

Fourteenth Hadith: Fear of God

بِسْنَدِي الْمُتَّصِلِ إِلَى مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ ثِقَةَ الْإِسْلَامِ وَعِمَادِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ، عَنْ عِدَّةٍ مِنْ أَصْحَابِنَا، عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ، عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ حَدِيدٍ، عَنْ مَنْصُورِ بْنِ يُونُسَ، عَنِ الْحَارِثِ بْنِ الْمُغِيرَةَ أَوْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ قَالَ: قُلْتُ لَهُ: مَا كَانَ فِي وَصِيَّةِ لُقْمَانَ؟ قَالَ: كَانَ فِيهَا الْأَعَاجِيبُ. وَكَانَ أَعْجَبَ مَا كَانَ فِيهَا أَنْ قَالَ لِابْنِهِ: خَفِ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ خِيفَةً لَوْ جِئْتَهُ بِبِرِّ الثَّقَلَيْنِ لَعَذَّبَكَ. وَأَرْجُ اللَّهَ رَجَاءً لَوْ جِئْتَهُ بِذُنُوبِ الثَّقَلَيْنِ لَرَحِمَكَ. ثُمَّ قَالَ أَبُو عَبْدِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ: كَانَ أَبِي يَقُولُ: إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ مِنْ عَبْدٍ مُؤْمِنٍ إِلَّا [و] فِي قَلْبِهِ نُورَانِ: نُورٌ خِيفَةٍ وَنُورٌ رَجَاءٍ، لَوْ وُزِنَ هَذَا لَمْ يَزِدْ عَلَى هَذَا وَلَوْ وُزِنَ هَذَا لَمْ يَزِدْ عَلَى هَذَا.

Thiqat al-Islam wa 'Imad al-Muslimin Muhammad ibn Ya'qub (al-Kulayni): From a number of our companions, from Ahmad ibn Muhammad, from 'Ali ibn Hadid, from Mansur ibn Yunus, from al-Harith ibn al-Mughirah or his father, from Abu 'Abd Allah (A) (Imam al-Sadiq). Al-Harith, or his father, says, "I asked him (A), 'What was (mentioned) in the testament of Luqman?' 'There were marvelous things in it', he said, 'and the most wonderful of that which he said to his son was this: "Have such a fear of God Almighty that were you to come to Him with the virtues of the two worlds (thaqalan) He would still chastise you, and put such a hope in God that were you to come to Him with the sins of the two worlds He would still have compassion for you." Then Abu 'Abd Allah (A) added: 'My father used to say, "There is no believer who does not have two lights in his heart: the light of fear and the light of hope. Were one of these to be measured it would not exceed the other, and were the other one to be measured, it would not exceed this one."¹

Exposition

According to al-Jawhari in his *al-Sihah*, *a'ajib* is the plural of *u'jubah*, in the same way as *ahadith* is the plural of *uhduthah*. Some lexicographers state that *u'jubah* is something amazing, either on account of its beauty or its ugliness, and the former (i.e. beauty) is meant in this tradition. It appears that the word primarily has the specific sense of something of striking beauty, and is used in a wider sense, parasitically, *Birr* is the opposite of *'uquq*, disobedience. *فُلَانٌ بَيْرٌ خَالِقُهُ* means so and so is obedient to his Creator, as pointed out by al-Jawhari. '*Thaqalan*' means mankind and the *Jinn*.

This noble *hadith* means that the fear of God and hope in Him should be at the highest degree. Despairing of Divine mercy and considering oneself secure from God's devising (*makr*) are totally prohibited, as indicated by a great number of traditions and explicitly stated by the Noble Qur'an. Secondly, none of these should exceed the other. God willing, we shall elaborate upon this and other aspects of the holy tradition in the course of a few sections.

Between Hope And Fear

Let it be known to you that the man cognizant of the realities and the relationship between possible existents (*mumkin al-wujud*) and the Necessary Being (*wajib al-wujud*), exalted and sublime is He, holds a two-sided viewpoint: The first thing he has in view is the essential defectiveness of his own, of all possible beings, and the wretchedness of the entire universe.

Through direct experience or through indirect knowledge he discovers that the entire existence of a possible being is immersed in lowliness and want, drowned in the dark ocean of possibility, poverty and need, always and for ever. The possible existents have nothing of their own: they are utterly insignificant, thoroughly devoid of majesty, and absolutely defective. Rather, none of these expressions can adequately express their utter neediness, and we use them for lack of proper words. Otherwise, defectiveness, poverty and need are a part of the quality of thingness. None of the possible beings and none of tile creatures has anything that is its own.

Accordingly, even if a man were to accomplish all the worships, follow all the Divine teachings and obey the Holy Lord most perfectly and meticulously, he has nothing but shame, humiliation and fear to his share. What obedience can lie offer? what worship? from whom? and to whom? Are not all the attributes of excellence His own, without the possible having any share whatsoever therein? Rather when the possible being approaches the threshold of these excellences, in order to praise God Almighty, it throws the shadow of its defectiveness on His praise and soils the purity and infinitude of His holy Names. It is regarding this station (of finitude and possibility vis-a-vis the infinitude of the Necessary Being) that He declares:

﴿ مَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ حَسَنَةٍ فَمِنَ اللَّهِ وَمَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ سَيِّئَةٍ فَمِنْ نَفْسِكَ ﴾

Whatever good visits thee, it is from God; whatever evil visits thee is of thyself. (4:79)

And it is regarding the first station (of the absolute neediness of the possible existent) that He declares:

﴿ قُلْ كُلٌّ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ ﴾

Say (O Muhammad): Everything is from God. (4:78)

And it is about these stations that the poet (Hafiz) says:

پیر گفت خطا بر قلم صنع نرفت آفرین بر نظر پاک خطا پوشش باد

Our master said, 'The pen of creation did not make any error'.

Praised be the immaculate eye that conceals all defects!

The statement of the mystic master (*pir*) relates to the second station, and the statement of the speaker himself relates to the first one. Hence, this view fills the heart with dread, grief, shame and humiliation.

In the other view, he beholds the Perfection of the Necessary Being, the expanse of His mercy, compassion and love. Therein, he sees the unlimited vastness of His various bounties and favors whose number is beyond limit and number and which are bestowed without any prior capacity or deservedness (on the recipient's part).

He has opened the doors of favor and bounty on His creatures without any deservedness. The initiative lies with His bounteousness, which precedes request and demand. The Imam Sayyid al-Sajidin Zayn al-Abidin (A) in the prayers of *al-Sahifat al-Kamilah* and his other prayers has recurrently pointed out this matter.

This view gives strength to his hope, making him hopeful of Divine mercy. He sees his magnanimous Lord Whose bequests are purely due to His care and compassion, the Lord of all kings Who bestows without asking and prior to the receiver's capacity. All the intellects fall short in knowing even an iota of His nobility. The disobedience of the sinners does not cause any disturbance in the order of His vast dominion, and the obedience of the obedient does not add anything to it.

Rather, the guidance of the Holiest Essence to the paths of obedience, and His prohibition of disobedience, are for the sake of the creatures, in order that they may attain to His beneficence, His vast mercy and bounty, that they may attain the stations of perfection and higher degrees of freedom from defect, deformity and ugliness. Hence, should it be that when tomorrow when we enter the court of the Almighty and stand in the presence of His compassion and mercy, we should be able to say: "O God, Who clothed us with the robes of existence and provided us all the means of our life and comfort, over and above the perception of perceivers, Who showed to us all the paths of guidance – all these of Your favors were for our own good and in order to benefit us further from the vast store of Your love and bounty.

Now that we stand in Your glorious and magnanimous presence, we have come with the sins of the two worlds. Yet the sins of the sinners have not created any defect in the order of Your dominion, nor diminished the infinitude of Your mercy. What will You have for this handful of dust, that has no significance in front of Your greatness, except pity and compassion? Can anything except pity and

compassion be hoped from You, O Lord?”

Hence, man should always be moving back and forth between these two views: neither should he ever close his eyes to his defects and shortcomings in fulfilling the duties of creaturehood, nor should he ever take his eyes off the expansive and all-encompassing mercy, love and compassion of God Almighty.

Stages And Degrees Of Fear

My dear, know that there are various levels and degrees of fear and hope in accordance with the condition of persons and the level of their knowledge (*ma'rifah*). The fear of the common people is in regard to chastisement. The fear of the elect is in regard to the wrath. The fear of the elect of the elect is from concealment (*ihtijab*) (i.e. deprivation from beatitude). Here, it is not our purpose to describe these stations and we will confine our discourse to certain points pertinent to what has been said earlier.

You should know that no creature can worship God Almighty as He deserves to be worshipped; for worship means extolling the praise of that Sacred Essence, and the praise offered by every creature is derived from its knowledge of Him, which in reality does not apprehend His Sacred Essence. Thus, it is not possible for them to praise His beauty and grandeur. Hence the Noblest of creatures and the Most knowledgeable of beings about His Lordship (i.e. the Prophet [S]), confesses his inadequacy in this regard, and declares:

مَا عَرَفْنَاكَ حَقَّ مَعْرِفَتِكَ وَلَا عَبَدْنَاكَ حَقَّ عِبَادَتِكَ.

We did not know You as You deserve to be known. We did not worship You as You deserve to be worshipped.[2](#)

The second sentence is intended to explain the cause of what is stated in the first one. And he (S) said:

أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ.

You are as You have praised Yourself.[3](#)

Therefore, imperfection is essential to possible being and Absolute Sublimity belongs exclusively to the Sacred Essence of the Almighty. And since the creatures are unable to attain to the praise and worship of the Sacred Essence without the knowledge and worship of God, none of them can attain to the degrees of perfection and the stations of the Hereafter (as has been demonstrated in its own place for the knowers of the Hereafter, and in regard to which the common people are oblivious, as they consider the Hereafterly stations as extravagances and the like, and regarding their fancies it must be said,

وَتَعَالَى اللَّهُ عَن ذَٰلِكَ عُلُوًّا كَبِيرًا.

‘High indeed is He exalted above that (they say)’!), God Almighty, with His expansive favor and His all-inclusive compassion, opened a door of His mercy upon them, out of His love, of the teachings regarding the hidden and of revelation and inspiration, through His angels and prophets. That is the door of worship (*‘ibadah*) and knowledge (*ma’rifah*).

He, thus, indicated the paths of worship to His servants and threw open the road of knowledge to them, that they may, as far as is possible, remove their shortcomings and defects and attain to the possible degrees of perfection, that they may be guided by the light of servitude to the world of Divine magnanimity, to the domain of the spirit and the aroma, to the paradise of His bounties, or, rather, to the good pleasure of God, which is greater than all that.

Thus, the opening of the gates of worship and service is one of the greatest of bounties, for which the creatures owe their deepest gratitude, although it is a favor for which they can never offer adequate thanks, for each expression of gratitude is itself the key that opens a further door to sublimity. Thus, they are ever incapable of offering adequate thanks for His bounties.

Thus when man attains the knowledge of this fountainhead and his heart becomes familiar with it, he confesses to his own shortcoming, and even if he is able to enter into the court of the Almighty with a record of service and worship equal to that of the worship and service of all mankind, *Jinn*, and angels near to God, he would still be fearful and conscious of inadequacy.

Also, the knowing servants of God and His elect friends, on whom the sacred doors of Providence have been opened and whose hearts have been illumined by the light of *marifah* – their hearts are so full of dread and trembling that even if all tree excellences were accessible to them, and were all the keys to the treasures of Divine knowledge be given them, and should their hearts be filled with Divine irradiation, that would not reduce their fear by an atom’s weight nor diminish the trembling of their quaking hearts. Hence– one of them says. ‘All are afraid of the End, and I am dreadful of the beginning.’

سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَلَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ

May glory be to God, and there is no power or might which is not by God! I seek refuge in God Almighty! God knows, these words tear a man’s heart to pieces. They make the heart melt, and take away his wits. But, alas! How negligent is man!

Another thing is that which we mentioned while expounding an earlier tradition, that all our obedience and worship are for the sake of selfish aims and motivated by self-love. In reality, it is abstinence from the world for the sake of the rewards of the Hereafter – which, nevertheless, for free men, is abstinence from the world for worldly rewards.

Hence, were we to come to our Lord with the worship of the two worlds, we would not deserve anything except expulsion from the Divine proximity. This is because, God, the Blessed and the Exalted, has invited us into His sacred proximity and love, declaring:

وَحَلَقْتُكَ لِأَجْلِي.

I have created thee for Myself.

He has made the knowledge of Him the end of our creation and shown to us the paths of knowledge and servitude. Despite it, all that we are occupied with is catering to our belly and our carnal lusts, with no purpose in view except self-seeking and self-love!

Then, O wretched man, whose worship and devotion do not entitle thee to anything except expulsion and remoteness from His sanctified proximity and to His wrath and chastisement! What have thee to rely upon? Why, shouldn't the fear of God's Might unsettle you and make your heart bleed? Do you, have anything to rely upon? Do you rely upon your works and trust your deeds? If that be so, woe to you and your estimation of yourself! And woe to you for your estimation of the Master of all masters! However, should your reliance and trust be upon the bounty of your Lord, His expansive compassion and the all-inclusive love of the Sacred Essence, your reliance is indeed well placed; you have relied upon a truly reliable thing, and have sought a firm refuge.

Hope And Prayer

O God! O Lord! Our hands are empty, and we know that we are imperfect and insignificant. We have nothing that is worthy of Thy sacred court. We are faulty, head to foot, and full of defects. Our inward and outward being is soaked in mortal sins, deserving eternal damnation. What are we that we should be worthy of praising Thee, when Thy friends (*awliya*) declare:

أَفْبَلِسَانِي هَذَا الْكَالِ أَشْكُرُكَ.

How shall I thank Thee with this dumb tongue of mine?

And confess to their incapacity, weakness and shortcoming? What can we, blindfolded sinners that we are, have to say about His Majesty, except declaring with the inconsequent oscillations of our tongue: "Our hope lies with Your mercy and our reliance in Your favor and forgiveness, and our trust in the generosity and magnanimity of Your Holy Essence, as expressed in the prayers of Your friends:

الكَافِي بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ: قَالَ اللَّهُ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى: لَا يَتَكَلَّمُ الْعَامِلُونَ لِي عَلَى أَعْمَالِهِمُ الَّتِي يَعْمَلُونَهَا لِثَوَابِي، فَإِنَّهُمْ لَوْ اجْتَهَدُوا وَاتَّعَبُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ - أَعْمَارَهُمْ - فِي عِبَادَتِي كَانُوا مُقْصِرِينَ

غَيْرَ بِالْعَيْنِ فِي عِبَادَتِهِمْ كُنْهَ عِبَادَتِي فِيمَا يَطْلُبُونَ عِنْدِي مِنْ كَرَامَتِي وَالنَّعِيمِ فِي جَنَاتِي وَرَفِيعِ الدَّرَجَاتِ الْعُلَى فِي جِوَارِي وَلَكِنْ بِرَحْمَتِي فَلْيَتَّقُوا وَفَضْلِي فَلْيَرْجُوا، وَإِلَى حُسْنِ الظَّنِّ بِي فَلْيَطْمَئِنُّوا، فَإِنَّ رَحْمَتِي عِنْدَ ذَلِكَ تُدْرِكُهُمْ، وَمَنِّي يُبَلِّغُهُمْ رِضْوَانِي وَمَغْفِرَتِي تُلْبِسُهُمْ عَفْوِي. فَإِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ وَبِذَلِكَ تَسَمَّيْتُ

Al-Kulayni, in al-Kafi, reports with his chain of narrators from Imam Baqir (A) that he said: The Messenger of Allah (S) said: God, the Sublime and the Blessed, said, “The workers (of deeds) for My sake should not, for My reward, trust the works they have done: for, verily, should they labor and toil for all their lives in My service and worship, they would fall short in their worship and will not attain to the reality of My service in what they seek with Me of My magnanimity and bounty, My paradise and the high stations in My proximity. Rather, they should rely upon My mercy and put hope in My favor and be contented of their good opinion (husn al-zann) of Me; for, verily, therein My mercy will reach them, My good pleasure will go forth to them, and My forgiveness shall envelop them. For, indeed, I am Allah, the Beneficent and the Merciful, and I have been named so on that account.”⁴

Contemplation, Fear And Hope

Of things that cause fear of God, is contemplation of the extremeness of Divine Might, the precision and sharpness of the path (*Sirat*) of the Hereafter and the perils that man has to face during the days of his life and at death, as well as the hardships of the Purgatory (*barzakh*) and the Resurrection and the scrutinies of the Reckoning (*hisab*) and the Balance (*mizan*). In the same way, reflection over the verses and traditions about the promises of God Almighty can bring about complete and perfect hope.

It is reported in traditions that on the Day of Resurrection God Almighty’s mercy shall be so abundant that even Satan will aspire for God’s pardon. In this world, at which God has never looked with favor, and on which since its creation His mercy has not descended (in comparison to the other worlds) except for a droplet of it, we encounter so much of the abundance of God’s mercy, bounty and care, which has enveloped everything, apparent and the invisible, that the world is a vast table of the bounties and gifts of the Almighty, so widespread that were all the world’s intellects attempt to encompass even a fragment of it, they would be unable to do so. If this is so, then what would be a world which is the house of the hospitality of the generous Lord and the abode of the expansive mercy and compassion of the All-merciful and the Compassionate? Of course, .Satan would be justified in his aspiring for His pity and his hoping from God’s generosity. Hence, make perfect your good opinion of Him and rely upon His grace, as He has declared:

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا﴾

Verily, God shall forgive all the sins. (39:53)

And immerse all in the ocean of His mercy and beneficence. It is impossible that God should break His

promise, although it is possible that He may withdraw His threats, and how often He does that! So gladden your heart with the hope of His mercy, for had it not enveloped you, you would not be a creature; every creature is the recipient of His mercy, for He has said:

﴿وَرَحْمَتِي وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ﴾

My mercy embraces all things. (7: 156)

The Difference Between Hope And Delusion

However, my dear, you should be careful of distinguishing between hope and delusion, for it may be that you be a deluded man, but imagine yourself to be a man of hope. Yet it is easy to distinguish between them on the basis of their grounds. You should reflect over the state of yours that makes you regard it as hope, to see whether that state of yours has come into being as a result of your belittling of Divine commands or as a result of conviction in the all-embracing character of Divine mercy and the greatness of the Holy Essence.

Should that prove to be difficult, the distinction can be made on the basis of their effects. Should the greatness of God be imprinted on the believer's heart and should it be content in the expansive mercy and bounty of His Holy Essence, he would be committed to His obedience and service, for esteem for someone great and gratitude and willingness to serve one's benefactor are inviolable features of human nature.

Hence, should you be committed to the duties of slavehood and unsparing in your efforts to obey and worship; should you not rely on your works and consider them insignificant; should your hope rest on God's mercy, grace and bounty; should you consider yourself entitled to every kind of blame, disfavor, reproof and wrath on account of your deeds; and should your sole reliance be the mercy and generosity of the Absolutely Magnanimous – should you be such, then you are indeed in possession of the state of hope. Then, thank God Almighty for that, and implore His Holy Essence to establish it firmly in your heart and to elevate you to a higher degree of it.

But if, God forbid, should you be one who belittles and takes lightly the commands of God, one who considers unimportant and insignificant the Words of the Holiest Essence, then rest assured that it is delusion that has appeared in your heart as a result of the guiles of Satan and your carnal self. Had you any faith in God's greatness and His expansive mercy, its effects would have been obvious in you. A claimant whose acts are contrary to his claims is one who falsifies himself, and there are many traditions to this effect.

الكافي بإسناده عن ابن أبي نجران، عمّن ذكره، عن أبي عبد الله عليه السلام قال: قلت له: قوم يعملون بالمعاصي

وَيَقُولُونَ نَرْجُو، فَلَا يَزَالُونَ كَذَلِكَ حَتَّى يَأْتِيَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ. فَقَالَ: هُوَ لَاءِ قَوْمٍ يَتَرَجَّحُونَ فِي الْأَمَانِي. كَذَبُوا، لَيْسُوا بِرَاجِينَ.
مَنْ رَجَا شَيْئًا طَلَبَهُ، وَمَنْ خَافَ مِنْ شَيْءٍ هَرَبَ مِنْهُ.

In al-Kafi, al-Kulayni, with his chain of narrators, reports from Imam al Sadiq (A) on the authority of an unnamed narrator who narrated it to Ibn Abi Najran, that he said to the Imam (A): “There are some people who commit sins and say we are hopeful. They remain in this condition until death comes to them.” The Imam said, “They are a people who have been swept away by false hopes. They lie, they are not the hopeful; for verily, one who has hope of something pursues it, and one who fears something flees from it.”⁵

Close to this in meaning is another tradition of the noble *al-Kafi*:

الكَافِي بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنِ الْحَسَنِ بْنِ أَبِي سَارَةَ قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ أَبَا عَبْدِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ يَقُولُ: لَا يَكُونُ الْمُؤْمِنُ مُؤْمِنًا حَتَّى
يَكُونَ خَائِفًا رَاجِيًا، وَلَا يَكُونُ خَائِفًا رَاجِيًا حَتَّى يَكُونَ عَامِلًا لِمَا يَخَافُ وَيَرْجُو.

(Al-Kulayni), with his chain of narrators reports from al-Husayn ibn Abi Sarah that he said: I heard Abu ‘Abd Allah (A) say: “A believer is not but fearful and hopeful, and he is not (truly) fearful and hopeful unless he responds in action in regard to that which he fears and hopes.”⁶

Some have said that the person who is hopeful without doing anything is like the one who awaits the result without preparing its needed means, like the farmer who awaits a ready harvest without sowing the seeds, without tilling and watering his land and without removing the hindrances in the way of a sufficient produce. Such a man cannot be said to have hope. What characterizes him is stupidity and folly. The similitude of the person who does not reform his morals and acts without refraining from sins, is the farmer who sows his seeds in barren, saline soil: of course, such farming does not yield any produce.

Therefore, the genuine kind of hope is that man should first prepare all the means that are available to him and have been provided to him by the grace of God Almighty, Who has also guided him regarding the paths of right and corrupt conduct and commanded him to make ready those means, and only then he should wait and hope that God, with His favor, will provide the remaining means over which he has no power, and remove the hindrances and perils from his path.

Hence, when the devotee has cleared the field of his heart of the thorns of moral vices and of the stones, rocks and salinity of sins, sowing therein the seeds of good works and watering it with the clear waters of beneficial knowledge and sincere faith and guarded his field against the pests of pride (*‘ujb*) and ostentation (*riya’*), which like weeds hinder the wholesome growth of the harvest, then he may sit and wait for God’s grace, hoping that the Almighty may keep him firm and on the straight path until the last moment of his life. This is the desired and genuine kind of hope, as declared by God Almighty:

﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَتْلُكَ يَرْجُونَ رَحْمَةَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ﴾

But the believers, and those who migrate and struggle in the way of God –those have hope of God's compassion; and God is All-forgiving, All-compassionate. (2:213)

The noble tradition at its end mentions that neither fear nor hope should exceed one another, and the same thing is stated in the *mursal hadith* of Ibn Abi 'Umayr from Imam al-Sadiq (A). When man observes his extreme shortcoming in fulfilling the demands of servitude and creaturehood and when he contemplates the narrowness of the path of the Hereafter, a high degree of fear seizes him. And when he observes his own sins and reflects over the condition of those persons who were righteous at the start but fell into wretchedness and departed from the world in a state of unbelief and without good works, ultimately meeting an evil goal, his fear is intensified. And in a noble tradition of *al-Kafi*, Imam al-Sadiq (A) is reported to have said:

المؤمن بين مخافتين: ذنب قد مضى لا يدري ما صنع الله فيه وعمر قد بقي لا يدري ما يكتسب فيه من المهالك. فهو لا يصبح إلا خائفاً ولا يُمْلِحُهُ إلا الخوفُ.

The believer stands between two dreadful things: the past sins, regarding which he does not know what God will do (with him), and the remainder of his life, regarding which he does not know what mortal sins he will commit therein. So he does not wake up except in a state of dread, and nothing keeps him righteous except fear.⁷

The same thing is stated in the sermon of the Noble Messenger (S) reported in a *hadith* of Imam al-Sadiq (A) in *al-Kafi*.⁸ The gist of the matter is that the self is in a state of utter imperfection and shortcoming, and God at the height of greatness, glory, all-embracing mercifulness and grace, and the devotee is always in a median state of fear and hope between these two views. And since the Divine attributes of glory and perfection cast their light simultaneously on the wayfarer's heart, none of the two, fear or hope, exceeds the other.

Some have said that sometimes fear is more beneficial for man –as in the state of health and robustness – in order that he may endeavor in attaining perfection and performing good works, and that hope is better in some conditions – as when the signs of approaching death appear – so that man may meet God in a state which He loves more. But this opinion does not agree with the above discussion and the traditions mentioned, for the genuine and lovable hope also induces one to good works and hereafterly conduct. Fear of God is also always desirable and is not contrary to confirmed hope in Him.

And some have said that fear is not a moral or intellectual merit in the Hereafter, and that its benefit is limited to the world, which is the abode of works and; deeds, for inducing obedience and service and for restraining men from sin. It is of no use after this world is left behind. On the other hand, hope will never end and shall endure in the Hereafter, for the more of God's beneficence man receives, the more does

he aspire to ‘His grace and bounty, because the stores of God’s mercy are inexhaustible. Hence, fear comes to an end, while hope continues.

The Opinion Of Al-Majlisi

The great *muhaddith* al-’*Allamah* al-Majlisi (M) says, “The truth is that as long as the devotee is in the abode of duty, i.e. this world, he is bound to have both fear and hope. However, after his witnessing of the matters of the Hereafter, one of them, of necessity, must surpass the other.”

This writer says: That which has been said regarding the dominance of fear or hope in the Hereafter does not agree with the above discussion about the meaning of hope and fear. Even if supposedly true, it would apply only to those of middle stations, for the state of the elect and the *awliya*’ is different from that; for their witnessing of the Divine majesty and glory and the irradiations (*tajilliyat*) of the Names of love and beauty, which are attained in the heart, are not effaced by the witnessing of the matters of the Hereafter; as a result their fear and hope do not surpass each other.

Rather, the effects of Divine majesty and glory and the irradiations of His beauty and love are greater in the world of the Hereafter, and the awe resulting from God’s majesty is one of the spiritual pleasures, which on reflection will not be found to be contrary to the noble verse:

﴿أَلَا إِنَّ أَوْلِيَاءَ اللَّهِ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ﴾

Surely God’s friends – no fear shall be on them, neither shall they sorrow. (10:62)

And that which has been said regarding fear, that it is not a spiritual merit—it is not true of the awe in front of God’s greatness and glory, for it is an excellence and is more intense in those of perfect and complete character (*kamilun, mukammalun*) than others. And praise belongs to Allah, for His majesty and His beauty, and may His benedictions be upon Muhammad and his Family.

- [1.](#) Al-Kulayni, al-Kafi, ed. ‘Ali Akbar al-Ghifari, 4th edition, Dar Mus’ab Dar al-Ta’aruf, Beirut, 1401 H., II, 67, hadith 1.
- [2.](#) Safinat al-Bihar, II, 180.
- [3.](#) Safinat al-Bihar, II, 180.
- [4.](#) Al-Kafi, II, 71, hadith 1.
- [5.](#) Al-Kafi, II, 68, hadith 5.
- [6.](#) Al-Kafi, II, 71, hadith 11, from al-Hasan ibn Sarah.
- [7.](#) Al-Kafi, hadith 12.
- [8.](#) Al-Kafi, hadith 2.

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