

Combining fear and hope

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Article taken and slightly adapted from: mtws.posthaven.com

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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

From the book, "Riyadh-us-Saleheen"

Chapter: On Combining Fear and Hope

Shaykh al-'Uthaymeen (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ)¹:

Know that it is preferred for the slave, in his time of health, to have both fear and hope, so that his hope and his fear will be equal. But in a time of sickness, it is pure hope.

And the principles of the divine law, taken from the texts of the Book and the Sunnah and other than them, demonstrate this. Allaah (تعالى)² said (what translated means):

["Did they then feel secure against the Plan of Allaah. None feels secure from the Plan of Allaah except the people who are the losers."]³

And He (تعالى) said (that which means):

["Certainly no one despairs of Allaah's Mercy, except the people who disbelieve."]⁴

And He (تعالى) said (that which means):

["On the Day (i.e. the Day of Resurrection) when some faces will become white and some faces will become black"]⁵

And He (تعالى) said (what means):

["Verily, your Lord is Quick in Retribution and certainly He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."]⁶

And He (سبحانه)⁷ said (that which means):

¹ (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ) (rahimahullaah) May Allaah the Most High have mercy on him

² (تعالى) Ta'aala (He, The Most High)

³ سورة الأعراف – Soorah al-'A'raaf [7:99]

⁴ سورة يوسف – Soorah Yoosuf [12:87]

⁵ سورة آل عمران – Soorah Aal-e-Imraan [3:106]

⁶ سورة الأعراف – Soorah al-'A'raaf [7:167]

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["Verily, the Abrar (pious and righteous) will be in delight; And verily, the Fujjar (the wicked, disbelievers, sinners and evil-doers) will be in the blazing Fire."]⁸

And He (سبحانه) said (that which means):

["Then as for him whose balance will be heavy, he will live a pleasant life. But as for him whose balance will be light, he will have his home in Haweeyah (pit, i.e. Hell)."]⁹

The verses with this meaning are many. Fear and hope are joined together in two verses side by side, or more than two, or one verse. And on the authority of Aboo Hurairah (رضي الله عنه)¹⁰, the Messenger of Allaah (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ)¹¹ said: **"If the believer knew what was with Allaah by way of punishment, no one would ever hope for Paradise, and if the disbeliever knew what was with Allaah by way of mercy, no one would ever despair of Paradise."**¹²

And on the authority of Aboo Sa'eed (رضي الله عنه), the Messenger of Allaah (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said: **"When the shrouded body is laid down and the people - or the men - carry it on their necks, then if it was righteous, it says, 'hand me over, hand me over!' and if it was not righteous, it says, 'woe to it, where are you taking it?' Everything hears its voice except the human being. If he heard it, he would pass out."**¹³

And on the authority of ibn Mas'ood (رضي الله عنه), he said: **"The Messenger of Allaah (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said, 'Paradise is closer to each one of you than your shoelace, and likewise is the Fire.'"**¹⁴

Explanation

The author, (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ)¹⁵ said: "Chapter: On Combining Fear and Hope, and Letting Hope Dominate in Times of Illness."

On this topic, the scholars have a difference of opinion: should the person let the aspect of hope dominate, or the aspect of fear? From them is he who says he should let his feelings of hope dominate absolutely, and from them is he who says he should let his feelings of fear dominate absolutely.

And from them is he who says it is befitting that his fear and hope be at the same level, not letting this win over that, or that over this, because if he lets the aspect of hope dominate,

⁷ (سبحانه) (Subhanahu) The Exalted

⁸ سورة الإنفطار – Soorah al-Infitaar [82:13-14]

⁹ سورة القارعة – Soorah al-Qaria [101:6-9]

¹⁰ (رضي الله عنه) (rad iyallaahu `anhu) May Allaah the Most High be pleased with him

¹¹ (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) May the peace and blessings of Allaah the Most High be upon him

¹² Recorded by Muslim

¹³ Recorded by al-Bukhaaree

¹⁴ Recorded by al-Bukhaaree

¹⁵ (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ) (rahimahullaah) May Allaah the Most High have mercy on him

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then he would feel secure against the Plan of Allaah, and if he lets the aspect of fear dominate, he would despair of the Mercy of Allaah.

And some of them say: in times of health, he makes his hope and his fear one, as an-Nawawee (رَجْمَهُ اللهُ) preferred in this book. But in a time of sickness, he lets his hope dominate and makes it manifest.

Some of the scholars also said that if he is being obedient, he should let his hope dominate, and that Allaah will accept from him, and if he is being disobedient, he should let his fear dominate so he will not have the gall to commit disobedience.

It is befitting for the human being to be his own doctor. If he notices himself feeling secure against the Plan of Allaah, persisting on disobedience to Allaah, and harbouring false hopes about Allaah, then let him turn back from this path and take the path of fear. And if he notices some whisperings with him, and that he has fear with no cause, then let him turn back from this path and let the aspect of hope dominate, until his fear and hope are equal.

Then the author (رَجْمَهُ اللهُ) noted some verses in which Allaah combined mentioning reasons for fear and mentioning reasons for hope, in which He mentioned the people of Paradise and the people of the Hellfire, and in which He mentioned His Attributes (سبحانه وتعالى)¹⁶, that he is Severe in Punishment, and that he is Oft-Forgiving, Most-Merciful.

So reflect on the saying of He (تعالى) (which means): **["Know that Allaah is Severe in punishment and that Allaah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. The Messenger's duty is but to convey,"]**¹⁷. Because he is in the position of instilling fear and giving threats, He put the severity of Punishment first, **["Know that Allaah is Severe in punishment and that Allaah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."]** And when He is telling him about Himself, and explaining the perfection of His Attributes, He says, (what means): **["Declare unto My slaves, that truly, I am the Oft-Forgiving, the Most-Merciful. And that My Torment is indeed the most painful torment,"]**¹⁸, placing the mention of His forgiveness over the mention of His Punishment, because He is talking about Himself (سبحانه وتعالى), and about His perfect Attributes, and His Mercy which has overtaken His Punishment.

Then the author mentioned ahadeeth on this concept which prove that it is obligatory for a person to combine fear and hope, such as the statement of the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ): **"if the believer knew what was with Allaah by way of punishment, no one would ever hope for Paradise."**

The intent is, if he had knowledge of its true reality, knowledge of its specific nature, and not just theories or reports, because surely the believer knows what is with Allaah of torture

¹⁶ (سبحانه وتعالى) (Subhanahu wa-ta'ala) The Exalted, The Most High

¹⁷ سورة المائدة – Soorah al-Maa'idah [5:98-99]

¹⁸ سورة الحجر – Soorah al-Hijr [49-50]

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for the people of disbelief and misguidance. But the reality of this can't be understood right now, nor will it be understood except by one who has fallen in it - and may Allaah protect us and you from His torment.

"And if the disbeliever knew what was with Allaah by way of mercy, no one would ever despair of Paradise." The intent is the true reality of this, because even the kaafir knows that Allaah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful, and he knows the meaning of forgiveness, and he knows the meaning of mercy.

The author mentioned ahadeeth on this concept, such as his statement: **"Paradise is closer to each one of you than your shoelace, and likewise is the Fire."**

He strikes the example of the shoelace for closeness, because people wear shoes, and the Paradise is closer to any one of us than his shoelace because perhaps it will overtake a person because of one statement, and the same with the Fire. Perhaps the Fire will be provoked due to a statement that someone says, like the man who passed by a person who used to sin, forbidding and scolding him, and then when he got tired he said, "by Allaah, Allaah will never forgive so-and-so!" So Allaah (تعالى) said, **"Who has belittled Me, saying that I won't forgive so-and-so? I have certainly forgiven him and nullified your actions."** Aboo Hurairah (رضي الله عنه) said, you may speak a word which has ruined your worldly life and afterlife.

So what is required of a person is to be his own doctor for his own state of being, of letting either fear or hope dominate. If he notices himself leaning towards excessive hope, not caring about the obligations, and violating the prohibitions, relying on Allaah's forgiveness and His mercy, then he should leave this path behind. And if he notices that he has whisperings with him that Allaah will not accept from him, then he should leave this path behind.