

153691 - The difference between major hypocrisy and minor hypocrisy

the question

What is the difference between major hypocrisy and minor hypocrisy? Will the one who has either of these two characteristics remain in Hell for eternity in the sense that he will never get out of it?

Detailed answer

Major hypocrisy is the hypocrisy of one who conceals disbelief whilst making an outward show of being a Muslim. Al-Jarjaani (may Allah have mercy on him) said: The hypocrite is the one who is a disbeliever in his heart but pays lip service to faith outwardly. "(At-Ta'reefaat, p. 298)

The one who pretends outwardly to believe in Allah, His Angels, His Books, His Messengers and the Last Day, whilst inwardly believing that which is contrary to that or part of it, is the hypocrite in the sense of major hypocrisy.

These are the ones who are referred to in the verse in which Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): "Verily, the hypocrites will be in the lowest depths (grade) of the Fire" [an-Nisa' 4:145].

Some of the most prominent of their characteristics are lying, treachery, deceit and resorting to foul speech when disputing.

With regard to minor hypocrisy – which is also called hypocrisy of actions – this refers to hypocrisy in deeds. That is when a person does righteous actions but they do not truly represent what is in his heart, or he behaves differently in private and in public, but that does not have to do with the fundamentals of faith mentioned above. Such a person may fall into one of the branches of hypocrisy of actions, or he may have some of the characteristics of the hypocrites, such as lying, treachery and breaking promises.

It was narrated from ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Amr (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “There are four characteristics, whoever has them all is a pure hypocrite, and whoever has one of them has one of the characteristics of hypocrisy, until he gives it up: when he is entrusted with something he betrays that trust, when he speaks he lies, when he makes a covenant he breaks it, and when he disputes he resorts to obscene speech.”

Narrated by al-Bukhaari (54) and Muslim (58).

If any of those who believe in Tawheed (the Oneness of Allah) has any of these characteristics, he has fallen into minor hypocrisy to the extent to which he has done such deeds or has that characteristic, because he resembles the hypocrites in some of their actions, even if he is not exactly like them.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The word hypocrisy refers to major hypocrisy which means concealing disbelief, or minor hypocrisy which means behaving differently in private and in public with regard to obligatory duties. ... This is well known among the scholars and this is how they interpreted the words of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), “The signs of the hypocrite are three: when he speaks he lies, when he makes a promise he breaks it, and when he is entrusted with something he betrays that trust.” Narrated by at-Tirmidhi and others. More than one of the early scholars said: A lesser form of kufr, a lesser form of hypocrisy, a lesser form of shirk. " (Majmoo‘ al-Fataawa, 11/140)

Al-Haafiz Ibn Rajab (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The interpretation given by the respectable scholars is that hypocrisy in the linguistic sense refers to a kind of treachery and betrayal, making an outward display of goodness whilst inwardly concealing the opposite. In Islamic terms it may be divided into two categories, the first of which is major hypocrisy, which is when a person makes an outward show of believing in Allah, His Angels, His Books, His Messengers and the Last Day, whilst inwardly concealing the opposite of that in whole or in part. This is the kind of hypocrisy that existed at the time of the

Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), and Qur'an was revealed condemning those hypocrites and describing them as disbelievers, and stating that they would be in the lowest level of Hell. The second type of hypocrisy is minor hypocrisy, which is hypocrisy of deeds. That is when a person makes an outward show of being righteous when inwardly he is the opposite of that.

To sum up, minor hypocrisy refers to behaving differently in private and in public, as was stated by al-Hasan. Minor hypocrisy is a means that may lead to major hypocrisy, just as sins are the harbinger of disbelief. Just as there is the fear that the one who persists in sin may be deprived of faith at the time of death, there is also the fear that the one who persists in one of the characteristics of hypocrisy will be deprived of faith and will become a pure hypocrite. Imam Ahmad was asked: What do you say about one who does not fear hypocrisy for himself? He said: Who can be sure that he is safe from hypocrisy? Al-Hasan used to call the one who did deeds of hypocrisy a hypocrite, and something similar was narrated from Hudhayfah."(Jaami' al-'Uloom wa'l-Hukam, p. 430-434)

If a person has any level of minor hypocrisy and dies in that state, he will not remain in Hell for eternity. Rather the one who will remain in Hell for eternity is the hypocrite in the sense of major hypocrisy. However, minor hypocrisy is a means that may lead to major hypocrisy, as stated above. Hence the Sahaabah and the early generations (may Allah be pleased with them) used to seek refuge with Allah from it.

Based on that, if any Muslim has any of the characteristics of minor hypocrisy, he is not one of those who will remain in Hell forever; rather he is subject to the will of Allah, may He be exalted, in the Hereafter: if He wills, He will punish him in Hell for his sin, then bring him forth from it because of his belief in Tawheed, or if He wills, He will forgive him from the outset. His situation is like that of sinners among the monotheists. As for the hypocrite in the sense of major hypocrisy, he will abide forever in Hell – we seek refuge with Allah from the Fire.

And Allah knows best.

For more information please see the answer to question no. [21249](#) .