10300 - The atheist who does good deeds is worse than the one who kills his mother and takes care of dogs

the question

What is the reason for people not believing in God being punished? I read that good deeds of such people will not be accepted. So if someone does all he can do to help people and be useful to the society, he will be punished nevertheless if he did not believe in God. But what exactly is the reason of punishing a good man for his atheism?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

It is the matter of common sense that man has been created, and the created being must have a Creator. The Creator of man is Allaah, Who created the heavens and the earth, and created all things. Man has to acknowledge this reality. It is also the matter of common sense that the Creator of this universe is the One who deserves to be worshipped, obeyed, feared, hoped and loved. This means that the one who does not acknowledge this truth is an atheist and a denier, and is ignorant and corrupt; his intellect is less than human. Whoever does not submit truly as a slave to Allaah, Who has created the heavens and the earth, but is too proud to worship Him, or worships some created being alongside Him, is refusing to worship Allaah, or is a mushrik (one who associates others in worship with Him). Both the one who refuses to worship Allaah and the one who associates others in worship with Him are kaafirs (disbelievers), like atheists and deniers. Whoever denies the Creator or refuses to worship Him, or joins others in worship with Him, deserves the most severe punishment, because for a man to deny his Creator, or refuse to worship Him, or join others in worship with Him, is the most serious of human sins, the most abhorrent of beliefs and the worst deviation. If a person is like this, there is no value in any good deed that he does. The atheist who does deeds that are good in his own eyes, and does whatever good deeds he can for his society, is like a man who kills his father and mother and takes good care of dogs.

Does it not make sense that he should be punished and that his good treatment of dogs should not count for anything? The most important rights are the rights of Allaah, which are that He should be acknowledged and worshipped. The one who neglects this most important right will not benefit from anything he does with regard to people's rights. Therefore if the atheist does not believe in Allaah and does not worship Allaah, there cannot be any good in the actions that he does for people's benefit. But this atheist or mushrik who treats people well is still better than the atheist or mushrik who oppresses and mistreats people, and denies them their rights. He may be rewarded for his good deeds by being granted provision of food and drink in this world, but he will have no share in the Hereafter. Look at yourself, and believe in Allaah and His Messenger, and follow the guidance of Allaah with which He sent His Messenger (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), the Seal of the Prophets, so that you might avoid the punishment of Allaah. Know the difference between the believer and the atheist, the one who worships Allaah alone and the one who associates others in worship with Him. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"The likeness of the two parties is as the blind and the deaf and the seer and the hearer. Are they equal when compared? Will you not then take heed?[Hood 11:24]