

Knowledge and Faith

Sometimes you see that one has knowledge of these realities but has no faith. Undertakers are not afraid of the dead, for they have certainty that the dead cannot harm one, even when he was alive and had a spirit in his body he was not harmful, so what harm can he be now as an empty frame? However, those who are afraid of the dead are afraid because they do not have faith in this truth. They merely have knowledge. They know about God and the Day of Atonement, but they lack certainty.

The heart is unaware of that which the intellect has understood. They know the proofs for the existence of God and the reality of the Resurrection, but these very same intellectual proofs may be veils covering the heart which do not permit the light of faith to shine in. Until God, the Exalted, frees them from the darkness and the obscurities and leads them to enter the worlds of light and radiances:

“Allah is the Guardian [wali] of those who believe; He brings them out of the darkness into the light” (Q 2:257).

He whose Guardian [wali] is God, the Blessed and Exalted, and who is taken by Him out from the darkness never commits another sin, never backbites, never slanders others, and he is never vengeful or envious of his brothers in faith. His own heart is filled with a feeling of luminosity and he no longer holds the world or what it contains in high esteem.

As Imam ‘Ali (as) said, “If all the world and what it contains were offered to me to cruelly and unjustly take the skin of a grain of barley from the mouth of an ant, I would never accept it.”¹

But some of you trample over everything, and you backbite the great [scholars] of Islam. If others speak ill of the grocers and perfume sellers on the street and backbite them, for your part some of you relate unfair things, insult and are impudent toward the scholars of Islam, because you are not firmly grounded in faith and you do not believe in [divine] retribution for your own deeds.

Impeccability [ismat] is nothing but perfect faith. The meaning of the impeccability of the prophets and the Friends of God [awliya] is not that, for instance, Gabriel took them by the hand. Of course, if Gabriel had taken the hand of Shimr,² he would never have committed a sin. However, impeccability is the

offspring of faith.

If a man had faith in God, the Exalted, and if he saw God Almighty with the eyes of his heart as one sees the sun, it would not be possible for him to commit a sin, just as if he were standing before an armed power, he would find some 'impeccability'.

This fear comes from committing sin. The Impeccable, [*ma'sumin*], peace be with them, after their creation from pure clay, because of the effects of their spiritual discipline, and acquisition of radiance and virtuous character traits, always see themselves as being in the presence of God, who knows all things and encompasses all affairs.

They have faith in the meaning of the words, "*La ilaha illallah*" [There is no god but Allah], and they believe that other than God, all persons and all things are perishing and have no role in determining man's destiny,

"All things are perishing but His Face" (Q28:88).

If man is certain and has faith that all the outward and inward worlds are in the presence of the Lord, and that God, the Exalted, is present everywhere and sees everything, in the presence of God and God's blessings there would be no possibility for committing sins. Man is not able to commit sins before a discerning child, and he does not expose his private parts; so how could he expose his private parts before God, the Exalted, and not dread to commit a crime?

This is because he has faith in the presence of the child, however, with regard to the divine presence, if he has knowledge, he still lacks faith. Due to the multiplicity of his sins which have darkened and blackened his heart, he is totally unable to accept such truths, and may not even consider them to be likely.

Actually, man would not recklessly run wild if he considered it all likely, he need not have certainty, that which is reported in the Noble Qur'an is right, the promises and the threats, and that he should amend his ways and deeds. If you consider it all likely that ferocious beasts are to be found along the path which might harm you, or that there are armed bandits who might hold you up, you would refrain from taking that path, and you would try to ascertain the correctness or incorrectness of these reports.

Is it possible for someone to consider it possible that hell exists and that one may remain forever in its fire while at the same time doing wrong? Can it be said that one who considers God Almighty to be present and watching and Who sees himself to be in the presence of the Lord, and who considers it possible that there should be retribution for his words and deeds, a reckoning and chastisement, and that in this world every word he speaks, every step he takes, every deed he does, is recorded by angels of Allah called '*Raqib and 'Atid*,'³ and they carefully record all his words and deeds, and in such a state, could he fearless of his own doing?

It is painful [to realize] that they do not even consider these truths to be possible. From the manners of some and their way of living it is obvious that they do not even consider the existence of a supernatural world to be possible, since the mere consideration of this possibility keeps man from committing many wrongs.

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1. "By Allah, if the seven climes and what is under their skies were offered to me to be sinful to Allah by taking the skin of a grain of barley from the ant, I would not do it." Nahj al-Balaghah, Sermon 215.
 2. Shimr was the assassin of Imam Husayn, peace be with him, and symbolizes evil. [Tr.]
 3. "He utters not a word but there is by him a watcher at hand [raqibun 'atidun]" (Q 50:18).

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