52817 - Meaning of the verse “It is only those who have knowledge among His slaves that fear Allaah”

the question

What is the meaning of the verse: “It is only those who have knowledge among His slaves that fear Allaah” [Faatir 35:28]?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“It is only those who have knowledge among His slaves that fear Allaah”

[Faatir 35:28]

The subject here is al-‘ulamaa’ (those who have knowledge). They are the ones who fear Allaah. The structure of the sentence in Arabic, where the word “Allaah” is maf’ool muqaddam (i.e., object appearing before the subject?) emphasizes the fact that no one fears Allaah except those who have knowledge. If the subject were mentioned first, that would change the meaning so that it would mean, “those who have knowledge fear nothing but Allaah,” but this is not correct, for there are some knowledgeable people who fear things other than Allaah.

Hence Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah said concerning this verse:

This indicates that everyone who fears Allaah has knowledge, which is true; it does not indicate that everyone who has knowledge fears Him.

From Majmoo’ al-Fataawa, 7/539.

See also Tafseer al-Baydaawi, 4/418; Fath al-Qadeer, 4/494.

This verse also indicates that the ones who have knowledge are the people who fear Allaah, and that whoever does not fear his Lord does not have knowledge.

Ibn Katheer (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

Those who fear Him as He should be feared are those who have knowledge of Him, because the more a person knows of the Almighty, All-Powerful, the more he will fear Him.

‘Ali ibn Abi Talhah narrated that Ibn ‘Abbaas said, concerning the verse “It is only those who have knowledge among His slaves that fear Allaah”: Those who know that Allaah is Able to do all things…

Sa’eed ibn Jubayr said: Fear is that which prevents you from disobeying Allaah. Al-Hasan al-Basri said: The one who has knowledge is the one who fears the Most Merciful in private, and seeks that which Allaah wants for him and abstains from that which incurs the wrath of Allaah. Then al-Hasan recited the verse: “It is only those who have knowledge among His slaves that fear Allaah. Verily, Allaah is All-Mighty, Oft-Forgiving”.

It was narrated that Ibn Mas’ood (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: The sign of knowledge is not narrating many ahaadeeth, rather the sign of knowledge is fearing Allaah a great deal…

Sufyaan al-Thawri narrated from Abu Hayyaan al-Taymi that a man said: It was said that those who have knowledge are of three types: those who have knowledge of Allaah and knowledge of the commands of Allaah, those who have knowledge of Allaah but do not have knowledge of the commands of Allaah, and those who have knowledge of the commands of Allaah but do not have knowledge of Allaah. The one who has knowledge of Allaah and of the command of Allaah is the one who fears Allaah and knows the limits and obligations. The one who has knowledge of Allaah but does not have knowledge of the commands of Allaah is the one who fears Allaah but does not know the limits and obligations. And the one who has knowledge of the commands of Allaah but does not have knowledge of Allaah is the one who knows the limits and obligations but does not

fear Allaah.

End quote from Tafseer Ibn Katheer, 4/729.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah said in Majmoo' al-Fataawa, 17/21:

The meaning of the verse "It is only those who have knowledge among His slaves that fear Allaah" is that no one fears Him except the one who has knowledge. Allaah tells us that everyone who fears Allaah has knowledge, as He says in another verse (interpretation of the meaning):

"Is one who is obedient to Allaah, prostrating himself or standing (in prayer) during the hours of the night, fearing the Hereafter and hoping for the Mercy of his Lord (like one who disbelieves)? Say: 'Are those who know equal to those who know not?'"

[al-Zumar 39:9]

End quote.

Al-Sa'di (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

The more a person knows Allaah, the more he will fear Him, and the fear of Allaah will make him refrain from sin and prepare to meet the One Whom he fears. This is indicative of the virtue of knowledge, for it calls one to fear Allaah. The people who fear Allaah are the ones who will be honoured by Him, as Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"Allaah will be pleased with them, and they with Him. That is for him who fears his Lord"

[al-Bayyinah 98:8]

End quote.

To conclude: the subject of the sentence is "those who have knowledge", and the meaning of the verse is that no one fears Allaah except those who have knowledge, who are the ones who know of His might and power.

The verse does not mean that Allaah is the One Who fears those who have knowledge, exalted be He far above any such thing.

We ask Allaah to bless us with beneficial knowledge and righteous deeds.

And Allaah knows best.