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Fear and Hope

Fear is the custodian of the heart, and hope is the intercessor of the self; whoever knows Allah fears Him and sets his hopes in Him. They are the wings of belief with which the true servant flies to Allah's pleasure. They are the eyes of his intellect, with which he sees Allah's promise and threat; fear contemplates the justice of Allah through careful awareness of that threat. Hope calls for Allah's overflowing favour and gives life to the heart, while fear kills the self. The Messenger of Allah said, 'The believer has two kinds of fear: fear of what has passed and fear of what is to come.'

In the death of the self lies the life of the heart, which leads to firmness in practice. Whoever worships Allah with a balance of fear and hope will not be misguided, and will obtain what he hopes for. How can a slave be anything other than fearful when he does not know at what action his record will be closed, while he has to his credit no deed capable of helping him, no power to do anything, nor any place to fly to? How can he fail to hope when he knows that despite his incapacity he is drowned in the seas of Allah's blessings and favours, which cannot be counted or numbered? The lover worships his Lord with hope by contemplating his own state with the eye of wakefulness; and the abstinent worships with fear.

Uways al-Qarani said to Haram ibn Hayyan, 'People act in hope.' 'But you act in fear,' Haram replied. There are two types of fear: permanent and changing. Permanent fear brings about hope, while changing fear brings about permanent fear. Similarly, there are two types of hopes: concealed and open. Concealed hope brings about permanent fear, which strengthens the connection of love; while open hope fulfils a man's expectations regarding his incapacity and shortcomings in the things he has done during his life.

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