314536 - Reflecting on Paradise and its delights

the question

I love Paradise and am yearning to enter it. Every day before I go to sleep I imagine Paradise, and I imagine myself doing there whatever Allah wills, but sometimes I feel that I forget paradise and give into wasting a lot of time in permissible things, and giving into love of this world. I want to keep loving Paradise all the time, and I want to not forget it. I am wondering how I can keep myself mindful of Paradise? Will I have reward for imagining paradise as I do every day before going to sleep? I hope that you will discuss this topic, because I love to read about these things.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

Reflecting on Paradise and its delights is something that is prescribed and is a good thing, because it comes under the heading of being mindful of the hereafter. Allah, may He be Exalted, has explained to us in detail what paradise is like, what its delights and pleasures are and how those who enter it will be, so that we can imagine it, for being mindful of it will motivate people to strive to attain it and hasten to do righteous deeds.

So if someone reflects on Paradise in order to energize himself to compete in doing righteous deeds, avoid what is prohibited and distract himself from attachment to this worldly life and its pleasures, that will be a righteous deed and there is the hope that he will be rewarded for it.

But the Muslim should not focus his mind on thinking of Paradise only; rather he should also reflect on Hell and its punishments, so that he will combine fear and hope. This is the best mindset, and it is the way of the Holy Qur’an, which often mentions Paradise and Hell together, just as it also mentions Allah’s forgiveness and His severe punishment together, as in the verse in which Allah,

may He be Exalted, says:

{Know that Allah is severe in punishment and that Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful} [Al-Ma’idah 5:98].

Combining fear and hope is the basis on which the prophets and righteous believers worshipped Allah.

Allah, may He be Exalted, says:

{And [remember] Zakariya, when he called upon his Lord: My Lord, do not leave me childless, although You are the best of inheritors.

So We answered his prayer and We bestowed upon him Yahya, and cured his wife [of barrenness]. Verily, they used to hasten to do good deeds, and they used to call on Us in hope and fear, and they were always humble before Us} [Al-Anbiya’ 21:89-90]

{Only those believe in Our revelations who, when they are reminded of them, fall down in prostration, and glorify and praise their Lord, and they are not arrogant;

who forsake their beds, calling upon their Lord with fear and hope, and spend out of what We have provided for them} [As-Sajdah 32:15-16]

{Do not spread mischief in the land after it has been put in order, but call upon Him with fear and hope, for the mercy of Allah is always near to those who do good} [Al-A`raf 7:56]

Al-Qurtubi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

{but call upon Him with fear and hope} – this is a command which means that the individual must be constantly in a state of suspense, with both fear of Allah’s punishment and hope of His mercy, so that hope and fear will be like the two wings of a bird that help it to remains steadfast on its course. If there is only one of them, the individual will be doomed. Allah, may He be Exalted, says:

{[O Muhammad], inform My servants that it is I who am the Forgiving, the Merciful

And that it is My punishment which is the painful punishment} [Al-Hijr 15:49-50].

So the Muslim must have both hope and fear.

Fear means the discomfort that is felt when one cannot feel safe from harm, and hope is the expectation of attaining one’s aspirations.

End quote from *Tafsir al-Qurtubi*, 9/250.

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

In its journey towards Allah, may He be Glorified and Exalted, the heart is like a bird; its head is love, and fear and hope are its two wings. If the head and wings are sound, the bird will fly well. If the head is cut off, the bird will die, and if the wings are missing, it will be vulnerable to every predator and vicious animal. But the early generations (the salaf) preferred the wing of fear to be stronger than the wing of hope when one is in good health, and preferred the wing of hope to be stronger than the wing of fear when departing this world.

End quote from *Madarij as-Salikin*, 2/1313.

Secondly:

Undoubtedly nowadays the distractions that could prevent a man from doing righteous deeds are many and varied, and this leads to hardheartedness and makes one forget the real life, which is the life of the hereafter with its bliss and punishment.

Therefore the Muslim must strive to bring his heart forth from the darkness of heedlessness. Some of the ways that will help him to achieve that include the following:

-1-

Having righteous friends. The Muslim should strive to keep company with pious and righteous people who will remind him of the hereafter by their deeds and actions.

Allah, may He be Exalted, says:

{Content yourself with [the company of] those who call upon their Lord every morning and afternoon, seeking [to see, in the hereafter] His Countenance, and do not turn your eyes away from them, desiring the adornment of the life of this world. And do not obey him whose heart We have made heedless of Our remembrance, who follows his own whims and desires, and is reckless in his deeds} [Al-Kahf 18:28].

Shaykh `Abd ar-Rahman as-Sa`di said:

Here Allah instructs His Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) – and others who are also subject to divine commands and prohibitions – to content themselves with the believers who are obedient and always remember Allah.

{those who call upon their Lord every morning and afternoon} that is, at the beginning and end of the day, seeking thereby the Countenance of Allah. He describes them as worshipping Him sincerely, which implies that one should keep company with good people and strive to make oneself content with their company and mix with them, even if they are poor, because there are innumerable benefits in keeping company with them.

{and do not turn your eyes away from them} that is, do not overlook them and turn your gaze away from them.

{desiring the adornment of the life of this world}, for that is harmful and is of no benefit, and it may undermine one’s religious interests, because it leads to being attached to this world and focusing one’s ideas and thoughts on it, which leads to the heart losing interest in the hereafter. That is because the adornment of this world is pleasing to the onlooker and bewitches the mind, which in turn distracts the heart from the remembrance of Allah and causes it to focus on pleasures and desires. This will cause him to waste his time and will cause his affairs to be in disarray, and it will lead to eternal loss and everlasting regret. Hence Allah says: {And do not obey him whose heart We have made heedless of Our remembrance}, so he becomes heedless of Allah, and He punishes him by making him heedless of His remembrance.

End quote from *Tafsir as-Sa`di*, p. 475.

The Muslim should keep company with righteous people who rare mindful of the hereafter, and he should avoid time wasters and those who are distracted by idle pursuits from doing good deeds, because these people – the time wasters – make a person forget about the hereafter and prevent him from striving to do that which will benefit him in this world and the hereafter. Hence the one who keeps company with such people is in danger of feeling immense regret on the Day of Resurrection, as Allah, may He be Exalted, has described that:

{On that day, the wrongdoer will bite on his hands and say: Would that I had taken a path with the Messenger.

Alas for me! Would that I had not taken So-and-so as a friend!

He led me astray from the Reminder [the Qur'an] after it had come to me. And Shayt@ân is ever treacherous to man } [Al-Furqan 25:27-29].

-2-

Consistently attending circles of knowledge and exhortation, and circles of reflection on the Qur'an. Knowledge is the way to become constantly mindful of the hereafter with its bliss and punishment. This will increase fear of Allah, may He be Exalted, and will ward off heedlessness, by Allah's leave. Allah, may He be Exalted, says:

{Among His slaves, only those who have knowledge truly fear Allah. Verily, Allah is Almighty, Oft-Forgiving} [Fatir 35:28].

Shaykh `Abd ar-Rahman as-Sa`di (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

{Among His slaves, only those who have knowledge truly fear Allah}. The more a person knows about Allah, the more he will fear Him, and this fear of Allah will make him refrain from sin and prepare to meet the one Whom he fears. This is indicative of the virtue of knowledge, because it prompts one to fear Allah, and those who fear Him are the ones who will be honoured by Him, as

He says elsewhere: {Allah is pleased with them, and they are pleased with Him. That (reward) is for whoever fears His Lord} [al-Bayyinah 98:8].

End quote from *Tafsir as-Sa`di*, p. 688.

-3-

Attending funerals and visiting graveyards, for this will awaken the heart from its heedlessness.

It was narrated from Ibn Buraydah that his father said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “I forbade you to visit graves, but now visit them.” According to one report: “… For they will remind you of the hereafter.” Narrated by at-Tirmidhi, 1054; he said: The hadith of Buraydah is an authentic (hasan sahih) hadith.

-4-

Constantly offering supplication and complaining to Allah, may He be Exalted, asking Him to revive the heart (in a spiritual sense) and protect it from heedlessness; and striving to offer such supplication at times when supplications are answered, such as whilst prostrating and during the last third of the night, calling upon Allah and beseeching Him with humility.

Thirdly:

You must realize that no matter how much you strive to remain mindful of the hereafter, you will inevitably tire sometimes, and there should be times of rest and times when you engage in some permissible worldly activities.

It was narrated from Abu `Uthman an-Nahdi, that Hanzalah al-Usaydi – who was one of the scribes of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) – said: Abu Bakr met me and said: How are you, O Hanzalah? I said: Hanzalah has become a hypocrite. He said: Subhan Allah! What are you saying? I said: When we are with the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), he reminds us of the Hell and the Paradise until it is as if we are seeing them with our own eyes, but when we leave the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be

upon him), we attend to our wives and children, and our land and gardens, and we forget a great deal. Abu Bakr said: By Allah, we experience something similar. Abu Bakr and I went to the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), and I said: Hanzalah has become a hypocrite, O Messenger of Allah. The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Why is that?” I said: O Messenger of Allah, when we are with you, you remind us of Hell and Paradise until it is as if we are seeing them with our own eyes, but when we depart from you, we attend to our wives and children, and our land and gardens, and we forget a great deal. The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “By the One in Whose hand is my soul, if you continued as you are when you are with me, and continued to remember (Paradise and Hell), the angels would shake hands with you in your homes and on the streets. But, O Hanzalah, there is a time for this and a time for that” – (he said it) three times.

Narrated by Muslim, 2750.

For more information, please see the answers to questions no. 296830, 70314 and 47565.

We ask Allah, the Most Generous, to revive our hearts with faith and to protect us from the diseases of heedlessness and hardheartedness.

And Allah knows best.