 John 5:3 “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.” Gaining knowledge will grow your faith thus

can draw you closer to God. Understanding of God's attributes like He is the most compassionate and merciful, moderate in His expectations for you, spurs you on the journey of purifying your soul.

Ephesians 6:13-17 “Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flying arrows of the evil one (temptation). Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which refers in this regard to the word of God.”

Proverbs 2:5-7 “Then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom, from His mouth come knowledge and understanding, He stores up sound wisdom for the upright. He is a shield to those who walk in integrity.”

The dual approach in this transformation gives a person strength and courage. He knows that God has recorded his

life and his sustenance for him. This comes only from God and is already decreed. He also does not need to sacrifice his vows of dedication to truth and just for anyone who threatens to cut off his sustenance and livelihood. Hence, he need not fear struggling and fighting for what is true and just, for the sake of God.

One should not become arrogant and boastful, if he achieves any goal that he desires, he must know that such an achievement came about not only from hard work and his superior characteristics; but because God in His mercy, had decreed it for him. If God had so wished, He could have put many obstacles in his way and prevented him from reaching his goal. Therefore, instead of becoming full of oneself and arrogant upon reaching his goal, the person who imbibes this transformation becomes well grounded in humility and submission to God.

Ecclesiastes 9:11 "I have seen something else under the sun, the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither is the bread to the wise, nor the wealth to the intelligent, nor the favour to the skilful. For time and chance happen to all." This verse highlights the point that life is often influenced by unpredictable circumstances and events, which are beyond our control.

The actual realities of success in life, like winning a race, depends not only on one's abilities but also on external factors like time and chance. The verse suggests that while intelligence, skill, and strength are important, they are not the absolute guarantees to success.

Time, chance, and fate are all determined by God's will, and they play a significant role in shaping one's life.
The productive servant is encouraged by his faith and guided by truth and just to be enthusiastic and diligent in his service to God and others.

Romans 12:11 “Never be lacking in zeal but keep your spiritual fervour.” Avoiding laziness or complacency, confidence and calmness embodies you knowing that all your decisions are based on both righteous and practical moral standards.

Be on the watch and pray continually, so that you do not come into temptation. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 “Pray constantly.” To that end, pray every day, reflect and meditate on your spiritual progress. Maintain a good routine of personal study of God's Word Attend congregational meetings and prayers and share your faith with others.

To the extent we have made progress in purifying our soul,

let us go on walking orderly in fortifying this transformation to be productive servants of God. You will falter and may feel that you are not making progress or even feel like you are not ready to dedicate fully to this journey. However, when this happens acknowledge the setback and see it as an achievement and part of the process. Take stock, reflect and pray for God's blessing on your efforts to enable you make whatever changes are necessary.

God is absolutely aware of your strengths, weaknesses, and background. Therefore, He does not ask more of you than you can give. We must imitate God by seeing ourselves as He does. Then we will have a sound mind, neither thinking too much or too little of ourselves. 1 Corinthians 28:9 “And you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father and serve Him with a whole heart and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought. If you seek Him, He will be found by you, but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever.”

A productive servant must be very clear about his goal in life. When he is clear about his goal in life, he must be able to identify the means and measures that will assist him to meet that goal. Similarly, he must be aware of the impediments and harmful aspects that harm him with respect to his goal.

When he slips, he needs to know what conditions led to his slip, and the best way that will put him, God willing, right back on the proper track.

Always show and express your gratitude for God's loyal and abundant love which affords us the opportunity for repentance and the possibility of turning round our sins through the transformative power of faith. It is comforting to know that believers, once enslaved to sin, can be set free and now follow a new pattern of life. Romans 6:17 "But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed."

A completely new way of looking at the world may take some adjustments. But the question is what can we do to receive God's support along this journey? Proverb 27:11 "Be wise, my son, and make my heart rejoice, so that I can make a reply to him who taunts me." Constantly tap into the true and just knowledge (whether good or bad) that you are gaining in this journey. Try to gauge your spiritual progress by evaluating the consequences of your past actions and plan the correct course of action when faced with a comparable situation in the future.

The wise course, the course that brings the greatest

happiness is to put God's interests first in our life. When we do so, we will avoid many of the problems experienced by those who focus too much on money, secular work, or themselves. May each of us be determined to be wise and make God's heart rejoice. We can be sure that we will win the race for life because God will give us the strength we need. Isaiah 40:29-31 “He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might He increases strength.”

Do not make changes to please humans or to get closer to the world. True believers make changes to draw closer to God's will which is truth and just. Proverbs 4:18 “But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shinneth more and more unto the perfect day.” God reveals the truth gradually, and we must be willing to wait patiently for the light of truth to get brighter. This verse describes the righteous person's life as progressively getting brighter, like the morning sun growing in intensity until midday. It suggests a continuous growth in understanding, wisdom and godliness for those who follow God's ways consistently with patience.

As you chase true happiness on this path of purification of your soul, this feeling may develop within you. You will see God's workings in everything around you. This will remind you of God and you will no longer be negligent of God and

one's duty towards Him. You will be then God willing, leading your life in a manner very different from before your decision to purify your soul.

Your love for God was first based on knowledge, but that love along with faith deepens as you see how He answers your prayers. This will make you want to do things that please God. Our hope acts as a figurative helmet that protects our thinking and safeguards us from choosing a self-indulgent lifestyle, which would spoil our relationship with God.

Today many who have no hope in God's promises, live for the moment, grasping whatever pleasures are available to them. Do not be deceived by the attitude of people who say, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.' This is the false belief that there is no life or accountability after death and, therefore, what we do in this life does not matter. We on the other hand, put our trust in the future promised by our Creator.

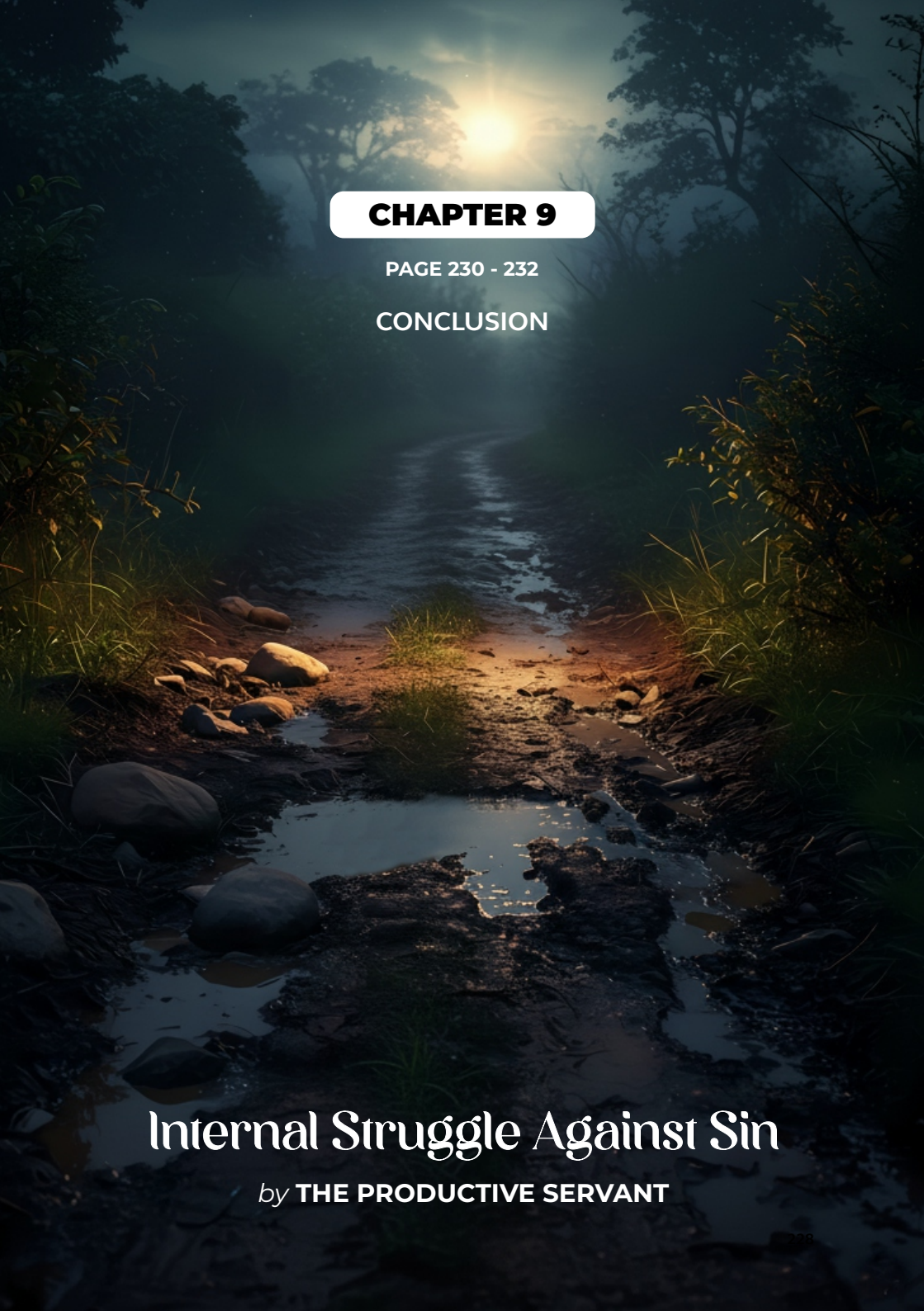
Life on earth is preparation for eternal life in the spiritual world. Whatever is left unaccomplished of this earthly purpose must be completed while in the spiritual world after the body dies. People on earth and in the spirit world exist at various levels of maturity, because humanity is presently distant from God.

There are few people who are truly conscious of the spirit world and how it operates. Yet, it is the place where all humanity is destined to live for eternity after passing from the physical world, upon the death of the body.

Throughout history, scholars and pious people have tried to explain the joy and contentment that enters their hearts through knowing their Lord. A famous scholar attempted to express the joy that he felt from his faith in God and the deeds he performed. He said in this world there is a paradise that whoever does not enter will not enter the Paradise in the Hereafter.

He also said, "What can my enemies do to me? Certainly, my Paradise and garden are in my chest." The lifestyle requirements of the Hereafter call for practice in this life: no lying, no cheating, no arrogance, no domination, and no classism.

The fruits of purification of the soul are perpetual fruits for all times. The productive servant finds their taste, experiences their sweetness, and moves about in its pleasures. Every time the person increases in the steps of purification, those fruits increase in like manner.



CHAPTER 9

PAGE 230 - 232

CONCLUSION

Internal Struggle Against Sin

by **THE PRODUCTIVE SERVANT**

Truth and just is simply the source of what God considers law. Thus one's 'personal reasoning,' moral and ethical codes, must also be subjected to the same source.

The productive servant must work diligently to codify and imprint the relationship between one's thoughts, speech and deeds with truth and just. Such that, this code will permeate in his or her life beyond situations covered in this work or any other book.

CHAPTER 9
CONCLUSION



I believe God created all things, both negative and positive elements such as: good and evil, male and female, negative and positive emotions, life and death, truth and falsehood, right and wrong, happiness and sadness, as well as the physical and the spiritual.

He gave us the gift of choice, placing humans at the center of His creation to discover each others harmonious path. God desires of us to persevere our true servitude to Him despite our weaknesses; through bitter experiences and lingering regrets. This is because failure is part of God's will for mankind; He does not judge by outcome, but by effort. Regarding the Hereafter, it depends entirely on one's worship of God in the proper way.

Remember; the closest humanity can come to piety is by being just. Micah 6:8 "He has shown you what is good; and what the LORD requires of you is to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God."

Quran 5:8 “O believers! Stand firm for Allah and bear true testimony. Do not let the hatred of a people lead you to injustice. Be just; that is closer to righteousness. And be mindful of Allah; surely Allah is All-Aware of what you do.”

A common concept across many religions is that while material wealth may be distributed somewhat randomly in this life, true and lasting reward is tied to righteousness and devotion to God.

Truth and just are the basis of what God considers law; thus one’s personal reasoning and moral codes must be subjected to the same basis.

2 Corinthians 13:14 “The grace of the Lord **Jesus Christ**, and the love of **God**, and the fellowship of the **Holy Spirit** be with you all.”

With good faith, when the emboldened words (key words) in this verse are interchanged with their corresponding words in this book's glossary, it brings God's guidance into our day-to-day affairs:

The grace of **truth** and the love of **just,** and the fellowship of the **Spirit of truth-your conscience** be with you all.

Malachi 3:10 "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it".

Does this quotation have meanings beyond the literal sense of tithes, the temple, the storehouse, and heaven?

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Purpose of this book

This book emphasizes a practical, here-and-now interpretation of Scripture, guiding readers toward a transformation of mind and behavior. It invites readers to shed their former ways of thinking, and to embrace a new mindset. By doing so, readers can prove to themselves a change that reflects God's purpose and teaching of truth and just; "to be renewed in the spirit of your minds" (Ephesians 4:23).

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Acknowledgment

I offer praise and gratitude to our Creator for the privilege of writing this book. If any of my portrayals have fallen short of His truth, I humbly seek forgiveness.

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