

Three Signs of Misfortune

From *al-Risalah al-Qushairiyyah* pg. 165

Muaz Billoo

Part of what makes Imam Abdul Karim ibn Hawazin al-Qushairi's (d. 465) *al-Risalah al-Qushairiyyah* a celebrated work on Tasawwuf is that he goes over brief biographies and advices of the major Imams of Tasawwuf until the 5th century, who are considered the golden standards of the external and internal practice of Islam. They were living embodiments of the Qur'an and Sunnah. Among these individuals was Imam Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn al-Fadl al-Balkhi, who passed away in the year 319.

Imam al-Qushairi narrates that Imam Muhammad ibn al-Fadl al-Balkhi was asked, **“What is the sign of misfortune?”** Imam al-Balkhi responded, “Three things (are signs of misfortune):

1. He is granted knowledge, while he is deprived of the ability to act (*amal*).
2. He is granted the ability to act but is deprived of sincerity.
3. He is granted the company of the righteous people, but he does not respect them.”

Imam ‘Abdul Mu’ti al-Lakhmi (d. 638) says in *al-Dalalah ‘Ala Fawaid al-Risalah* 1/446,

“This is true, for the one who is granted knowledge and does not act upon it either does not act upon what is necessary and what is recommended, or he simply does not act upon what is recommended. If he acts upon what is necessary, then he is safe, and his action will be evidence against him for coming up short in the recommended acts after being aware of them.

If he is granted the ability to hasten in recommended good deeds and is not granted sincerity...he will lose in this life and after death.

If Allah favors him to be able to mingle with the righteous people and does not value them nor their status with Allah, then he has not respected them, and will treat them in the worst of manners. He will lose out on all sorts of good, and trials will flood into his life.”