

Regret for the Past: Its Dominating Influence and Overcoming It

Why Do We Fall into the Trap of Regret for the Past? What Is the Role of Satan in This?

Oh, if only I hadn't done that certain thing;

If only I could go back in time...

These regrets are familiar to many of us, regrets that stem from lingering on the past, which constantly divert our focus from the present and the future, and this very distraction of focus from the present and the future itself will lead to new regrets in the future.

Are you also one of those who are constantly tormented by regret for the past?

Can we get rid of negative thoughts and regret for the past?

Do you know where regret for the past originates?

Have you heard about Satan's attack from behind?

As we mentioned in previous lessons, Satan is a real and external entity; it is a general term for calling any wicked and deceitful being that deceives or misguides human beings. Satan works tirelessly to deceive us by planting negative thoughts and regret for the past as well as enticing temptations to lead us astray from the Straight Path. This evil being attacks us from all directions, front, back, right, and

left¹ to render us incapable of building a beautiful eternity; therefore, we must consider Satan as one of our most important and dangerous enemies.²

Of course, if we pay attention, we all have accepted Satan within us as a deceitful and misleading being; for example, in our everyday conversations, we often hear phrases like, “I’m tempted by Satan to knock him down for good” or “Satan is whispering to me to ruin his reputation,” and similar phrases, or when we want to talk about something or an action, we say, “knock on the wood” to prevent the evil eye; it means we assume that Satan, with temptations, might create difficulties in our affairs. However, despite all this, unfortunately, we do not take him seriously and do not seek to repel his attacks. He is an enemy who is always with us and is constantly trying to destroy both our worldly life and the hereafter.

Any sound mind accepts that we must never ignore such a deceitful enemy; but rather, we must make every effort with complete vigilance to protect ourselves from his attacks. How can we truly avoid falling for the deceit of this wicked enemy?

In this lesson, we will discuss Satan’s attack from behind and regret for the past; it is an attack related to negative events from the past. We will also explore the solution to confront these negative thoughts.

How Does Satan Generate Feelings of Regret and Negative Thoughts?

As mentioned, Satan's attack from behind is related to our past. Sins, resentments, and failures are three crucial factors in our past that Satan uses in this attack. By

¹. Quran, 7:17

². Quran, 35:6

exploiting these three factors, Satan ignites regret for the past and negative thoughts within us; for instance, we constantly think, “Why did I commit that sin?”; “If I hadn't invested in that business, I wouldn't have lost my money”; “He disrespected me by not inviting me to his party.” These thoughts lead to thousands of regrets that occupy our minds and hearts.

Satan's goal in attacking from behind is to cause sorrow, humiliation, despair, and fear, and diminish our self-confidence. In essence, Satan brings our sins, resentments, and failures to light to prevent us from moving toward perfection.

Sins and the Accompanying Regret

The sins we have committed in past are one of Satan's tools in the attack from behind. By reminding us of past sins, Satan keeps our constant focus on them, leading to feelings of defeat and self-loathing. Through this deception, we constantly see ourselves as unworthy of a close and strong relationship with our Creator and the Infallible Imams (PBUT). Some of us still dwell on a sin we committed years ago, constantly blaming ourselves and regretting our past actions. No matter how big our sins may be, they should never lead us to distance ourselves from God, because God is greater than our sins.

Reminding Us of Resentments

In the attack from behind, resentments are another tool of Satan. Satan invests heavily in our resentments and conflicts with others, constantly bringing up our bitter memories of them, not only weakening our morale but also causing a rift in

our relationships with them. Satan is persistently trying to bring forth bitter memories, hostilities, and conflicts between us and our friends, relatives, or family so that we can never have a happy and peaceful heart. For example, many of us, years after our wedding ceremony, still recall the resentments we had toward our spouse or their family on that day, and this reminder is the work of Satan.

Another goal of Satan in reminding us of resentments is to deprive us of all the blessings that come from empathy, kindness, unity, and agreement. By reminding us of past resentments, Satan hinders the creation of peace and friendship among people.

Echo of Failures

Failures are another tool of Satan to attack from behind. We all naturally experience failures in various aspects of life, whether it is in finances or social, political, spiritual, educational, professional, marital, familial, and friendly matters, or *jihad* and sacred affairs. By recalling our failures, Satan stirs up regret for the past within us and instills a sense of inadequacy, aiming to hinder our courage to correct our mistakes and make life-changing decisions.

Through this tactic, Satan creates discouragement and fear of future failures within us, leading us to continuously dwell on past sorrows and ultimately preventing us from taking positive steps toward our future. For example, a divorced person may constantly dwell on her failed marriage, blaming herself for making the wrong choice, which leads to the feelings of weakness and hopelessness.

How Can We Combat Regret for the Past?

By recognizing Satan's tactics in his attack from behind, we realize that we are all susceptible to such attacks, and if we do not confront it, Satan will not only harm our worldly life but will also inflict severe damage on our eternal life in the hereafter.

One necessary way to combat Satan is to take self-knowledge and awareness of Satan seriously. For instance, when we identify Satan's attack from behind, we can recognize the source of regrets and negative thoughts stemming from these attacks and avoid surrendering to his deceptions. In general, thoughts that lead to sadness, fear, hopelessness, weakness, and feelings of inadequacy are not truly ours; rather, they stem from Satan, and we must not care about them.

Another way to combat Satan's attack is to address our own weaknesses because Satan targets vulnerabilities within us. For example, forgiving others' mistakes and not holding grudges against them is an important way to confront the negative thoughts generated by Satan. Another way is to seek forgiveness for our sins.

One interesting behavior of children is that after each mistake, they run to their parents, seeking forgiveness despite any wrong deed they have done. They never sever their relationship with their parents. We must adopt the same attitude, and after committing a sin, we must never sever our connection with Merciful God; instead, we must seek His forgiveness and never forget that the loving embrace of God is always open to us. It is like when our clothes get dirty; we do not throw them away or fret, instead, we wash them. Similarly, if our body gets dirty, instead of getting upset, we bathe and clean ourselves. In the case of our hearts getting tainted with sin, we must do the same thing.

Another important way to combat Satan's attack is to ignore negative thoughts instead of trying to push them away, and engage ourselves with positive and uplifting thoughts.

Ultimately, let us not forget this very important point that closeness to God, trusting Him, and seeking refuge in Him from Satan are crucial and cause Satan to lose power over us. This is because when we establish a connection with the Source of Power, Satan's tricks become weak and ineffective.

In this lesson, we discussed Satan's attack from behind and regret for the past and the negative thoughts stemming from it. We mentioned that these attacks are related to our past. Key tools of Satan in attacking from behind are past sins, failures, and resentments. He always tries to instill fear, sadness, humiliation, and despair in us by reminding us of them. Through self-awareness, awareness of Satan, addressing our weaknesses, positive thoughts, remembrance of God, getting close to Him, and putting our trust in Him, we can combat this attack. What do you think about Satan's attack from behind and regret for the past?