125618 - Fear of his shortcomings makes him hesitant about loving to meet Allah

the question

I know that the wise people are those who constantly remind themselves of death, and I love to meet my Lord, but my fear of my shortcomings and failing to do some obligatory duties makes me hesitant about loving this meeting. I hope that you can advise me about this matter.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Our advice to you with regard to this matter is that you should differentiate between two types of fear:

1. Fear of Allah that leads to one fearing Allah in all that one does, by being keen to do acts of obedience and to avoid prohibited things, to do a lot of naafil (supererogatory) acts of worship, and to treat people kindly. This is praiseworthy fear for which one will be rewarded, by Allah’s leave.

2. Fear of meeting Allah that leads to despairing of His mercy and being overwhelmed with worry about His punishment, without that having any visible effect on your conduct and deeds. This is blameworthy fear which is of no benefit; rather it stems from the whispers of the Shaytaan who strives to make the slaves of Allah despair of His Mercy.

So think about which of these two types of fear of Allah do you have?

Although the Muslim is commanded to constantly fear Allah and fear His punishment, he is also commanded to keep in his heart a large amount of hope in Allah, and hope for His forgiveness and kindness, hope that makes him aspire to the mercy of Allah and does not make him lazy in doing righteous deeds or make him fall into that which is prohibited. These are subtle distinction of

which every Muslim must be aware so that he will know how to relate to Allah on that basis.

It was narrated that Jaabir ibn ‘Abdullah al-Ansaari (may Allah have mercy on him) said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) say, three days before he died: “No one of you should die except thinking positively of Allah.”

Narrated by Muslim (2877)

The mercy of Allah, may He be exalted, encompasses all things, and He is more merciful towards us than our mothers and fathers. Hence Imam Sufyaan ath-Thawri (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

I would not like my reckoning to be at the hands of my father, for my Lord is better for me than my father. End quote.

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

The scholars said: what is meant by thinking positively of Allah, may He be exalted, is thinking that He will have mercy on you and forgive you. They said: When a person is in good health, he should feel fear and hope, in equal measure. And it was said that fear should be more prevalent. Then when the signs of death appear, hope should outweigh fear, or should prevail completely, because the purpose of fear is to prevent one from committing sins and abhorrent deeds, and make one keen to do a great deal of acts of obedience and good deeds, but that – or most of it – is no longer the case in this situation, so it is recommended to think positively of Allah, acknowledge one’s need for Allah, may He be exalted, and surrender to Him. This is supported by the following hadith: “Each person will be resurrected as he dies.” Hence Muslim quoted that after the first hadith. The scholars said that what is meant is that he will be resurrected in the state in which he died. The other hadith which comes after it is also similar to that: “Then they will be resurrected according to their intentions.” End quote.

Sharh Muslim (17/210)

Imam al-Bukhaari included a chapter in his Saheeh entitled “The Chapter on Hope with Fear”. Al-

Haafiz Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) said in his commentary:

The words “The Chapter on Hope with Fear” mean that this is mustahabb (recommended), so one should not think of hope without fear, or of fear without hope, lest the former lead to disappointment and the latter lead to despair, both of which are blameworthy.

The purpose of hope is that whoever falls short should think positively of Allah, and hope that He will erase his sin; likewise, whoever does acts of obedience should hope that they will be accepted. However, if a person persists in sin, hoping that he will not be brought to account for it, and does not regret it or give it up, then he is deceiving himself. How good are the words of Abu ‘Uthmaan al-Jeezi: One of the signs of being blessed is that you do acts of obedience and fear that they will not be accepted; and one of the signs of being doomed is that you do acts of disobedience and hope that you will be saved (from punishment).

Ibn Maajah narrated via ‘Abd ar-Rahmaan ibn Sa‘eed from his father from ‘Aa’ishah that she said: O Messenger of Allah, “And those who give that (their charity) which they give (and also do other good deeds) with their hearts full of fear” [al-Mu’minoon 23:60], does this refer to the one who steals and commits zina? He said: “No; rather it refers to the one who fasts, gives charity, and prays, and fears that it will not be accepted from him.”

There is scholarly consensus that all of this is mustahabb (recommended) when one is in good health, although it was said that it is preferable for fear to be greater when one is in good health, and when one is sick for it to be the opposite. However at the time of death, some scholars regarded it as recommended to focus on hope, because hope in that situation is an expression of one’s need of Allah, may He be exalted, and because the possible negative outcome of forgetting about fear are not applicable (when one is dying). So in this case one should focus on thinking positively of Allah, by hoping for His pardon and forgiveness. This is supported by the hadith, “No one of you should die except thinking positively of Allah.”

Other scholars said that (the one who is dying) should not completely neglect the aspect of fear by feeling certain that he is safe.

This is supported by the report that was narrated by at-Tirmidhi from Anas, according to which the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) entered upon a young man as he was dying, and said to him: How do you find yourself? He said: I have hope in Allah but I am afraid because of my sins. The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “These two feelings (fear and hope) do not coexist in a person’s heart in this situation but Allah will give him what he hopes for and keep him safe from what he fears.”

End quote.

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The difference is clear between thinking positively and being deluded. If thinking positively motivates one to do good deeds, and it encourages, helps and pushes one to do that, then it is sound, but if it calls one to be idle and to persist in sin, then it is delusion. Positive thinking is hope, so if a person’s hope motivates him to do acts of obedience and deters him from acts of disobedience, then it is sound hope. But if a person’s idleness is based on hope, and his hope results in idleness and heedlessness, then he is the one who is deluded. End quote.

Al-Jawaab al-Kaafi (p. 24)

Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Azeez ibn Baaz (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked:

Is it required of the believer not to fear death? If that happens, does it mean that he does not want to meet Allah?

He replied:

The believer, male or female, is required to fear Allah, may He be glorified, and put his hopes in Him, because Allah, may He be glorified, says in His holy Book (interpretation of the meaning):

“so fear them not, but fear Me, if you are (true) believers”

[Aal ‘Imraan 3:175]

“Therefore fear not men but fear Me”

[al-Maa’idah 5:44]

“and fear none but Me”

[al-Baqarah 2:40]

“Verily, those who have believed, and those who have emigrated (for Allah’s Religion) and have striven hard in the Way of Allah, all these hope for Allah’s Mercy”

[al-Baqarah 2:218]

“So whoever hopes for the Meeting with his Lord, let him work righteousness and associate none as a partner in the worship of his Lord”

[al-Kahf 18:110].

And there are many similar verses.

So it is not permissible for a believer, male or female, to despair of the Mercy of Allah or to feel safe from His wrath. Allah, may He be glorified, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Say: "O Ibadee (My slaves) who have transgressed against themselves (by committing evil deeds and sins)! Despair not of the Mercy of Allah, verily Allah forgives all sins. Truly, He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful”

[az-Zumar 39:53]

“and never give up hope of Allahs Mercy. Certainly no one despairs of Allahs Mercy, except the people who disbelieve”

[Yoosuf 12:87]

“None feels secure from the Plan of Allah except the people who are the losers”

[al-A ‘raaf 7:99].

All Muslims, whether male or female, are required to prepare for death, and to beware of being heedless concerning it, because of the verses quoted above, and because of the report narrated from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), according to which he said: “Frequently remember the destroyer of pleasures”– meaning death. That is because being heedless about it and not preparing for it are among the causes of meeting a bad end. It is proven from ‘Aa’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) that she said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Whoever loves to meet Allah, Allah loves to meet him, and whoever hates to meet Allah, Allah hates to meet him.” I said: O Prophet of Allah, do you mean hating death? For all of us hate death. He said: “That is not so; rather when the believer is given the glad tidings of the Mercy of Allah, His pleasure and His Paradise, he loves to meet Allah, so Allah loves to meet him. But when the disbeliever is given the tidings of the punishment and wrath of Allah, he hates to meet Allah, so Allah hates to meet him.” Agreed upon.

This hadith indicates that there is blame attached to hating death and fearing it, and that is not indicative of not wanting to meet Allah, because when the believer hates death or fears its approach, that encourages him to do more acts of obedience to Allah and to prepare to meet Him. By the same token, when the believing woman fears death and hates its approach, that will motivate her to do more acts of obedience and prepare to meet her Lord. End quote.

Fataawa ash-Shaykh Ibn Baaz (6/313)

To sum up: with regard to fear of Allah and fear of meeting Him, if the reason is that one is falling short in one’s duties towards Allah, there is nothing wrong with that; rather that is something praiseworthy, and it should motivate one to prepare for that day by doing righteous deeds, repenting sincerely, and avoiding sins.

For more information, please see the answer to question no. 100451

And Allah knows best.