



21. Having Proper Reverential Fear of Allaah

Delivered by His Eminence

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All praise is due to Allaah. He is the One to whom we must resort at times of fear, and also the One in whom we must place all our hope. I praise Allaah, as He is perfect in every way, and He deserves praise from us at all times. I testify that none has the right to be worshipped except Allaah alone, without any partner, and I testify that Muhammad is Allaah’s worshipping servant and Messenger. Out of all people, he was the individual who had the most reverential fear towards the Lord of all creation. O Allaah, grant Your commendation and protection to Your worshipping servant and Messenger, Muhammad, as well as to his immaculate family, esteemed Companions, and all who continue to follow their path until the Day of Recompense.

Servants of Allaah, you must observe taqwaa of Allaah (i.e. fulfil His commands and avoid His prohibitions). A person will continue to remain in a good state so long as he observes taqwaa, diligently strives to devote himself to his Guardian Lord, opposes his own disobedient inclinations, and takes from this life what he requires for the next. “People of eemaan, observe taqwaa of Allaah. Every soul must look at what it has prepared for tomorrow. Observe taqwaa of Allaah, as He is completely acquainted with everything that you do.”¹

Dear Muslims, it is true that among people there are those who are deceived by the life of this world, follow their own disobedient inclinations, and ignore sound beliefs, such that those influences lead them to fear being affected by anything which they themselves consider to be a danger, an ill, or an obstacle that obstructs them from their aims. However, there are also among them those who follow the straight and correct path while avoiding other paths which are rife with confusion, deviation, doubt, and weakness of certainty. These servants of Allaah traverse their path to Him as done by people who devote themselves to their Lord due to having sound knowledge about Him. They have complete reverential fear of none besides Him, and they put their complete hope in none besides Him. They are certain about the fact that having proper reverential fear of Allaah is among the highest levels attained by those who worship Him and seek His assistance. It is among the most beneficial of those levels for people’s hearts, and among the greatest in terms of its impact upon their lives in both the short and long term. Having proper reverential fear of Allaah is, in fact, an obligation to be fulfilled by every single one of Aadam’s descendants. This can be understood from the statement of Allaah, the Most Exalted,

﴿ إِنَّمَا ذَلِكُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ يُخَوِّفُ أَوْلِيَاءَهُ. فَلَا تَخَافُوهُمْ وَخَافُونِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴾

“It is only shaytaan who attempts to discourage you. He tries to make you afraid of his supporters and followers. However, you must not be fearful of them. Rather, you must direct all of your reverential fear to Me if you truly have eemaan.”² It can also be understood from the statement of Allaah, the Almighty,

﴿ فَلَا تَخْشَوْهُمْ وَاخْشَوْنِي ﴾

“Therefore, do not fear them. Rather, you must direct all of your reverential fear to Me.”³

¹ Soorah al-Hashr (59):18.

² Soorah Aali ‘Imraan (3):175.

³ Soorah al-Maa’idah (5):3.



Allaah, who is perfect in every way, commended those who have that fear of Him. He said,

﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ هُمْ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ رَبِّهِمْ مُشْفِقُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾
وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِرَبِّهِمْ لَا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾ وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْتُونَ مَا آتَوْا وَقُلُوبُهُمْ وَجَلَةٌ أَنَّهُمْ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ رَاجِعُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾
أُولَٰئِكَ يُسْرِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ وَهُمْ لَهَا سَابِقُونَ ﴿٦١﴾﴾

“Indeed, there are people who are fearful of their Lord; who accept the evidences of their Lord; who do not ascribe any partners to their Lord; and who diligently strive to perform righteous deeds while their hearts remain fearful of being punished when they return to their Lord. The people who have those qualities are the ones who hasten to righteous deeds and are foremost in performing them.”⁴ Al-Hasan (may Allaah have mercy upon him) commented that this means “they strive in earnest to perform righteous deeds and are also fearful that those deeds might be rejected.” Thus, a mu’min⁵ combines obeying Allaah with fear; while a munaafiq⁶ combines disobeying Allaah with complacency, meaning that he is not apprehensive about being punished for wrongdoing.

Allaah, who is perfect in every way, also commended His angels for having fear of Him. He said,

﴿يَخَافُونَ رَبَّهُمْ مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾﴾

“They fear their Lord above them and they do what they are commanded.”⁷ Allaah further commended the Prophets for having fear of Him. He said,

﴿الَّذِينَ يَلْبِغُونَ رِسَالَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَخْشَوْنَهُ وَلَا يَخْشَوْنَ أَحَدًا إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ حَسِيبًا ﴿٦٣﴾﴾

“They conveyed all parts of Allaah’s message, maintained their fear of Him, and did not have complete reverential fear of anyone besides Allaah. And Allaah is sufficient as a reckoner.”⁸

A point to be noted is that the Arabic word “khashyah” conveys the meaning of having fear of Allaah while also having correct knowledge about Allaah.

The extent of proper reverential fear a person has towards Allaah will be in proportion to the extent of the person’s knowledge about Allaah. This is precisely why, out of all people, Allaah’s Messenger (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection) was the one who had the most fear of his Lord. Al-Bukhaaree collected a hadeeth in which the Prophet (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection) said, “I swear by Allaah that I am one among you who certainly has the most knowledge about Allaah and the most reverential fear of Him.” A narration collected by Muslim has the wording, “I swear by Allaah that I hope I am the one among you who has the most reverential fear of Allaah and the most knowledge of what I must do to protect myself from His punishment.” The Prophet (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection) also said, “If you had the same knowledge I have been granted, you would certainly laugh little, you would certainly weep much, you certainly would not find enjoyment with your women in your beds, and you would certainly set out upon certain paths, beseeching Allaah with humility.” This was collected by Ahmad and at-Tirmitheer with a hasan chain of narration.

⁴ Soorah al-Mu’minooneen (23):57-61.

⁵ A person who strives to obey Allaah by way of his beliefs, words, and deeds.

⁶ A person who outwardly displays that he practices Islaam while he actually rejects it within himself.

⁷ Soorah an-Nahl (16):50.

⁸ Soorah al-Ahzaab (33):39.



Furthermore, in light of the preceding, Allaah – the Most Exalted – described those who have knowledge about Him as being people who have true reverential fear of Him. Allaah, who is perfect in every way, said

﴿ وَمِنَ النَّاسِ وَالْدَّوَابِّ وَالْأَنْعَامِ مُخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَنُهُ، كَذَلِكَ ۗ ﴾

﴿ إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ غَفُورٌ ۗ ﴾

“Among humans, moving creatures in general, and livestock animals, there are those which have various colours. The only servants of Allaah who have true reverential fear of Him are those who have knowledge. Allaah is truly Almighty, Most Forgiving.”⁹ This fear emanated from them knowing that Allaah is the One who owns and controls all of creation. Everything throughout the heavens and the earth is subject to His command, all matters return to Him, and He regulates every single aspect of creation. He is the Ever-Living who never dies, and the Self-Sufficient Sustainer whom all creatures need. None besides Him has the ability that He does; and none besides Him controls benefits, harms, death, life, or resurrection. Created beings are merely means by which what Allaah preordained reaches those whom He decreed it for. This idea is clearly understood from a hadeeth collected by at-Tirmithee with the following wording – and also collected by al-Imaam Ahmad as well as al-Haakim – with a saheeh chain of narration from ‘Abdullaah ibn ‘Abbaas (may Allaah be pleased with both of them). He narrated that Allaah’s Messenger (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection) told him, “Young man, I will teach you some important words: If you are dutiful to Allaah, He will protect you. If you are dutiful to Allaah, you will find Him in front of you. If you ask, then ask of Allaah. If you seek help, then seek help from Allaah. Know that if everyone came together to benefit you in any way, they would not benefit you except with what Allaah had written for you, and if they came together to harm you in any way, they would not harm you except with what Allaah had written against you. The pens have been lifted and the pages have dried.”

Servants of Allaah, fear is not itself an objective. Rather, it is the means to something else. It comes to an end in the absence of the thing feared. This is why the people who are admitted to Jannah will neither fear anything nor will there be any reason for them to feel sorrow. They will no longer be fearful of any type of punishment, and they would be admitted to the abode of reward which is everlasting. They would be granted that out of Allaah’s favour and generosity to them, as a recompense for persevering and staying away from disobeying Allaah. Scholars have mentioned that genuine praiseworthy fear is the type which inhibits a person from perpetrating anything that Allaah prohibited. Fear which goes beyond that amounts to despair. Allaah prohibited despair and mentioned it as a trait of those who reject Him. He said,

﴿ إِنَّهُ لَا يَأْتِسُّ مِنْ رَوْحِ اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْفَوْمُ الْكَافِرُونَ ۗ ﴾

“Indeed, no one despairs of Allaah’s mercy except people who reject Him.”¹⁰

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allaah have mercy upon him) mentioned that as one’s heart traverses its path to Allaah, it is to do so as a bird with love as its head, and hope and fear as its two wings. When the head and two wings remain intact, the bird will fly properly. If the head is severed, the bird will die; and if it loses its wings, it will be helpless prey for every predator and hunter. The Salaf (foremost generations of Islaam) encouraged giving fear more weight than hope during one’s circumstances of health, and hope more weight than fear when one’s time to depart from this world draws near. Nonetheless, the most complete state is to maintain a balance between hope, fear, and a major share of

⁹ Soorah Faatir (35):28.

¹⁰ Soorah Yoosuf (12):87.



love. Love has the role of a vessel for travel, hope is what drives it onwards, fear is what leads it, and the destination lies with Allaah out of His grace and favour.

There are some very important matters which must be given necessary care and attention: training one's heart to have for love Allaah; have fear of Allaah; have hope in His favour; have sound beliefs about Him; recognize His uniqueness in His Lordship, His right to be worshipped, and His names and attributes; have knowledge about the rewards He has prepared in the abode of His favour for the people of taqwaa; and have knowledge about the punishment He has prepared for those who continue to disobey Him. There are three essentials which encompass all of the preceding.

The first is unwaveringly believing in the threats that have come to us from Allaah and His Messenger (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection).

The second is remaining mindful of one's own wrongdoing.

The third is being mindful of consequences, and scholars have explained that this increases one's awareness of what one fears and enables him to always keep it in focus without forgetting it. Even though one may know about something, forgetfulness can obstruct his heart from the fear it needs to have. This is why reverential fear of Allaah is a sign of sound beliefs, and its firm establishment in the heart indicates that sound beliefs are also firmly established within it. Allaah certainly spoke the truth when He said,

﴿وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ وَنَهَى النَّفْسَ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ ۗ ﴿٤٠﴾ فَإِنَّ الْجَنَّةَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَىٰ﴾

“As for the person who feared standing before his Lord, and restrained himself from disobedient inclinations, Jannah will surely be his abode.”¹¹

I implore Allaah to enable all of us to glean benefit from the guidance of His Book and the Sunnah of His Prophet (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection). I say this much and I beseech Allaah – the Most Majestic and Magnificent – to grant His forgiveness to me, you, and all who submit to Him in Islaam. He is certainly the continually forgiving, the bestower of mercy.



All praise is due to Allaah. He sent down His final scripture and He grants His care to those who fulfil His rights and the rights of His servants. Allaah is perfect in every way, and I praise Him. He loves His worshipping servants who have proper reverential fear of Him. I testify that none has the right to be worshipped except Allaah alone, without any partner. I further testify that our leader and Prophet, Muhammad, is Allaah's worshipping servant and Messenger. He was the leader of all who observe taqwaa, and the seal of the Prophets. O Allaah, I implore You to grant Your commendation and protection to Your worshipping servant and Messenger, Muhammad, as well as to all of his family and Companions, and to all who continue following their path until the Day of Recompense.

Servants of Allaah, the only time one would find any aversion to the aforementioned reverential fear is when he wrongs himself by committing sins and mars himself by doing what leads to his own destruction.

As for people who strive to worship Allaah in the best way and remain devoted to Him, they do not find any aversion to having reverential fear for Allaah. This is because Allaah – the Almighty and Most Majestic – is with such people by granting them His exclusive care, granting them His love, making Himself even more beloved to them, and being pleased with them. The fear such people have for Allaah provides them with comfort since it prompts them to do what pleases Allaah and avoid what displeases Him. That comes about by sincerely devoting all worship to Him alone, and consistently

¹¹ Soorah an-Naazi'aat (79):40.



following the example of His Messenger (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection). These comprise the source of comfort and safety for those who traverse their path to Allaah, and the means to the salvation that lies with Him.

Therefore, servants of Allaah, you must continue to observe taqwaa of Allaah. In addition, ensure that you make proper reverential fear of Allaah the guide that leads you to pleasing Him, being admitted to Jannah, and being saved from the hellfire