

47748 - Minor Sins (Lamam); an Islamic Perspective

the question

Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Those who avoid great sins and Al-Fawahish (illegal sexual intercourse) except the small faults (Lamam)...”

[An-Najm 53:32]

I know that Lamam (translated here as “small faults”) means minor sins, such as looking, kissing and touching, and these sins will be forgiven by Allah so long as major sins are avoided.

My question is: does this mean that a person will not be punished for these sins even in this world, if he repents from them then does them again, and repents again and goes back to them again? Will he not be punished by Allah for committing these sins?

Summary of answer

The majority of scholars are of the view that Lamam refers to minor sins. This does not mean that a person may be negligent regarding minor sins, rather persisting in minor sins makes them major sins, which means that they are no longer minor faults.

Detailed answer

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Definition of Lamam: A Deeper Insight into Minor Sins

In the answer to the question no. [22422](#), we have discussed the different scholarly opinions on the meaning of the word Lamam in the verse (interpretation of the meaning):

{Those who avoid great sins and Al-Fawahish (illegal sexual intercourse) except the small faults (Lamam)...} [An-Najm 53:32]

The majority of scholars are of the view that Lamam refers to minor sins.

This does not mean that a person may be negligent with regard to the matter of committing minor sins, rather [persisting in minor sins makes them major sins](#) , which means that they are no longer minor faults.

Scholarly Opinions on the Consequences of Lamam

An-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said in Sharh Muslim:

The scholars (may Allah have mercy on them) said that [persisting in a minor sin makes it a major sin](#) . It was narrated from `Umar, Ibn `Abbas and others (may Allah be pleased with them) that there is no major sin with prayers for forgiveness and no minor sin if one persists in it.

What this means is that a major sin may be erased by praying for forgiveness, [but a minor sin may become a major sin if one persists in it](#) . (End quote)

Shaykh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah said in Majmu` Al-Fatawa (15/293):

[Adultery is a major sin](#) , but looking and touching are Lamam (minor sins) which may be forgiven if one avoids major sin. But if a person persists in looking or touching, that becomes a major sin, and persisting in that may be worse than a small amount of major sin, for persisting in looking with desire, along with the connected feelings of mixing and touching, may be much worse than the evil of an isolated act of Zina. Hence the fuqaha' said concerning the witness of good character: he does not commit a major sin or persist in a minor sin... Indeed, looking and touching may lead a man to Shirk as Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

{And of mankind are some who take (for worship) others besides Allah as rivals (to Allah). They love them as they love Allah.} [Al-Baqarah 2:165]

The one who is in love becomes a slave to the one he loves. (End quote)

The Prophet's Warning against Undermining Minor Sins

The Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) warned us against being negligent with regard to minor sins, and said:

“Beware of minor sins, like a people who camped in the bottom of a valley, and one man brought a stick, another man brought a stick, and so on, until they managed to bake their bread. There are some insignificant sins which, once (they accumulate) and a person is questioned about them, they lead to his doom.” (Narrated by Ahmad, 2/223, from the Hadith of Sahl ibn Sa’d (may Allah be pleased with him). Al-Hafidh said: Its chain of narration is sound)

Ahmad (3803) narrated from `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Beware of minor sins, for they accumulate until they doom a man,” and the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) gave a likeness of that: “Like people who camped in the wilderness, and one man brought a stick, another man brought a stick, and so on, until they accumulated a lot, then they lit a fire and cooked their food.” (Classed as sound by Al-Albani in Sahih Al-Jami`, 2687)

Ibn Majah (4243) narrated that `Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said to me: “O `Aishah, beware of deeds that are regarded as insignificant, for they have a pursuer from Allah.” (Classed as authentic by Al-Albani in Sahih Ibn Majah)

Al-Ghazali (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Repeatedly committing small sins has a great effect of blackening the heart. It is like the effect of water dripping onto rock, which will inevitably erode it, even though water is liquid and rock is solid. End quote.

The poet spoke well when he said:

Do not think of minor sins as insignificant, for mountains are made out of pebbles.

Repentance: Erasing Both Minor and Major Sins

If a person repents from his sin, [then it is forgiven and he will not be punished for it](#) , either in this world or in the Hereafter. Hence the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “The one who repents from sin is like one who did not sin at all.” (Narrated by Ibn Majah, 4250) Al-Hafidh said: Its chain of narration is sound; it was also classed as sound by Al-Albani in Sahih Ibn Majah)

An-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The scholars (may Allah be pleased with them) agreed that [repentance is accepted so long as the death rattle has not reached the throat](#) , as it says in the Hadith. [There are three pillars or essential parts of repentance](#) : the person must give up the sin, regret doing it, and resolve not to go back to it.

If a person repents from sin then goes back to it, that does not invalidate his repentance, and if he repents from one sin then commits another, his repentance is still valid. This is the correct view. (End quote)

He also said:

If a person repeats the sin a hundred times or a thousand times or more, and repents each time, his repentance is accepted and his sin is erased. Even if he were to repent once after all these sins, his repentance would be valid. (End quote)

Al-Bukhari and Muslim narrated from Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said in a Hadith Qudsi: “A person committed a sin and said, ‘O Allah, forgive me my sin.’ Allah said: ‘My slave has committed a sin, but he knew that he has a Lord Who forgives sins and punishes for sin.’ Then he committed the sin again and said: ‘O Lord, forgive me my sin.’ Allah said: ‘My slave has committed a sin, but he knew that he has a Lord Who forgives sins and punishes for sin.’ Then he committed the sin again and said: ‘O Lord, forgive me my sin.’ Allah said: ‘My slave has committed a sin, but he knew that he has a Lord Who forgives sins and punishes for sin. Do what you wish, for I have

forgiven you.” According to another report: “I have forgiven My slave, so let him do what he wishes.”

An-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The words “Do what you wish, for I have forgiven you” mean: so long as you sin then repent, I will forgive you.

Whatever the case, the mercy of Allah is vast and His bounty is immense. Whoever repents, Allah will accept his repentance. But the Muslim should not take the risk of committing sins because he may not be able to repent. What is mentioned in the hadeeth is for the purpose of explaining how great the mercy of Allah is and how immense His bounty, not to encourage people to commit sin.

And Allah knows best.