319879 - I Always Make Istighfar but Don’t See Any Benefit

the question

I am a young, religiously-committed man, and I pray for forgiveness constantly, praise be to Allah. Allah, may He be Glorified and Exalted, says in His Book (interpretation of the meaning):

{And said, `Ask forgiveness of your Lord. Indeed, He is ever a Perpetual Forgiver.

He will send [rain from] the sky upon you in [continuing] showers,

And give you increase in wealth and children and provide for you gardens and provide for you rivers} [Nuh 71:10-12].

But I have not been blessed with children and usually it does not rain. Why is that?

Summary of answer

If a person who is asking for forgiveness experiences a delay in the arrival of a child or the occurrence of rain, it is not appropriate for him to think negatively of his Lord, may He be Exalted. Rather he must reflect and think negatively of his own self, for perhaps he is praying for forgiveness without proper focus and humility, or is merely paying lip service to praying for forgiveness, and this is an obstacle to his prayer for forgiveness being answered. Or perhaps the one who is praying for forgiveness has some sins of which he is heedless, and has not repented from them.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Benefits of Istighfar (Seeking Forgiveness from Allah)

It is proven in the religious texts that praying for forgiveness is a means of having a good life in this world, and a means of being provided with wealth and children , and the means of having rain.

Allah, may He be Glorified and exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{[Through a messenger, saying], `Do not worship except Allah . Indeed, I am to you from Him a warner and a bringer of good tidings,' And [saying], `Seek forgiveness of your Lord and repent to Him, [and] He will let you enjoy a good provision for a specified term and give every doer of favor his favor. But if you turn away, then indeed, I fear for you the punishment of a great Day.'} [Hud 11:2-3]

The commentator Shaykh Muhammad Al-Amin Ash-Shinqiti (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

"This verse indicates that praying for forgiveness and repenting to Allah, may He be Exalted, from sin are a means of Allah granting to the one who does that enjoyment of good provision for a specified term, because He has made that the consequences of praying for forgiveness and repenting, as a reward for meeting that condition.

It appears that what is meant by enjoyment of good provision is abundant provision, a life of comfort and well-being in this world, and that what is meant by the specified term is death. This is indicated by what Allah, may He be Exalted, tells us in this Surah about the words of His Prophet Hud (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him):

{And O my people, ask forgiveness of your Lord and then repent to Him. He will send [rain from] the sky upon you in showers and increase you in strength [added] to your strength} [Hud 11:52].

And He, may He be Exalted, tells us about Nuh (interpretation of the meaning):

{And said, `Ask forgiveness of your Lord. Indeed, He is ever a Perpetual Forgiver.

He will send [rain from] the sky upon you in [continuing] showers,

And give you increase in wealth and children and provide for you gardens and provide for you rivers} [Nuh 71:10-12].

And He, may He be Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life…} [An-Nahl 16:97]

{And if only the people of the cities had believed and feared Allah , We would have opened upon them blessings from the heaven and the earth.} [Al-A `raf 7:96]

{And if only they upheld [the law of] the Torah, the Gospel, and what has been revealed to them from their Lord, they would have consumed [provision] from above them and from beneath their feet.} [Al-Ma'idah 5:66]

{And whoever fears Allah - He will make for him a way out, And will provide for him from where he does not expect.} [At-Talaq 65:2-3]

And there are many similar verses." (Adwa' Al-Bayan 3/11-12)

Is it appropriate to think negatively of Allah if you do not see the benefits of Istighfar?

If a person who is asking for forgiveness experiences a delay in the arrival of a child or the occurrence of rain, it is not appropriate for him to think negatively of his Lord, may He be Exalted. Rather he must reflect and think negatively of his own self, for perhaps he is praying for forgiveness without proper focus and humility , or is merely paying lip service to praying for forgiveness, and this is an obstacle to his prayer for forgiveness being answered.

Allah, may He be Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{Call upon your Lord in humility and privately; indeed, He does not like transgressors.

And cause not corruption upon the earth after its reformation. And invoke Him in fear and

aspiration. Indeed, the mercy of Allah is near to the doers of good.} [Al-A`raf 7:55-56]

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Call upon Allah in supplication while you are certain of a response, and understand that Allah will not answer the supplication of one whose heart is distracted and heedless.” (Narrated by At-Tirmidhi, 3479; classed as sound by Shaykh Al-Albani in Sahih At-Targhib wa’t-Tarhib, 2/286)

Or perhaps the one who is praying for forgiveness has some sins of which he is heedless, and has not repented from them or sought Allah’s forgiveness for them.

Moreover, part of the Muslim’s creed is to believe that Allah, may He be Exalted, is perfect in His justice, so He does not wrong a person by taking away even an atom’s weight of the good that he has done. He is also perfect in His wisdom, therefore the one who is seeking forgiveness should think positively of his Lord, and not object to His wisdom.

Allah, may He be Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{He cannot be questioned about what He does, but they will be questioned.} [Al-Anbiya’ 21:23]

Shaykh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“He, may He be Glorified, is the Creator, Lord and Sovereign of all things, and He has great wisdom in what He creates; from Him come all the blessings we enjoy and His mercy encompasses all in general, whilst He singles out some for special mercy. He is not to be questioned about what He does, but they will be questioned. This is not only because of His might and power, but because of the perfect nature of His knowledge, His might, His mercy and His wisdom." (Majmu` Al-Fatawa 8/79)

Perhaps the delay in the arrival of a child or rain is something good for a person; perhaps keeping him on the straight path requires depriving him of some worldly conveniences.

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

“What is contrary to contentment with Allah’s decree is insisting that He do something, believing that He should give you what you are asking Him for and what you want, when you do not know whether that is pleasing to Him or not. This is like one who insists that his Lord should give him such and such a position of authority, or make him rich, or meet his needs. This is contrary to contentment with His decree, because he cannot be certain that this is something with which the Lord is pleased." (Madarij As-Salikin 3/2033)

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

“The wise person should be content if what he asks for in his supplication is not granted, for if he offers supplication and asks for what he is seeking, then this supplication is an act of worship to Allah. Then if he is granted what he sought, he should give thanks, and if he is not granted what he wants, he should not persist in pursuing it, because this world is not for the purpose of getting what we want. He should say to himself: {But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you} [Al-Baqarah 2:216]." (Sayd Al-Khatir p. 625-626)

Moreover, the supplication of the Muslim is all good. If he is not granted what he asked for in this world , perhaps something bad of which he is not aware may be warded off from him, or perhaps it will be stored up for him until the Day of Resurrection. So he should praise Allah for that.

It was narrated from `Ubadah ibn As-Samit (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “There is no Muslim on earth who supplicats Allah but either Allah will grant it to him, or He will ward off an equivalent harm from him, unless he offers supplication for the purpose of sin or severing ties of kinship.” One man said: Then we should offer a great deal of supplication. He said: “Then Allah will grant you more.” (Narrated by At-Tirmidhi (3573), who said: “This is an authentic Hadith with this Isnad (chain of narrators).”)

And it was narrated from Abu Sa `id (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “There is no Muslim who offers a supplication in which there is no sin or severing of ties of kinship but Allah will give him one of three things in return for it: either He will hasten to grant him what he asked for, or He will store it up for him in the hereafter,

or he will avert from him an equivalent harm.” They said: Then we should offer a great deal of supplication. He said: “Then Allah will grant you more.” (Narrated by Imam Ahmad in Al-Musnad, 17/213; Shaykh Al-Albani said: “It is authentic, as noted in Sahih At-Targhib wa’t-Tarhib, 2/278).

And Allah knows best.