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Divine Blessings

Because He favors His servants, God the Blessed and Supreme gave them intellect, He gave them the power to refine and purify themselves, He sent the prophets and *awliya* [the friends of God, saints, holy men] to guide people and to help them to reform themselves so that they do not fall into the severe chastisement of hell. If these preventatives do not cause the awareness and refinement of man, God, the Merciful, will make him aware through other means: by various difficulties, afflictions, poverty, and illness.

Like an expert physician or a skilled and kind nurse, He tries to cure a sick man from dangerous spiritual illnesses. If a servant is blessed by God, he will be faced with afflictions until he turns his attention to God the Almighty, and is refined. This is the way, and other than this there is no way, but man must tread this path with his own feet until he reaches its conclusion.

If he does not reach any conclusion in this way, and the misled man is not cured, and he does not deserve the blessings of heaven, when his soul is drawn from him there will be much pressure on him, so perhaps he will return and be aware. Again, if he is not affected, then in the grave, in the world of *barzakh*, and in the terrible perilous events which take place after death, he will suffer pressures and chastisement until he becomes purified and refined, and he will not go to hell.

All of these are blessings from Almighty God to prevent man from going to hell. What then if with all these blessings and favors from Almighty God he is still not cured? Then there is no other alternative but the last cure, which is that he should be burned. How many a man has not refined and reformed himself and was not affected by these cures, so that he needed God, the Merciful, the Compassionate, to refine His servant by fire, just as gold must be purified in fire.

Regarding the ayah (verse)

"Living therein for ages" (Q 78:23)

It has been reported that the 'ages' mentioned here are for those who have been guided, those the basis of whose faith has been preserved. 1 This is for me and you, if we are believers. Each age lasts for thousands of years, how many, only God knows. God forbid that we reach such a state that these cure

are not effective, so that for deserving and meriting the everlasting blessings [of heaven] this final cure is required.

God forbid that it should be necessary that a man should go to hell for a while and burn there until he is purified from his vices, spiritual pollution and filthy satanic attributes, so that he may become deserving and capable of benefiting from

"Gardens beneath which rivers flow" (Q 58:22).

Beware that this is only for those whose sins have not reached such an extent that they are entirely deprived of the mercy and blessings of God the Almighty, those who yet have an essential merit for going to heaven.

God forbid that a man, due to the multitude of his sins he should be expelled and blocked from the presence of God the Almighty, and that he should be bereft of the divine mercy, so that there is no other way for him to remain forever in the fire of hell. God forbid that you should be bereft of divine mercy and blessings, and that you should be subject to His wrath, anger and chastisements. May your deeds, behavior and speech not be the means to the denial of grace, so that there is no way for you but eternal damnation.

Now, while you cannot bear to keep a hot stone in your hand for a minute, keep the fire of hell away! Keep these fires from the seminaries and from the clerical community. Keep disputes and strife far from your hearts. Behave well with people, and in company, and be compassionate and kind. Of course, you are not to be nice to sinners with regard to their sins and rebelliousness.

Tell him to his face of his ugly deeds and wrongdoing, and prohibit him from it, and keep yourselves from promoting anarchy and from rebellion. Behave well with the servants of God and the righteous. Show respect to the learned with regard to their knowledge, to those on the path of guidance with regard to their virtue, and to the ignorant and unlearned, for they are also the servants of God.

Have good behavior; be kind, honest and brotherly. Refine yourselves. You want to refine and guide the community, but how can one who is not able to reform and manage himself guide and manage others? Now there are only a few days left in the month of Sha'ban, so try in these few days to repent and reform yourselves, and enter the blessed month of Ramadan with a healthy soul.

1. 'Ayashi narrates from Humran who asked from Imam al-Baqir, peace be with him, about the ayah mentioned, and he answered: "This is about those who will depart from the fire." Majma' al-Bayan, vol. 10, p. 424.

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