

Fearing others besides Allaah

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allaah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy

The First Verse:

Allaah (تعالى) says:

[That is only Satan who frightens (you) of his supporters. So do not fear them, but fear Me, if you are indeed believers.]¹

Fear is one of the most dignified and important religious principles. Fear of Allaah summarises all forms of worship which must be made solely and sincerely for Allaah.

Allaah says (about His messengers):

[And they, from fearing Him, are frightened.]²

And He (تعالى) says (about the angels):

[They fear their Lord above them.]³

And He (تعالى) says (about the believers):

[But whoever has feared standing before his Lord will have two gardens.]⁴

And:

[So fear only Me.]⁵

And Allaah says:

[So do not fear people, but fear Me.]⁶

There are many verses in the Qur'aan similar to these.

Fear of other than Allaah can be divided into three types.

¹ Soorah Aali 'Imraan, 3:175

² Soorah al-Ambeeyaa, 21:28

³ Soorah al-Nahl, 16:50

⁴ Soorah al-Rahmaan, 55:46

⁵ Soorah al-Nahl, 16:51

⁶ Soorah al-Maa'idah, 5:44

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1. The first type of fear is an inward, spiritual fear. This type is the religious fear one has of other than Allaah such as fearing idols and false gods, being afraid that they may afflict him with something he dislikes. An example is the verse in which Allaah narrated that the people of Prophet Hood said to him:

[“**We only say that some of our gods have possessed you with evil.**” He said, “Indeed, I call Allaah to witness, and you witness yourselves, that I am free from whatever you associate with Allaah.”]⁷

Allaah also says about this type of fear:

[**And they threaten you with those (they worship) other than Him.**]⁸

This is exactly the same type of fear those who worship grave inhabitants have as well as idol worshippers; such people fear these false gods. They threaten the people who believe only in Allaah with the punishment of such false deities when the believers criticise their misplaced worship, encouraging them to instead sincerely worship Allaah alone. This type of fear completely invalidates Tawheed – the worship of Allaah alone.

2. The second type of fearing others besides Allaah is when one chooses not to do what he is religiously obligated to do out of fear of other people. This type of fear is impermissible and it is a form of associating others with Allaah which contradicts complete Tawheed. And it is this type of fear for which the opening verse was revealed; Allaah (تعالى) says:

[**Those to whom hypocrites said, “The people have certainly gathered against you, so fear them.” But it (only) increased them in faith and they said, “Sufficient for us is Allaah and (He is) the best disposer of affairs.” So they returned with favour from Allaah and bounty, no harm having touched them. They pursued the pleasure of Allaah, and Allaah is the possessor of great bounty. That is only Satan who frightens (you) of his supporters. So do not fear them, but fear Me, if you are indeed believers.**]⁹

Similarly, in a hadeeth

Allaah (تعالى) will ask a worshipper on the Day of Resurrection, “What prevented you, when you saw some wrongdoing, from changing it?” The person will answer, “My Lord, the fear of people.” He will say, “I was more deserving that you fear Me.”¹⁰

3. The third type of fearing others besides Allaah is the natural fear. It is the instinctive fear of an enemy, a wild animal, or similar things. There is nothing wrong with this type of fear as Allaah (تعالى) said relaying the story of Prophet Moosa (عليه السلام) :

⁷ Soorah Hood, 11:54

⁸ Soorah al-Zumar, 39:36

⁹ Soorah Aali ‘Imraan, 3:175

¹⁰ Recorded by Ahmad (3/27, 29, 77), Ibn Hibbaan (1845), Ibn Maajah (4017), and others. Shaykh ‘Abdul ‘Azeez Ibn Baaz said it is authentic in his checking of Fath al-Majeed. Shaykh Naaşir al-Deen al-Albaanee said the similar narration of Ibn Maajah is authentic in Saheeh Sunan Ibn Maajah (no. 3244).

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[So he escaped it (the city), fearful and anticipating (apprehension). He said, “My Lord, save me from the wrongdoing people.”]¹¹

As for the meaning of [“**That is only Satan who frightens (you) of his supporters**”] in the opening verse,¹² it means he tries to make you afraid of his allies. And as for [“**So do not fear them, but fear Me**”], this is a commandment from Allaah (تعالى) to believers that they must not fear others besides Him. It is an order that they should limit their emotion of fear to Allaah alone, fearing none other. This is the complete sincerity and devotion Allaah requires from his worshippers and with which He is pleased. So when they ensure their fear is for none other than Allaah, as well as all other aspects of worship, He will in return give them what they hope for and keep them safe and secure from the fears of this life and the hereafter as He (تعالى) says:

[**Is Allaah not sufficient for His servant? And yet they threaten you with other than Him.**]¹³

The great scholar Ibn al-Qayyim (رحمه الله تعالى) said:

Part of the plot of the enemy of Allaah is that he tries to frighten believers with his soldiers and supporters. He does so in order that the believers will be too scared to oppose and strive against them, too scared to encourage his supporters to do good or forbid them from doing evil. As such, Allaah, the Most High, informs us that this is all part of the plot and deception of Satan and his intimidation and frightening (of believers). Yet He has forbidden us from fearing them by saying—and this is the interpretation of most interpreters—that Satan is only trying to make the believers scared of his supporters. Qataadah says, “He (Satan) makes them (his supporters) seem greater, more significant in the believer’s hearts.” So whenever a worshipper’s faith in Allaah becomes stronger, the fear of Satan’s supporters becomes less, and when his faith weakens, his fear of them becomes greater. Therefore, this verse shows that sincerity in fear is one of the conditions of complete faith.

The Second Verse

Allaah (تعالى) says:

[**The mosques of Allaah are only to be maintained by those who believe in Allaah and the Last Day and establish prayer and give charity and fear none other besides Allaah. It is expected that those will be of the rightly guided.**]¹⁴

Here, Allaah tells us the mosques of Allaah are to be maintained only by people of faith in Allaah and the last day (the Day of Judgment). They are those who both believe with their

¹¹ Soorah al-Qasas, 28:21

¹² The verse again (Soorah Aali ‘Imraan, 3:175):

”إِنَّمَا ذَلِكُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ يُنَوِّفُ أُولَئِكَهُمْ فَلَا تَخَافُوهُمْ وَخَافُونَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ“

That is only Satan who frightens (you) of his supporters. So do not fear them, but fear Me, if you are indeed believers.

¹³ Soorah al-Zumar, 39:36

¹⁴ Soorah al-Tawbah, 9:18

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hearts and worship with their limbs, and they make their fear sincerely and exclusively for Allaah and no other. For these, He has confirmed the maintenance of places of worship after He forbade it for those who worship others besides Him. This is because the establishment and care of such places of worship is to be done with obedience (to Allaah) and righteous actions. As for one who worships other than Allaah, even if he were to perform a seemingly righteous action:

[**Their deeds are like a mirage in a desert which a thirsty one thinks is water until, when he comes to it, he finds it is nothing but finds Allaah before him.**]¹⁵

Or:

[**Their deeds are like ashes which the wind blows forcefully on a stormy day.**]¹⁶

Considering that, true goodness does not result from such action or person. So places of worship, the mosques, should be maintained and populated with only true faith, the most dignified of which is Tawheed and righteous deeds free of all forms of deficiency such as the worship of other than Allaah and unfounded religious innovation. All of that is included in the meaning of the word “faith” ('Eemaan) according to mainstream Muslims who follow the Sunnah.

About [“**and (they) fear none other besides Allaah**”] in the verse, Ibn ‘Atiyyah says, “It means the type of fear which is based on honour, worship, and obedience. And while it may be inevitable that people are afraid of worldly dangers, they must ultimately fear the decree and control of Allaah alone regarding (the consequences) of such worldly dangers.”

Ibn al-Qayyim (رحمه الله) says,

“Fear is worship of the heart, and it is not fitting to be given to others besides Allaah, similar to repentance, love, reliance, hope, and other aspects of worship of the heart.”

As for “It is expected that those will be of the rightly guided”, Ibn Abee Talhah reported that Ibn ‘Abbaas رضي الله عنه (ما) said, “He is saying, ‘They are the rightly guided.’ Any time the Arabic word ‘عَسَى’ – “perhaps,” “it is expected,” etc.) is used in the Qur'aan, it means it is something destined to happen.”¹⁷

The Third Verse

Allaah (تعالى) says:

¹⁵ Soorah al-Noor, 24:39

¹⁶ Soorah al-Noor, 24:39

¹⁷ Shaykh ‘Abdul ‘Azeez Ibn Baaz noted in his checking of Fath al-Majeed that Ibn Katheer mentioned that Ibn ‘Abbaas also said, “It is similar to the verse in which Allaah says to his prophet ﷺ: “It is expected that your Lord will resurrect you to a praised station” (Soorah al-Isrā, 17:79) and this refers to his intercession.” Muhammad Ibn Isḥaaq Ibn Yassaar said, “عَسَى asá mentioned in the Qur'aan is truth from Allaah.”

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[And of mankind are some who say, “We believe in Allaah.” But if they are made to suffer for the sake of Allaah, they consider the trial of mankind as (if it were equal to) the punishment of Allaah.]¹⁸

Ibn Katheer (رحمه الله) says:

Allaah (تعالى) informs us about the characteristics of some people who dishonestly claim to believe, but their belief is only with their tongues and not firm in their hearts. For such people, when a trial or tribulation comes to them in this life, they believe it is from the resentment and wrath of Allaah and then leave Islam. Ibn ‘Abbaas (رضي الله عنه ما) said, “It becomes a tribulation from which he leaves his religion when harmed for the sake of Allaah.”

Ibn al-Qayyim (رحمه الله) says:

When people are sent a messenger, they become one of two types of individuals: those who respond, “I believe,” and those who do not. Those who refuse continue on with their sin and disbelief. As for he who says he believes, he is then tested by his Lord with trial and affliction; the affliction is only a test however. This is to distinguish the truthful from the untruthful. As for those who do not believe (in the messenger), he should not think that Allaah is incapable (of testing him), or that he will escape from Him. As a consequence, whoever believes in the messengers and obeys them, the messengers’ enemies will begin to show enmity toward him and afflict him with whatever will harm him (in this life). And those who neither believe in the messengers nor obey them, they will be recompensed in this life and in the hereafter and will still eventually experience what harms them. Yet their harm is greater and more lasting than that experienced in life by the messenger’s followers.

So even though every soul will experience some type of harm, whether it believes or refuses belief, a believer is hurt in this life only as a trial for him then he will be rewarded for it both in this life and in the hereafter. But he who refuses to believe, he may experience his delight in this life, again only as a trial for him, then he experiences a permanent harm and everlasting pain (in the hereafter).

Everyone must live among others and people have their own ideas and plans. People want other individuals to agree and conform to them in their plans. If one does not agree with them, choosing instead to contradict them, they seek to harm and punish him. Even if he were to conform to them, he would still be harmed, sometimes by the very people he agrees with, sometimes by others. For example, if a person of religion who is conscientious of Allaah is among sinful or oppressive people, he may feel he has no way of escaping their wickedness and oppression except by either agreeing and conforming to what they are upon or at least by remaining silent regarding their evil. Were he to support them or remain silent, he may save himself from their evil and tribulations. But they will then have gained influence and power over him, humiliating him and perhaps harming him with affliction

¹⁸ Soorah al-‘Ankaboot, 29:10

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even greater than he had feared had he criticized them and differed from them. Even if he were safe from them, he may simply be humiliated and harmed by other than them.

The solution is to remember what the Mother of the Believers, 'Aaishah (رضي الله عنها), said to Mu'aaweyyah (رضي الله عنه): Whoever seeks the pleasure of Allaah by angering people, Allaah will suffice him regarding people. And whoever seeks the pleasure of people by angering Allaah, Allaah will entrust him to people."¹⁹

So when Allaah guides an individual, inspiring within him His guidance and saving him from the evil of his own soul, such a person would refuse to support and agree with others in sinful acts. He would patiently bear whatever enmity they show him for it. He will then have his reward in this life and the hereafter as did the messengers and their followers.

Allaah (تعالى) then informs us about those who enter the faith without true insight. When he is harmed for the sake of Allaah, he considers the tribulation of people—and it is the hurt he feels from them and their hatred which the messengers and their followers always experience from those who oppose them—he makes such tribulation of people, by his fleeing from it and avoiding whatever upsets them, equal to the punishment of Allaah from which believers should more rightfully flee with true faith.

True believers with complete insight, however, flee from the punishment of Allaah toward belief in Him. They bear patiently with whatever temporary harm they may suffer (from people) for Him, harm from which they will soon escape. But the other individual (who refuses to differ from sinful people), from his weak insight and unclear understanding of faith, flees from the harm of those who oppose the messengers toward agreeing with them and following them. In doing so, he flees from the punishment of people and into the punishment of Allaah. He equates the harm of people, by his action of fleeing from it in what angers Allaah, with the punishment of Allaah. How unbefitting it is that he seeks safety and refuge (from people's harm) in the scorching fire, running away from the pain of an hour to the pain of eternity.

Also in this verse is a refutation of the Murjiah Karraamiyah sect (who claim that merely expressing faith with the tongue is sufficient to be saved). This is because such peoples' statement, ["**We believe in Allaah**,"] as mentioned in the verse, did not benefit them when they refused to patiently bear the harm of those who would hurt them for the sake of Allaah. So proclaiming faith alone is of no benefit without actions. True religious faith of any person is only correct when it combines three aspects: belief in the heart and its actions (emotions in accordance with faith), statements with the tongue, and actions with the limbs. That is the position of all mainstream Muslims who follow the Sunnah, past and present, and Allaah (سبحانه وتعالى) knows best.

¹⁹ This hadeeth is recorded by al-Tirmidhee.

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Such action (conforming to sinfulness, refusing to differ from it) is a form of flattering the creation despite the truth, and the only one saved from such action is one whom Allaah saves.

The Hadeeth

'Aaishah (رضي الله عنه) reported that Allaah's messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said:

[“Whoever seeks the pleasure of Allaah by angering people, Allaah will suffice him regarding people. And whoever seeks the pleasure of people by angering Allaah, Allaah will entrust him to people.”]²⁰

Ibn Hibbaan recorded this hadeeth with that wording and al-Tirmidhee recorded it by way of a man from Madeenah who said that Mu'aaweyyah (رضي الله عنه) wrote to 'Aaishah (رضي الله عنه) : “Write and advise me but be concise.” She replied, greeting him with “Peace be on you,” then wrote that she heard the messenger of Allaah (صلى الله عليه وسلم) say, “Whoever seeks the pleasure of Allaah by angering people, Allaah will suffice him regarding people. And whoever seeks the pleasure of people by angering Allaah, Allaah will entrust him to people.”

The scholar of Islam (Ibn Taymeeyah) says:

'Aaishah wrote this hadeeth to Mu'aaweyyah and it has been reported from her in a marfoo' form²¹ that she said, “Whoever seeks the pleasure of Allaah by angering people, Allaah will suffice him regarding people. And whoever seeks the pleasure of people by angering Allaah, they will not protect him from Allaah in any way.” That is the marfoo' form.

It has also been reported in a mawqoof form²² that she said, “Whoever pleases Allaah at the expense of angering people, Allaah will be pleased with him and cause people to be pleased with him too. But whoever pleases people at the expense of angering Allaah, He will make those who praise him revert back to criticising him.”

This is the greatest understanding of religion. Whoever seeks to please Allaah, even if it means angering people, he has rightfully feared Allaah and has become His righteous worshipper. Allaah in return assumes the responsibility of protecting the righteous and He is sufficient for his worshipper.

²⁰ Recorded by Ibn Hibbaan (1542) and al-Tirmidhee (2414) and al-Albaanee said it is authentic in Saheeh Sunan al-Tirmidhee (1967).

²¹ Muhammad Ibn Saalih al-'Uthaymeen explains in his booklet *Muṣṭalaḥ al-Hadeeth* that a marfoo' narration is one in which is either explicitly attributed to the prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) or considered to be attributed to him based on other ruling factors.

²² Ibn al-'Uthaymeen explains also in *Muṣṭalaḥ al-Hadeeth* that a mawqoof narration is one that is attributed only to the narrating companion and not raised to the status of being attributed to the prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم).

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[And whoever fears Allaah, He will make a way for him to get out (from every difficulty), and He will provide him from (sources) he could never imagine.]²³

Allaah will certainly suffice him from having to rely on people. As for trying to please all people, that is impossible anyway.

As for, “**seeking the pleasure of people by angering Allaah**,” in doing this, the person gives preference to people’s acceptance and happiness over that of Allaah. This happens when the honour and respect for Allaah and His greatness has not settled in his heart. If it had, it would have prevented him from seeking to gain the pleasure of the creation by gaining the anger of his creator, his Lord, and owner – the very One who controls all hearts, removes all difficulties, and forgives all sins. Based on this, such a choice (preferring to please people by angering Allaah) is a form of associating others in worship with Allaah because he considers pleasing the creation a higher priority than pleasing Allaah. He seeks to get closer to creation by way of displeasing Allaah. And no one is saved from this except one whom Allaah saves and for whom He gives the success of truly knowing Him. This is attained by knowing what befits Allaah by believing in His characteristics and rejecting any false notions which reduce His perfection and knowing Tawheed of His lordship and sole right to worship. With Allaah alone is success.

Ibn Rajab (رحمه الله) said:

If one realises that anyone of creation on earth—and the earth is merely dirt—is himself (created) from dirt, then why would someone give preference to obeying someone from dirt over obeying the Lord of lords? How can he please dirt by angering the Owner, the Bestower? That is certainly an amazing thing.

In this hadeeth, there is a severe reprimand for whoever fears people, preferring their acceptance and pleasure over Allaah. And perhaps his punishment for doing so may even be a test or affliction in his religion—we seek refuge with Allaah from that—as He says:

So He punished them with hypocrisy in their hearts until the day they will meet Him because they failed Allaah in what they promised Him and because they used to lie.²⁴

[Posted from: <http://www.authentic-translations.com>]

²³ Soorah al-Talaaq, 65:2,3

²⁴ Soorah al-Tawbah, 9:77