

Is a Good Deed Always Accepted? Three Key Criteria for Acceptance of Deeds

What Are the Criteria for Acceptance of Deeds, and How Do We Know If Our Deeds Are Accepted?

Have you ever done something good but neither felt inner satisfaction nor received the effect you expected?

In today's world, where outward behavior is valued more than the meaning of it, an essential question arises: What are the criteria for acceptance of deeds, and what factors make a deed truly valuable, effective, and accepted in both human and divine perspectives? Is intention, sincerity (*Ikhlas*), and the inner quality of the deed more important than its outward result? Here enters the key concept of the criteria for acceptance of deeds.

The criteria for acceptance of deeds refer to a set of inner indicators such as pure intention, sincerity, gratitude, and humility—factors that determine whether a deed, regardless of its outward form and external result, is truly accepted or not.

In today's world, judgments have become more superficial. People are measured by their outward acts: Someone who helps or speaks truthfully is quickly labeled as a good person. But are these standards sufficient? Is outward behavior enough for acceptance of deeds, or must we also look at deeper layers including intention, motivation, and inner quality?

In divine and moral teachings, a deed without a proper intention, even if good in appearance, is not accepted and may even become useless or harmful. Thus,

knowing the true criteria for acceptance of deeds is essential for anyone who seeks a meaningful and moral life. This awareness helps us not to settle for outwardly good deeds but to align the depth of intention and the inner reality of their behavior with what is right.

The goal of this lesson is to clarify- through a correct understanding of the criteria for acceptance of deeds- how we can reach a level where our deeds are not only valued in the eyes of people but also in our conscience, and most importantly, in the sight of God.

The Three Criteria for Acceptance of Deeds: What Brings Life to Our Deeds?

In daily life, we often see two people performing the same deed, but one is praised and the other is not. What makes one deed fall into the category of acceptance while the other does not?

The reality is that actions are not solely evaluated based on their outward form; their true essence and worth stem from the underlying intention and inner quality. In this section, we will explore three key indicators that shape the identity and meaning of an action: gratitude, sincerity, and humility.

Gratitude: The First Indicator of the Criteria for Acceptance of Deeds

Gratitude is not just a verbal reaction but a deep perspective toward life and its blessings. When a person is aware of their assets as the blessings, recognizes them, and responds with appropriate behavior, they are among the grateful. Otherwise, they risk falling from their elevated human status. Imam Sajjad (Peace be upon him)

states in the first supplication of Sahifa Sajjadiya: “And widen themselves in His provision, but not thank Him, and had they been such, they would have left the bounds of humanity and reached the level of animality ... as He has described in His mighty Book ‘They are nothing but as cattle, rather they are further astray from path’” [1].

A deed comes to life in the light of gratitude. Without gratitude, a deed moves away from the standard of acceptance. Gratitude is what keeps motivation and continuity alive in good deeds. A simple example can be seen in family relationships: A spouse who works tirelessly for the family but receives no acknowledgment eventually becomes worn out. Yet a sincere “thank you” can renew their energy and motivation. Imam Reza (Peace be upon him) said: “Whoever is ungrateful for the blessings from the created ones is not grateful to God the Honorable the Exalted” [2]. This shows clearly that gratitude toward people is also part of the acceptance of deeds.

For a grateful person, life is a stage for gratitude. Instead of complaining about what they lack, they focus on what they have—something many of us forget in the stress and dissatisfaction of daily life.

Sincerity: The Inner Driving Force

The second indicator from the criteria for acceptance of deeds is sincerity. Sincerity means having pure intention and performing deeds solely for God—not for achieving recognition, being praised, or even having peace of mind. A small act with pure intention has more impact than large deeds done for vanity and self-display. Sincerity grants inner freedom and peace of heart. A sincere person does not wait

for reactions or rewards from others because they know they are dealing with God. This perspective protects them from depression and discouragement in the path of doing good.

Humility: Protection Against Pride and a Guard for Acceptance

The third indicator from the criteria for acceptance is humility after performing a good deed. This means that despite doing good, a person does not fall into arrogance and self-glorification. Pride in one's deeds, if it leads to self-praise and arrogance, can prevent their acceptance. Someone who views their good deeds as great may unconsciously believe they deserve special treatment or rewards from both God and the people: "I've done so much good, why do I still face problems?" This is the moment when a good deed loses acceptance and effectiveness.

Humility prevents pride from burning the reward of the deed. This attitude defeats the devil's attack from the right side—where he uses our good deeds to trap us in arrogance. A person who does not expect recognition after doing good has reached moral and spiritual maturity, and their deeds are closer to the criteria of acceptance.

When a Good Deed Turns Harmful: The Red Lines of Acceptance

Commonly, any act with a good appearance is considered virtuous. But in a deeper view, only those actions that meet the criteria for acceptance of deeds are truly accepted. A deed without spirit is dead, even if it looks religious or sacred. In divine and human teachings, if a good deed is internally tainted with vanity, insincerity, or doubt and uncertainty, it not only fails to grow but becomes a burden on the

person.

The opposite of each factor of acceptance is a reason for rejection: Gratitude versus ingratitude, sincerity versus show-off, humility versus arrogance, knowledge versus doubt, and pure intention versus jealousy and malice. In the following section, we will review some factors that cause rejection of deeds.

Quality of Deeds: An Indicator Beyond Appearance

One of the most important indicators from the criteria for acceptance of deeds is quality—the depth, honesty, and heart connection in what we do. Many may pray, fast, or recite the Quran without feeling peace, closeness to God, or inner growth. Why? Because their act is merely outward, not heartfelt and conscious. Such deeds may look correct externally but lack meaning internally, and so fall outside the framework of acceptance. Imam Jawad (Peace be upon him) said: “Moving with the heart brings a person to God sooner than burdening their body with deeds and acts of worship” [3]. This shows that quality is more important than quantity.

Imagine two people helping an elderly person on the street. The first does it hurriedly for being praised, while the second, with sincere intention, kindness, and respect, accompanies the elder warmly. Both perform the same deed, but they are like chalk and cheese.

While the quantity of deeds matters in spiritual growth, what makes them truly accepted is their quality. If we want our deeds to be pleasing to God, our conscience, and society, we must focus more on their inner quality and pure intention than their numbers.

Lack of Sincerity or Acting to Show Off

If a deed is done for self-display, even if outwardly good, it is not accepted. On social media, some people perform charity just to be seen. This is insincerity. In daily life, we also see such examples: a mother who constantly reminds her family of her sacrifices while doing housework, or a husband who pays for household expenses with taunts and humiliation. Outwardly, these are good deeds, but without sincerity, they lack value. Sincerity is the spirit of action; without it, deeds are ineffective.

Seeing One's Actions as Great: A Barrier to Acceptance

One of the most dangerous traps that distances a person from acceptance is arrogance after doing good. Satan often deceives people through their righteous deeds, pushing them into religious arrogance.

Someone who becomes arrogant after prayer or charity unconsciously expects special treatment from God: "I prayed so much, why wasn't my prayer answered?" This hidden pride corrupts intention and removes acceptance. A person who constantly reminds others of their help shows disregard for the true criteria for acceptance of deeds.

Can Ignorance and Lack of *Ma'rifa* Prevent Acceptance?

Without *ma'rifa*, worship is mere repetition, lifeless and ineffective. Imam Reza (Peace be upon him) said: "The best of service is to acknowledge the existence of Allah." Someone who prays without understanding its meaning is far from

acceptance. It is like reciting a poem by heart without knowing its meaning. Such a deed has nothing to do with the heart or getting similar to God. Without *ma'rifa*, even good deeds become habit, not worship.

Can Doubt and Lack of Certainty Prevent Acceptance?

Certainty is one of the pillars of acceptance. Without it, deeds are hollow. Imam Ali (Peace be upon him) said: "There is no good in an act except with certitude and piety" [4].

Certainty means deep faith that remains even in hardship. For example, an elder with Alzheimer's who continues to pray shows rooted certainty. In contrast, someone who only worships in peace but abandons God in hardship lacks deeply ingrained faith. Doubt weakens deeds, preventing their acceptance. An act done with lack of certainty and without wholehearted conviction is not accepted from a monotheistic perspective and becomes ineffective.

Good Deeds with Bad Intention: How Malice Rejects Deeds

A serious barrier to acceptance is bad intention filled with jealousy or hatred. Even if outwardly good, such deeds are null. Imam Sadiq (Peace be upon him) said: "God does not accept from a believer any deeds while he harbors evil in his heart against a believer." For example, someone who performs midnight prayers but treats their family with hatred cannot expect acceptance because pure intention is the root of all valuable deeds.

At the end of this lesson, the question arises: How can we know if our deeds meet the criteria for acceptance of deeds? Some signs include:

-After the act, do we feel inner peace and calm?

-Do we repeat the same deed when unseen?

-Do we remain motivated even if others ignore it?

-Do we avoid boasting about it?

If the answers are yes, we may hope that we are closer to the criteria for acceptance of deeds. Conversely, if we expect especial treatment after doing good deeds, suffer from lack of recognition, or expect immediate reward from God or people, we should review our intentions. How do you evaluate your deeds?

Have you ever done something seemingly good that actually hurt you or others, or a small but sincere deed that deeply touched someone?

Please share your experiences in the comments. Perhaps your story can help others better understand the criteria for acceptance of deeds.

References

[1]. Quran, 25:44

[2]. Sheikh al-Saduq, *Uyun Akhbar al-Ridha*, Peiravi. Ansarian Publication, vol. 2, Chapter 31, Hadith 2, p. 4.

[3]. Majlesi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 75, p. 521.

[4]. Amedi, *Ghurar Al-Hikam Wa Durar Al-Kalim (Exalted Aphorisms and Pearls Of Speech)*. Tahir
Ridha Jaffer, p. 714.

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