



## Article by Ameer Mustapha Elturk



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ وَالصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ  
*In the name of Allah, praise be to Allah and  
Peace and Blessings upon the Messenger of Allah*

### The Will to Conquer the Soul

إِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَأَمَّارَةٌ بِالسُّوءِ إِلَّا مَا رَحِمَ رَبِّي إِنَّ رَبِّي غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

*“Indeed, the soul is ever inclined to evil, except those upon whom my Lord has mercy.”*  
[Yusuf, 12:53]

The *al-naafs al-ammarah bis-su'* (النَّفْسُ لَأَمَّارَةٌ بِالسُّوءِ) is the lower self, the ego that pulls us toward sin, arrogance, desires, selfishness, and heedlessness.

We must keep in mind that satan (*shaytan*) has one goal. He wants to destroy humanity, he wants to destroy us, he wants to destroy you. But not by brute force. He uses deception. He whispers doubt, lowers your self-worth, makes you fear poverty, implants resentment and jealousy in your heart, and invites you to despair.

الشَّيْطَانُ يَعِدُكُمُ الْفَقْرَ وَيَأْمُرُكُم بِالْفَحْشَاءِ

*“Satan threatens you with poverty and commands you to immorality...”* [al-Baqarah, 2:268]

He will offer you the world—status, fame, instant gratification—then crush your soul from within. It is a trap. Do not get caught in his game.

The conquest of the soul, or the *naafs*, is among the greatest struggle a believer must endure. The Prophet (ﷺ) referred to it as the greater jihad.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, “The *mujahid* (the true struggler) is the one who strives against his own soul for the sake of Allah.” (Tirmidhi) This is *jihad al-naafs* - (جهاد النفس) the greatest struggle.

The following steps are necessary to combat the *al-naafs al-ammarah bis-su'* (النَّفْسُ الْأَمَّارَةُ بِالسُّوءِ)

### The First Step: Realizing You are at War.

**Refusing to Play the Devil's Game:** The first step in conquering your soul is refusing to get caught in the devil's game. *Shaytan* (satan) is not just an enemy in theory — he is a master strategist, playing the long game. He will tempt you with the world; offering comfort, fame, wealth, desire, and distractions. Once you take the bait, he doesn't stop there. No — that's when his real attack begins.

He begins to destroy you from the inside. He plays with your mind. He implants doubt in your heart, doubt in Allah, doubt in your worth, doubt in your ability to change. He whispers fear into your soul, fear that you're not enough, fear that you'll never be free, fear that you've gone too far to return.

He will make you feel worthless, small, hopeless, weak, like you're alone and that you'll never be good enough. That's his trap; mental manipulation, emotional warfare, and spiritual ambush.

And the sad part is that many people fall into it not because they're evil, but because they are unaware. They do not even realize they are under attack.

**The first step in conquering the soul is to recognize the trap and refuse to play.**

Speak to the devil and say: “I see you, shaytan. I see your tricks. You can't give me what only Allah can. I don't want your illusions. I want the truth. I want peace. I want Jannah. I declare war on you.”

Jabir (RAA) narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, “Indeed, satan flows through the son of Adam as the blood flows through his body.” He was asked, “Even you, O Messenger of Allah?” He replied, “Even me, but Allah helped me against him and he submitted (or became Muslim), so he only commands me to do good.” (al-Tirmidhi)

This hadith highlights the profound reality of the constant internal whispering of the devil.

1. “Satan flows like blood” — This expression metaphorically illustrates how persistent and intimate the whisperings of satan can be. He seeks to influence our thoughts, desires, and decisions at every turn.

2. “Even you?” — The Prophet (ﷺ) affirms that even he had a *qareen* (a companion from the devils) assigned to him, but Allah (SWT) subdued him. This shows that the Prophet (ﷺ) was protected from the evil influence of satan and that the devil accompanying him became obedient and only whispered good.

The Qur’an tells us that there are devils from among jinn and humans,

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَا لِكُلِّ نَبِيٍّ عَدُوًّا شَيَاطِينَ الْإِنْسِ وَالْجِنِّ يُوحِي بَعْضُهُمْ إِلَى بَعْضٍ زُخْرُفَ الْقَوْلِ غُرُورًا ۚ

“Thus We have made for every prophet an enemy – devils from mankind and jinn, inspiring one another with decorative speech in delusion.” [al-An’am, 6:112]

Thus, there exist external devils – from among jinn and humans, who may mislead or influence others. Internal devils (*qareen*), on the other hand, (a personal shaytan) is appointed to each person. This is likely what the Prophet (ﷺ) was referring to in this hadith. *Shaytan*’s influence is real, intimate, and persistent, but not invincible.

3. “Allah helped me against him”—The Prophet (ﷺ) was protected, but we too can resist *shaytan* through *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah), *taqwa* (God-consciousness), and *du’a* (supplication).

With sincere effort, repentance, and divine help, we too can conquer our *qareen* and overcome the lower self (*nafs*).

### The Devil's Influence:

وَمَنْ يَعْشُ عَنْ ذِكْرِ الرَّحْمَنِ نُقَيِّضْ لَهُ شَيْطَانًا فَهُوَ لَهُ قَرِينٌ ۚ

“And whoever turns away from the remembrance of the Most Merciful – We appoint for him a devil (*qareen*) to be his associate.” [al-Zukhruf, 43:36]

This ayah explicitly warns that those who turn away from the remembrance (*dhikr*) of Allah will be assigned a *qareen*—a constant, intimate companion from among the devils—who become a persistent source of misguidance. The term *qareen* refers to a close associate or companion, and in this context, it signifies a devil who continually whispers evil, manipulates desires, and seeks to pull the individual further away from divine guidance.

For the Muslim who neglects regular *dhikr*—such as the daily prayers, Qur’anic recitation, or supplication—this neglect weakens their spiritual defenses, making them more susceptible to the influence of the *qareen*. The *qareen* does not force one to commit sin, but acts subtly, suggesting and beautifying sinful behavior, fostering doubts, inflaming desires, and steering one toward heedlessness and disobedience.

The Qur’an repeatedly emphasizes the role of satan and his allies in leading people astray, but it also makes clear that protection lies in staying connected to Allah (SWT) through His remembrance. The more a person engages in acts of devotion and reflection, the less influence the *qareen* has over them.

### Neglecting the Remembrance of Allah (SWT):

Neglecting *dhikr* leaves the soul empty and vulnerable. The *qareen*, once empowered, influences the heart and mind, gradually detaching the person from the path of righteousness, distorting their priorities, and causing them to fall into patterns of destructive behavior. This ayah is a powerful reminder of the spiritual consequences of heedlessness and the importance of remaining connected to Allah (SWT) through regular remembrance and obedience.

### The Role of the Qur’an and Remembrance:

On the other hand, those who engage with the Qur’an, practice *dhikr*, and remain in constant connection with Allah (SWT) are protected from this harmful influence. The Qur’an itself is a guide that helps to purify the soul and shields the believer from the whispers of *shaytan* and the *qareen*. Through the Qur’an, a Muslim gains awareness of what is right and wrong, strengthens their relationship with Allah (SWT), and keeps their heart steadfast and tranquil on the righteous path.

الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ ۚ

“Those who believe and whose hearts find comfort in the remembrance of Allah. Surely in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find comfort.” [al-Ra’d, 13:28]

This ayah emphasizes that keeping Allah (SWT) in one’s heart and mind—through prayer, remembrance, and reflection—is essential to maintaining spiritual protection and guidance.

“Indeed, the remembrance of Allah is greater.” [al-ʿAnkabut, 29:45]

### The Remedy:

The remedy to overcome the influence of the *qareen* and avoid deviating from the straight path is:

1. Constant connection with Allah (SWT) through *dhikr*, prayer, and the recitation of the Qurʿan.
2. Seeking refuge in Allah from the whispers of *shaytan* and his companions.
3. Repentance and seeking forgiveness when one falls into sin, which cleanses the soul and weakens the *qareen*’s influence.
4. Sincerity in intention and always striving to align one’s actions with the guidance of the Qurʿan and Sunnah.

The remembrance of Allah (SWT) and keeping one’s heart attached to Allah’s guidance is the protection against this harmful influence.

Don’t let the devil define you. Let Allah refine you.

### Step Two: Recognize the Enemy Within

The greatest battle one will ever face is not with any external foe, but with the *naḥs*—the ego, the lower self. While the well-known saying is often incorrectly attributed to the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) through Abdullah ibn Abbas, it more accurately traces back to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, a respected Tabiʿī (successor to the Companions), may Allah have mercy on him. He said, “Your enemy is not the one you are relieved of by killing him; rather, your true enemy is your own soul that resides between your two sides.” Tahdhīb al-Āthār Musnad ‘Umar 2/812

قال الحسن البصري رحمه الله ليس “عدوك الذي إن قتلته استرحت منه ولكن عدوك نفسك التي بين جنبيك” تهذيب الآثار مسند عمر

This enemy whispers arrogance when you are praised, jealousy when others succeed, lust when you are alone, and despair when you slip. But recognizing that this voice is not *you* is the beginning of mastery.

### Step Three: Diagnose the Spiritual Diseases

To conquer the soul, one must first diagnose its illnesses. Among them are:

1. Pride (*Kibr* - كبر) Thinking you are better than others.
2. Envy (*Hasad* - حسد) Resenting the blessings others have.
3. Greed (*Jashaʿ* - جشع) Always wanting more, never content.
4. Lust (*Shahwah* - شهوة) Being enslaved to desire.
5. Anger (*Ghadab* - غضب) Losing control and harming others.
6. Showing Off (*Riyaʿ* - رياء) Worshipping not for Allah but for people’s praise.
7. Despair (*Yaʿs* - يأس) Giving up on Allah’s mercy.

Each of these traits, if left unchecked, blinds one’s heart and makes the soul heavy and veiled from the light of Allah (SWT).

### Step Four: Purify the Soul with *Tazkiyah*

The Qurʿan reveals,

وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا ۖ فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا ۖ قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَن زَكَّاهَا ۖ وَقَدْ خَابَ مَن دَسَّاهَا ۖ

“By the soul and the One Who proportioned it. Then He inspired it with [the knowledge of] its wickedness and its righteousness. Successful indeed is the one who purifies it, and ruined is the one who corrupts it.” [al-Shams, 91:7-10]

Swearing by the soul emphasizes the divine creation and balance given to every soul. Allah (SWT) instilled in every human being an innate ability to recognize both immoral and moral inclinations. The result of self-purification (*tazkiyah*) is spiritual success while neglecting or polluting the soul results in utter destruction and failure.

*Tazkiyah* means to cleanse one’s soul of its diseases and beautify it with its cure. The cure is:

1. Humility in place of pride.
2. Gratitude in place of envy.
3. Contentment in place of greed.
4. Chastity in place of lust.
5. Patience in place of anger.
6. Sincerity in place of showing off.
7. Hope in place of despair.

This can be done through consistent awareness of our thoughts and actions. “Where have I corrupted my soul?” One must ask him or herself. *Dhikr* (remembrance), *duʿa*, *salah*, reflection, and companionship with the righteous puts one on the right track.

### Step Five: Strengthen the Soul with Worship

*Ibadah* isn't just rituals—it's medicine. When you pray with humility, fast with patience, give charity with love, you are strengthening your soul like a warrior trains for battle. Every act of sincere worship breaks the chains the devil tries to wrap around you.

### Step Six: Seek Allah's Help Constantly

You cannot conquer your soul alone. You need divine help. Invoke daily the beautiful *dua* ' the Prophet taught us,

اللَّهُمَّ آتِ نَفْسِي تَقْوَاهَا، وَزَكِّهَا أَنْتَ خَيْرُ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا، أَنْتَ وَلِيُّهَا وَمَوْلَاهَا

*"O Allah, grant my soul a sense of righteousness and purify it, for You are the best to purify it. You are its Guardian and its Protecting Friend"* (Muslim)

One needs to constantly seek refuge in Allah (SWT) from the evil of one's own self.

اللهم إني أعوذ بك من شر نفسي

"O Allah, I seek refuge in You from the evil of my own self."

### Step Seven: Keep Fighting Until the End

This journey is not a one and done. You will slip, fall, regress. But every time you get up, you are proving your sincerity. The Prophet (ﷺ) said, *"The strong believer is more beloved to Allah than the weak one."* The strong believer isn't one who never sins, but one who never stops fighting.

The diseases of the soul are too many to name. Among them are arrogance, envy, anger, love of *dunya*, heedlessness, insincerity, hypocrisy, pride, and addiction to desires. These are traps of the *nafs* that must be recognized and treated.

Conquering the soul begins with sincere *tawbah* (repentance)—the gateway to transformation. Allah (SWT) is All-Merciful, and no matter how far one may have strayed, His door remains open. As the Prophet (ﷺ) said, *"Every son of Adam sins, and the best of those who sin are those who repent"* (Tirmidhi). Alongside repentance; self-discipline, especially through fasting, serves as a powerful tool for curbing the desires of the lower self. The Prophet (ﷺ) described fasting as a shield, a means to develop the inner strength necessary to resist temptation and purify the heart. Furthermore, seeking knowledge illuminates the path forward—knowledge of Allah, the self, and the spiritual diseases that corrupt the heart fosters humility, awareness, and alignment with divine guidance. Through these three—*tawbah*, discipline, and knowledge—the soul can be refined and elevated toward its higher purpose.

The journey from the commanding soul (*al-nafs al-ammārah*) to the self-reproaching soul (*al-nafs al-lawwāmah*), and ultimately to the tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭma'innah*), is one of spiritual struggle (*mujāhadah*), self-awareness, and divine grace. Its aim is to reach a state of complete contentment with oneself and with Allah (SWT).

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ ۖ اٰرْجِعِيْ اِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً ۖ فَادْخُلِيْ فِيْ عِبَادِيْ ۖ وَادْخُلِيْ جَنَّاتِيْ ۝

*"O tranquil soul, return to your Lord well pleased and well pleasing. So, enter among My servants, and enter My Garden."* [al-Fajr, 89:27–30]

May we strive to be among those who conquer their soul, not those who are conquered by it. Ameen.

The famous adage, *"If there is a will, there is a way"* is an encouraging statement — one that tells us we are not helpless. That within us lies the power to change our lives. That no matter how difficult the path is, if we are determined enough, we can find a way forward.

The adage emphasizes the power of determination, but willingness to change is what activates that will.

In the Islamic tradition, there is a more profound, spiritually-rooted version of this idea. Allah (SWT) says in the Qur'an:

وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا ۝

*"And whoever has taqwa of Allah, He will make a way out for him/her."* [al-Talaq 65:2]

This ayah teaches us that the key to unlocking divine help in our lives is *taqwa* — God-consciousness, reverent fear of Allah, and a sincere desire to obey Him. When we align our will with what pleases Allah (SWT), and guard our hearts, our actions, and our intentions out of love and reverence for Him, He takes responsibility for opening the doors that seem closed.

Having *true* consciousness of Allah (SWT) - as one ought to have— means choosing to trust Allah (SWT), even when it is hard, even when you are stuck, Allah (SWT) will open a path for you. That's not just a "way," it is divinely created ease, a path out of difficulty, confusion, or tightness.

The worldly adage tells us that your effort is enough. The Qur'an, on the other hand, tells us, yes, have the will, but root that will in *taqwa*. Then, even when your resources fail, Allah's mercy will not.

*Taqwa* is not just about wanting something — it's about wanting Allah's guidance enough to act upon it. Then, the "way" comes — not always the way we imagined, but a way better than what we could create for ourselves.

*Taqwa* is not passive. It is active. It means making intentional choices — choosing honesty over deceit, patience over frustration, prayer over heedlessness, hope over despair. And when we do that, Allah (SWT) responds, not only by easing our path but by providing solutions and sustenance “from where we do not expect.”

One may have the will but no opportunity, or the opportunity but no strength. But with *taqwa*, Allah (SWT) *guarantees* to make a way out — even from ways “one never expected.” So, in essence, the Qur’anic message takes the human-centered phrase “if there is a will, there is a way” and lifts it to a spiritual level, “if there is *taqwa*, Allah will *make* a way.”

### Human Will vs. Spiritual Will

The phrase “if there is a will, there is a way” reflects inner resolve, but it’s limited to the material or psychological realm.

The Qur’anic version elevates that concept. *Taqwa* is a deeper kind of will — a will rooted in surrender, reverence, moral clarity, and longing for Allah’s pleasure.

*Taqwa* is not just about pushing through life with brute strength — it is about aligning one’s heart with Allah’s pleasure and then walking forward, knowing He walks with you.

And so, if we are looking for change, healing, clarity, or success — let us not just summon our willpower. Let us summon *taqwa*, let us root our resolve in faith, and let us trust the One who controls all paths.

وَمَنْ يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ ﴿١٠٣﴾

“And whoever relies upon Allah — then He is sufficient for him/her.” [al-Talaq 65:3]

Many people *desire* better outcomes, peace, success, closeness to God, but without the willingness to change, the will remains dormant. The first spiritual breakthrough begins with *ikhlas* (sincerity) and a readiness to face discomfort, to leave behind unhealthy habits, toxic patterns, or even just complacency.

The Qur’an touches on this principle beautifully,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّى يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ ﴿١٠٤﴾

“Indeed, Allah does not change the state of a people until they change what is within themselves (inner realities — their hearts, intentions, and ways.)” [al-Ra’d,13:11]

Here, Allah (SWT) is telling us that *transformation is possible*, but it starts from within. That inner willingness — the readiness to shift, to let go, to strive — is the catalyst.

So yes, the willingness to change is the ignition key to the will, and the will is the engine that drives transformation. Without it, all the guidance and tools in the world remain untouched.

And then comes *tawwakul* ‘*ala Allah* - توكل على الله

*Tawwakul* ‘*ala Allah* (placing trust in Allah) is also not passive. It doesn’t mean sitting back and waiting for change to happen while we remain unchanged. True *tawakkul* is trusting Allah *as you take the steps* — even if those steps are uncertain or difficult. It’s like the Prophet (ﷺ) said, “Tie your camel and trust in Allah.” (Tirmidhi) You tie the camel — that is, you *do your part* — and then you rely on Allah (SWT) for the outcome. That “*doing your part*” includes the willingness to change what’s inside: our attitudes, our habits, our reactions, our fears. *Tawwakul* ‘*ala Allah* is not replacing action with hope. It is walking the path of change with hope in Allah (SWT).

Once again, Allah (SWT) says, “Indeed, Allah does not change the state of a people until they change what is within themselves” [al-Ra’d,13:11]

He (SWT) also informed,

وَمَنْ يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ ﴿١٠٣﴾

“And whoever has *tawakkul* upon Allah — then He is sufficient for him/her.” [al-Talaq, 65:3]

The combination of the two ayahs teaches us that transformation requires both inner willingness and effort, and total trust in Allah’s help.

The well-known adage, “If there is a will, there is a way,” emphasizes the power of human determination. The Qur’anic ayah, “And whoever relies upon Allah — then He is sufficient for him/her,” offers a divinely rooted and spiritually rich version of the same idea — one that connects willpower with God-consciousness (*taqwa*) and divine assistance.

“And whoever has *taqwa* of Allah — He will make for him/her a way out and will provide for him/her from where he/she does not expect. And whoever puts his trust in Allah, then He is sufficient for him/her.” [al-Talaq, 65:2,3]

