248749 - Tricks that the Shaytan uses to misguide people

the question

What is the order of importance of acts of worship? I learned from an Islamic tape that the Shaytan has tricks, one of which is that he starts by trying to make the person a disbeliever; if he cannot do that, he tries to make him not pray; if he cannot do that, he tries to prevent him from doing acts of worship that earn greater reward, and so on, until he comes to the least that he can do, which is making the person overindulge in what is permissible; in other words, he makes him extravagant and wasteful I hope that you can explain the order of acts of worship in terms of importance, because I do not know which bring great reward and which bring greater reward.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

It is as if the questioner is referring to something that she heard from a da'iyah, quoting something that Ibn al-Qayyim mentioned in his valuable book *Madarij as-Salikin*. He (may Allah have mercy on him) mentioned seven diversions through which the accursed Shaytan is keen to lead the son of Adam to doom, and he does not move on from the diversion that would lead to the worst outcome to the one that comes after it unless he has failed to achieve anything with the first one.

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

1. The first diversion is that through which the Shaytan tries to lead him to disbelief in Allah, His religion, the meeting with Him, His perfect attributes and what His Messengers have told us about Him. If he achieves his goal through this diversion, then the fire of his enmity will cool down and he will feel relief. But if the individual overcomes this devilish attempt by virtue of his insight, which is based on guidance, and is saved from it, and the light of faith in his heart remains intact,

then the Shaytan will move on to the second diversion.

2. The second diversion is the diversion of innovation (bid ‘ah), whether that involves belief that is contrary to that with which Allah sent His Messenger and sent down His Book; or through worshipping Allah in ways for which Allah has not granted permission, such as rituals and practices that have been introduced into the religion, none of which Allah will accept…

If the individual overcomes this devilish attempt and is saved from this diversion by the light of the Sunnah, and he protected himself against it by truly following the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and adhering to what was narrated from the best generations, namely the Sahabah and those who followed them in truth, it is very unlikely that the people of later generations will allow such a person to be safe from this type of diversion. If he escapes them, then the promoters of innovation will set up traps and cause him much trouble, and they will accuse him of being an innovator.

3. The third diversion is major sins. If the Shaytan has a chance, he will try to entice him and make major sins appear attractive to him, and make him delay repentance. … If the individual overcomes this devilish attempt by the protection of Allah, or through sincere repentance that will save him from it, then the Shaytan will resort to the fourth diversion.

4. The fourth diversion is minor sins. The Shaytan will encourage him to commit many of them, and will tell him: Do not worry about minor sins, so long as you avoid major sins; do you not know that minor sins may be forgiven if you avoid major sins and do some righteous deeds? And he will keep trying to persuade him that it is not a serious issue, so that he will persist in them, to the extent that the one who commits a major sin but is afraid, worried and filled with regret will be better off than him, because persisting in minor sin is worse than the major sin referred to above. There is no major sin if one repentants and seeks forgiveness, and there is no minor sin if one persists in it. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Beware of the sins that you regard as minor.” Then he gave a likeness of that, namely people who halted in the wilderness and needed to collect firewood, so one person brought a stick, and another brought a stick, until they had accumulated a large pile, then they lit a fire and cooked their bread. Similarly,

the sins that people regard as minor accumulate whilst the individual thinks that they are nothing, until they lead to his doom.

5. The fifth diversion is permissible actions for which there is no blame on the one who does them, but the Shaytan will distract him with them, so that he does not do a great deal of acts of worship and will not strive to acquire provision for the hereafter. Then the Shaytan tries to make him give up doing some Sunnahs, then after he makes him give up some Sunnah acts of worship, he tries to make him give up obligatory acts of worship. The least harm he may be able to inflict on him is making him miss out on a great deal of good deeds and causing him to fail to attain high status. If the individual realised how much he was missing out on of good deeds, he would not have missed any of the acts of worship, but he is ignorant of the reward he could attain for every act of worship. If he is saved from this diversion by virtue of his perfect insight and the light of guidance, and his knowing the virtue of the acts of worship and the importance of doing a great deal of them, how short his life is, how important it is that he should strive in doing righteous deeds and how generous Allah is in giving reward, and he becomes very careful about how he spends his time, and he does not let any minute pass without earning reward for good deeds – in that case the enemy will seek to deploy the sixth diversion.

6. The sixth diversion is causing him to do righteous deeds and acts of worship that earn less reward than others, and prompting him to focus on that. So he makes appealing to him the virtue that he will gain from that, and brings to his mind the rewards that he will earn thereby, in order to distract him thereby from other acts of worship that are superior to them and would bring him greater reward. As the Shaytan failed to stop him attaining any reward at all, he tries to reduce the reward that he does earn, so that he will not attain perfection and high status. He does this by distracting him with acts of worship and righteous deeds that are inferior in terms of reward, to prevent him from doing those that will earn him greater reward, and with those that are less dear to Allah, to prevent him from doing those which are more dear to Him.

But where are those who are able to overcome this diversion? They are few in this world, for the Shaytan manages to ensnare the majority with the first diversion. If someone is saved from this

diversion, because he has learned about righteous deeds and their level of importance before Allah, and how they vary in virtue, and what the yearn of reward, and he has learned to distinguish between those of greatest importance and those of the least importance, between those which are superior and those which are inferior, between those which are foremost and those which are less than that, between those that are dominant and those that are subordinate, then he will be saved from this diversion. It is very important for the one who wants to be saved from this diversion to learn that among deeds there are those which are dominant and those which are subordinate, those which are foremost and those which are less than that, those which are at the pinnacle and those which are lower than that, as it is mentioned in the sahih hadith: “The best prayer for forgiveness (*sayyid al-istighfar*) that a person may say is: *Allahumma anta rabbiy, la ilaha illa anta*… (O Allah, You are my Lord, there is no god worthy of worship except You…).” According to another hadith: “Jihad is the pinnacle of the matter.” And in another report: “Good deeds boasted to one another,” and each deed mentioned its status and virtue, and charity had an advantage over all of them. No one can overcome this diversion except those who have deep insight and sincerity, and are people of knowledge who are helped to follow the path of truth. If they give due appreciation to various acts of worship and righteous deeds, each will be given his due.

If he is saved from that, there remains one diversion through which his enemy will try to harm him, and it is unavoidable. If anyone were to be saved from it, it would be the messengers and prophets of Allah, the dearest of creation to Him. This diversion is the enemy’s motivating his troops to cause all manner of harm, physical and verbal, stemming from ill will, and is commensurate with the individual’s efforts to do good. The greater his striving, the greater the enemy’s efforts and the more people he will prompt to cause him harm, and he will rally his troops against him to cause him every possible harm. There is no way he can overcome this diversion, for the harder he strives and the greater his efforts to call people to Allah and urge them to uphold His commands, the harder his enemy will strive to tempt foolish people to cause him harm. When he is faced with this diversion, he should prepare for war and start fighting the enemy for the sake of Allah and with the help of Allah."(*Madarij as-Saalikin bayna Manazil Iyyaka na‘budu wa iyyaka nasta‘in* 1/237).

Secondly:

Regarding the question about the order of acts of worship, and which is the best of them, this has been answered previously on this website, and we have explained that it varies from one person and situation to another.

For information on that, please see question no. 21374 .

However, one of the most beneficial things that will help a person in his religious affairs and keep him steadfast on the path of Islam, and will also be most effective in making him consistent in obeying Allah is constantly remembering his Lord in all his affairs, and constantly reciting dhikr in all situations.

It was narrated from ‘Abdullah ibn Bisr (may Allah be pleased with him) that a man said: O Messenger of Allah, the teachings of Islam are becoming overwhelming for me. Tell me of something that I can adhere to. He said: “Keep your tongue moist with remembrance of Allah.” Narrated by at-Tirmidhi (3375); he said: It is a hasan gharib hadith. It was classed as sahih by al-Albani.

And Allah knows best.