

Published on Al-Islam.org (https://www.al-islam.org)

Home > The Ahlul-Bayt; Ethical Role-Models > Section One: General Ethics > Fear Of God > Stories of the Fearful

Fear Of God

Fear of God stands for the mental pains arisen from the anticipation of God's punishment for the commitment of acts of disobedience to Him. It enjoins holding on straightforwardness and forbids vices and sins. For that reason, the Sharia has paid a considerable attention to fear of God:

"Only Allah's knowledgeable servants fear Him. Allah is Majestic and All-pardoning. (35:28)"

"Those who fear their Lord in secret will receive forgiveness and a great reward (67:12)."

"However, those who had feared their Lord and restrained their souls from acting according to their desires, Paradise will be their dwelling (79:41)."

The Prophet (S) said: "For those who avoid acts of disobedience or the illegal desire that is shown before them out of fear of Allah, Allah will prevent the fire of Hell from consuming them, save them on the Day of the Grand Horror, and fulfill His promise to them that He cites in His Book as He says:

"Those who fear their Lord will have two gardens (55:46)1."

Imam as-Sadiq (a) said: "Fear Allah as if you can see Him before you. If you cannot see Him before you, then it is surely that He can see you. If you think that He cannot see you, then you disbelieve Him. If you realize that He can see you and, yet, you commit acts of disobedience to Him, then you consider Him as the humblest among those who can see you2."

"The believer should live between two fears the past sin that he does not know what Allah will do about it and the remaining days that he does not know what misfortunes he will encounter through them. Thus, the believer begins his day fearfully and ends his day fearfully. Except fear, nothing mends the believer3."

"You will not be true believer unless you are fearful (of God's punishment) and hopeful (for His reward). You will not be true fearful and true hopeful unless you avoid what you fear and work for what you hope4."

A wise man said: "How poor man is! Had he feared the fire of Hell in the same way as he feared poverty, he would have been saved from the both. And had he desired for Paradise in the same way as he desired for the worldly pleasures, he would have won the both. And had he feared God secretly in the same way as he feared people openly, he would have achieved happiness in this world and the world to come."

A wise man said to al-Mahdi the Abbasid caliph who asked for an advice: "This seat that you are in now was occupied by your father and uncle before you, was it not?" "Yes, it was," answered the caliph. "They had done some acts because of which you expect they will be saved, had they not?" asked the wise man. "Yes, they had," answered the caliph. "They also had done some acts for which you are afraid they will be punished, had they not?" asked the wise man. "Yes, they had," answered the caliph. "Now," said the wise man, "you should do these acts because of which you expect they will be saved and you should avoid these acts for which you are afraid they will be punished."

Fear between Ebb and Flow

The previous texts have depicted the importance of fear and its contribution in rectifying man and qualifying him to have the honor of God's contentment. Like the other noble traits, fear does not deserve praise unless it is characterized by moderation away from shortage and excess. Excess fear impoverishes the personality and deprives of hope. Moreover, it causes despair, which, in turn, brings about perpetual deviation. Shortage of fear, also, causes negligence, shortcoming, and rebel against acts of obedience to God. By the balance of fear and hope, one's self nourishes, conscience towers up, and the spiritual energies go forward. Referring to this point, Imam as–Sadiq (a) said:

"Hope for Allah in a form that does not draw you to the commitment of acts of disobedience to Him, and fear Him in such a way that does not make you despair of His mercy5."

Advantages of Fear

The values of the noble traits depend on levels of the virtuous concepts and principals of righteousness that they leave on personalities. Accordingly, fear occupies the first place among the noble traits. It has played a big role in the fields of belief since it is the main reason encouraging acts of obedience to God. Feelings of fear enhance the souls and take them to a lofty angelic position that imparts to the ideality of the angels. As he compared among angels, human beings, and animals, Amirul–Mu'minin (a) said:

"Surely, Allah has characterized the angels by intellect without sexual desire, and characterized animals with desire without reason. He exalted man by bestowing upon him both qualities. Accordingly, if man's reason dominates on his desire, he rises to a state above that of the angels (because this state is attained by man in spite of the existence of hurdles which do not vex the angels), and if man's desire dominates on his reason, he drops to a state below that of the animals6."

Consequently, we notice that the fearful deem easy the sufferings they encounter because of acts of obedience to God and deem bitter the sweetness of the sins and acts of disobedience to Him, because they fear His wrath.

This in fact achieves mental and physical happiness in the same way as this cosmos, along with its components, is organized because of its submission to God:

"All righteously believing male or female will be granted a blessed happy life and will receive their due reward and more. (16:97)"

All the current calamities, such as commonness of disorder, spread of crimes, prevalence of mental perplexity, that humankind is suffering is only the result of going away from the course of the Creator and neglecting His constitution:

"Had the people of the towns believed (in Our revelations) and maintained piety, We would have certainly showered on them Our blessings from the sky and the earth. But they called Our revelations lies, thus Our torment struck them for their evil deeds. (7:96)"

How to Feel Fearful?

It is necessary to fix the belief in God as well as the concepts of the Judgment Day, divine rewards, punishment, Paradise, and Hell. Fear is in fact one of the fruits of faith:

"When Allah is mentioned, the true believers begin to feel fear of Him in their hearts and when His revelations are recited to them their faith strengthens. In Allah alone do they trust (8:2)."

- It is necessary to listen to the touching sermons and words of wisdom that creates fear and reverence.
- It is necessary to survey the manners of the fearful, including their states of reverence and submission.

Let us now provide the most fascinating picture of fear of God that is painted by Imam as-Sajjad (a) in one of his supreme supplications:

"I weep, and why do I not weep, while I do not know what will my destiny be? And I see my soul cheat me and my days deceive me and the wings of death are flapping near my head. Why then do I not weep? I weep for the departure of my soul, for the gloomy of my grave, for the narrowness of my sepulcher, for the interrogation of Munkar and Nakeer, for my going out of my grave naked, humble, and overburdened. I will look once to my right and another to my left while the creatures each will have his own concern:

"For on that day everyone will be completely engrossed in his own concerns. Some faces on that day will be radiant, laughing and joyous, but others will be gloomy and covered by darkness (80:37–41)."

Stories of the Fearful

Imam al-Bagir (a) narrated:

"A very charming prostitute could charm some young Israelites one of whom said, 'Had the worshipper so-and-so seen this lady, she would have surely seduced him.' As she heard this statement, she decided to visit that worshipper for seducing him. That night, she went to his house. He refused to let her in, but she claimed that some young people were chasing her, and that they would rape her if they would catch her. Because of this claim, the man let her in. As soon as she entered his house, she undressed herself. When he saw her beauty and charm, he was seduced. He therefore struck her with his hand. Suddenly, he regained his conscience; hence, he ran to the hearth and put his hand in fire. 'What are you doing?' she cried. 'I am burning my hand because it committed an ill deed,' answered he. The woman left him hurriedly and told some people that she met of that worshipper's deed. They ran to him, but found his hand was burnts."

Imam as-Sadiq (a) narrated:

"One of the ladies of the Israelites tried to seduce the worshipper who hosted her. He wanted to reach her, but whenever he tried to do it, he was putting one of his fingers in fire. He kept on doing so until morning. 'Go out,' he dismissed her, 'you were the worst guest I have ever had.'"

- 1. Quoted from Safinat ul-Bihar; vol. 15 part 2 page 113 (as quoted from al-
- 2. Quoted from al-Wafi; part 3 page 57 (as quoted from al- Kafi).
- 3. Quoted from al-Wafi; part 3 page 57 (as quoted from al- Kafi).
- 4. Quoted from al-Wafi; part 3 page 57 (as quoted from al-Kafi).
- 5. Quoted from Bihar ul-Anwar; 15/2/188 (as quoted from as-Saduq's al-Amali).
- 6. Quoted from Ilal ush-Sharaayi
- 7. Munkar and Nakeer: The two angels who interrogate the dead in graves.
- 8. Quoted from Bihar ul-Anwar; 5 (as quoted from ar- Rawandi's Qassas ul-Anbiyaa).

Source URL:

https://www.al-islam.org/ahlul-bayt-ethical-role-models-sayyid-mahdi-sadr/fear-god#comment-0