81973 - If a sick person refuses treatment and bears it with patience, will he attain the reward?

the question

If I become sick – Allah forbid – with an incurable sickness, and I refuse treatment and bear it with patience, will I attain the great reward? Is that included in the words of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him: “Seventy thousand of my ummah will be admitted to Paradise without being brought to account; they are the ones who did not ask for ruqyah or use cautery or believe in omens, and they put their trust in their Lord” and the hadith about the woman who said: “I am a woman who has epileptic fits and becomes uncovered, so pray to Allah for me” etc?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

You should understand that there is no disease that it is impossible for Allah, may He be exalted, to cure. Allah, who sent down the disease, has also sent down the remedy; those who know it know it, and those who do not know it do not know it, as the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, has not sent down any disease but He has sent down a remedy for it. Those who know it know it, and those who do not know it do not know it.” Narrated by Ahmad; classed as hasan by al-Albaani in Ghaayat al-Maraam, no. 292. So you should have great hope in what is with Allah, may He be exalted, and think positively of Him, hoping that He will grant you healing and well-being, and bestow blessings upon you, for He, may He be exalted, is as His slave thinks He is.

Sickness is a test with which Allah tests His slave, for many great and wise reasons. See the answer to question no. 21631.

Secondly:

The scholars differed concerning the ruling on seeking medical treatment. The majority are of the view that it is not obligatory, although some of them are of the view that it is obligatory if the person fears that he will die if he does not receive medical treatment.

Shaykh al-Islam (may Allah have mercy on him) said: It is not obligatory according to the majority of leading scholars; rather a few of the companions of ash-Shaafa'i and Ahmad regarded it as obligatory. Quoted by as-Safaareeni in Ghidhaa' al-Albaab (1/459).

It says in Tuhfat al-Muhtaaj (3/182): 'Iyaad narrated that there was consensus on the fact that it is not obligatory, but some suggested that in some cases it could be obligatory if a person has an injury from which he fears that he will die. End quote.

In his comment he said: In Baab Damaan al-Wulaat min al-Anwaar, al-Baghawi is quoted as saying that if it is known that healing will result from medical treatment, then it is obligatory. End quote.

In Haashiyat Qalyoobi wa 'Umayrah it says: al-Isnawi said: It is haraam to neglect medical treatment in cases such as an injury where it is thought likely that a person may die. End quote.

Thus we may conclude that when there is certainty that a particular medical treatment is beneficial, then it may become obligatory, if the disease is one that may lead to loss of life or limb. This may include stopping bleeding, stitching wounds, amputating damaged limbs when not doing so may cause damage to the rest of the body, and other similar things which doctors have stated are beneficial and necessary, and that not doing them will lead to loss of life or limb.

The Islamic Fiqh Council is of the view that medical treatment is obligatory if not treating the problem will lead to loss of life or limb, or incapacity, or if the harm of the disease may be transferred to another person, as in the case of contagious diseases. See the text of the Council's statement in the answer to question no. 2148.

Based on that, if the sickness asked about is one that will lead to loss of life or limb if medical treatment is not sought, then it is obligatory to take the medicine, and it is not permissible to

ignore it, according to the view of those whom we have mentioned among the Shaafa‘is, and according to the view favoured by the Islamic Fiqh Council.

If the sickness is not at that level of severity, it is permissible to take the medicine and it is also permissible not to do so. These scholars differed as to which is preferable, but the texts indicate that seeking medical treatment is preferable, and this is the view of the majority. As-Safaareeni (may Allah have mercy on him) stated in Ghidhaa’ al-Albaab (1/457): It was said that seeking medical treatment is preferable to not doing so. This is the view of some of the Shaafa‘is, and Imam an-Nawawi stated in Sharh Muslim that it is the view of the Shaafa‘is, the majority of the early generations, and most of the later generations. It was stated definitively by Ibn al-Jawzi, who is one of our leading scholars, in al-Minhaaj, and by al-Qaadi, Ibn ‘Aqeel, and others. It was also the view favoured by al-Wazeer ibn Hubayrah in al-Ifsaah. He said: The view of Abu Haneefah is that it is confirmed to the point of being almost obligatory. The view of Maalik is that it is all the same whether one seeks medical treatment or not. He said: There is nothing wrong with seeking medical treatment and there is nothing wrong with not doing so. End quote.

Thirdly:

Seeking medical treatment does not cancel out putting one’s trust in Allah, may He be exalted. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) sought medical treatment and taught his ummah to seek medical treatment, and he is the leader of those who put their trust in Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said: In the saheeh hadiths there is instruction to seek medical treatment, and the indication that it is not contrary to putting one’s trust in Allah, just as putting one’s trust in Allah is not cancelled out by warding off hunger, thirst, heat and cold by means of their opposites. Rather true Tawheed (affirmation of the oneness of Allah) cannot be perfectly attained except by availing oneself of the means and measures that Allah has ordained and prescribed as causes of attaining the relevant outcomes, and that neglecting those means undermines putting one’s trust in Allah, and also undermines the divine command and wisdom. That is because the one who neglects them thinks that neglecting them will strengthen his trust in Allah, whereas in fact neglecting them is a kind of

helplessness that is contrary to putting one's trust in Allah, which means relying in one's heart on Allah to attain that which is beneficial in both religious and worldly terms, and to ward off that which is harmful in religious and worldly terms. However, in addition to relying on Allah, it is also essential to take appropriate measures, otherwise one will be undermining divine wisdom and Islamic teachings, so a person should not regard his helplessness as putting his trust in Allah, or regard his putting his trust in Allah as helplessness.

End quote from Zaad al-Ma'aad (4/15),

Fourthly:

With regard to the hadith in as-Saheehayn: "Seventy thousand of my ummah will be admitted to Paradise without being brought to account; they are the ones who did not ask for ruqyah or use cautery or believe in omens, and they put their trust in their Lord" (narrated by al-Bukhaari, 6472, and Muslim, 218), this indicates that it is recommended not to ask someone else to perform ruqyah; it does not indicate that one should not seek medical treatment using beneficial medicines.

Shaykh Ibn 'Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) said: That does not include one who goes to a doctor for medical treatment, because the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) did not say that they did not seek medical treatment; rather he said "[they] did not use cautery or ask for ruqyah." But if a person connects his emotions to the doctor, and his hope and fear regarding the sickness are connected to the doctor, then this undermines his trust in Allah, may He be glorified and exalted). So if someone goes to the doctor, he should believe that this comes under the heading of taking appropriate measures, and that the one who brings about the outcome of these measures is Allah alone, may He be glorified and exalted, and that He is the One in Whose hand is healing, so that he will not undermine his trust in Allah.

Fataawa Noor 'ala ad-Darb (3/213).

Fifthly:

With regard to the hadith about the woman who suffered epilepsy and would become uncovered (during the seizure), its text is as follows:

It was narrated that ‘Ata’ ibn Abi Rabaah said: Ibn ‘Abbaas said to me: Shall I show you a woman of the people of Paradise? I said: Yes. He said: This black woman came to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and said: I have epilepsy and I become uncovered. Pray to Allah for me.

He said: “If you wish, you may be patient, and Paradise will be yours, or if you wish, I will pray to Allah to heal you.”

She said: I will be patient. She said: But I become uncovered; pray to Allah that I will not become uncovered. So he prayed for her.

Narrated by al-Bukhaari (5652) and Muslim (2576).

This hadith indicates that it is permissible not to seek medical treatment in such cases, for one who has strong resolve and is able for that. Al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) said: This hadith is indicative of the virtue of one who suffers from epilepsy, and shows that patience in bearing the trials of this world will lead to Paradise, and that choosing the more difficult option is better than availing oneself of the concession, for one who knows that he has the strength to do so and is not too weak to bear the hardship. It also indicates that it is permissible not to take medicine, and it indicates that treating all sicknesses by means of du‘aa’ (supplication) and turning to Allah is more effective and more beneficial than treating them with medicines, and that the effect of that and the way in which the body will benefit from that is greater than the effect of tangible medicine, but it is better to combine the two. So the one who is sick should have sincerity in his heart, and the one who is treating him should be mindful of Allah (taqwa) and have strong trust in Him. And Allah knows best.

End quote.

And Allah knows best.