20159 - Does one suffering from waswas get rewarded, and what should they do?

the question

Will the one who suffers from waswas (insinuating whispers from the Shaytan) be rewarded? What should he do?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Allah, the Exalted, says in Soorat al-Nas (interpretation of the meaning):

{Say, "I seek refuge in the Lord of mankind,

The Sovereign of mankind.

The God of mankind,

From the evil of the retreating whisperer -

Who whispers [evil] into the breasts of mankind -

From among the jinn and mankind."}(al-Nas:1-6)

Muslim narrated that Abu Hurayrah said: “Some of the Companions of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) came to him and said, ‘We find things in our hearts that none of us would dare to utter out loud.’ He said, ‘Do you really find that?’ They said, ‘Yes.’ He said, ‘That is clear faith.’”

Muslim narrated that ‘Uthman ibn Abi’l-‘As came to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and said: “O Messenger of Allah, the Shaytan is coming between me and my prayer and making me confused in my recitation.” The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be

upon him) said: “That is a devil called Khanzab. If you feel his presence, then seek refuge with Allah from him and spit drily to your left three times.” [‘Uthman] said: “I did that and Allah took him away from me.”

Al-Bukhari and Muslim narrated that Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: “The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: ‘The Shaytan comes to some of you and says, “Who created such and such? Who created such and such?” – until he says, “Who created your Lord?” If that happens, then let him seek refuge with Allah and stop thinking about that.’”

Al-Bukhari and Muslim narrated that Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: “The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: ‘When the call for prayer (adhan) is given, the Shaytan runs away, breaking wind loudly so as not to hear the adhan. When the adhan ends, he comes back. When the iqamah (final call to prayer) is made, he runs away, then when the iqamah ends, he comes back to distract a man from his prayer, saying, “Remember such and such,” things that the man did not remember, until he does not know how many rak’ahs (units of prayer) he has prayed. If one of you does not know how many rak’ahs he has prayed, whether it is three or four, then let him do two prostrations whilst he is sitting.”

Muslim narrated that Abu Sa’eed al-Khudri said: “The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, ‘If one of you is uncertain about his prayer and cannot remember how many rak’ahs he has prayed, whether it was three or four, then let him avoid doubt and act upon that of which he is certain, then let him do two prostrations before he says the salam (conclusion of prayer). Then if he prayed five rak’ahs they will make his prayer even, and if he prayed four then that will annoy the Shaytan.”

These ayahs (verses) and ahadeeth (prophetic traditions) show just how keen the Shaytan is to lead the sons of Adam astray and stop them from worshipping their Lord, by means of the waswas (whispers) which he instils in their hearts. But the way to save oneself from these devilish whispers is made clear. For some people the matter may go so far that they have doubts about every act of worship they try to do, whether they have even done it or not. The question here is not whether

such a person is to blame, rather the question is whether a person will be rewarded for his striving against the Shaytan and his efforts to resist these whispers, or not.

There is no clear statement from the scholars on this matter, but it may be understood from the words of the two Shaykhs, Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on them), that he will be rewarded for that. This is what is to be understood from the texts quoted above, as we shall see below.

In the first hadeeth, the Sahabah (Companions) asked the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) about the waswas that they felt in their hearts, and he said, “That is clear faith.” Shaykh al-Islam (Majmoo’ al-Fatawa, 7/282) said: “In other words, the fact that this waswas was happening and they disliked it so much and pushed it away from their hearts is clear faith, like the mujahid (warrior) to whom the enemy comes and he resists him until he defeats him, and this is the greatest form of jihad (battle). Clear (sareeh) means pure, like pure milk. It becomes clear and pure because they hated those devilish whispers and warded them off, so their faith became pure and clear.”

He also said (Majmoo’ al-Fatawa, 14/108):

“This waswasah is something that involuntarily enters the heart of a person, and if a person hates it and shuns it, this hatred of it is clear faith.”

He also said (Majmoo’ al-Fatawa, 22/608):

“Many of the scholars said: hating that, disliking it and shunning it is clear faith. Praise be to Allah that the most the Shaytan can do is whisper, for when the devil from the jinn is defeated, it whispers (waswasah) and when the human devil is defeated, he lies. Waswas affects everyone who tries to focus on Allah in his worship and dhikr (remembrance of Allah) etc. So one has to be steadfast and patient and persist in dhikr or prayer; he should not feel distressed because if he persists, that will divert the plot of the Shaytan away from him, for the plot of the Shaytan is weak.”

And he said in Dar al-Ta'arud, 3/318:

"This waswas may be gotten rid of by seeking refuge with Allah and ignoring it, so that if [the Shaytan] says, 'you did not wash your face,' you should say, 'Yes, I did wash my face;' if he thinks that he did not form the intention (for prayer) or say Allahu akbar, he should say in his heart, 'Yes I did form the intention and say Allahu akbar.' He should cling steadfastly to the truth and ward off the waswas that goes against it, so that the Shaytan will see how strong and steadfast he is in adhering to the truth, and will leave him alone. Otherwise when he (the Shaytan) sees that he is influenced by doubts and responsive to waswas, he will send him more waswas until he will be unable to resist and his heart will become receptive to the seductive whispers of the devils of the jinn and of mankind, and he will move from one thing to another until the Shaytan drives him to his doom.

Based on the above, we may say that a man will be rewarded for resisting this waswas and for striving against the Shaytan for a number of reasons:

1 – The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) praised the feeling of hatred towards the waswas that had to do with doubts concerning belief ('aqeedah) when he said, "That is clear faith." One of the things implied by the hatred of this waswas is that one turns away from it and does not get carried away with it.

2 – Obeying the command of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), "Let him stop it."

3 – The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said concerning the prostration of forgetfulness (sajdat al-sahw): "They will annoy the Shaytan." This implies encouragement to annoy and humiliate the Shaytan. Annoying him here means turning away from this waswas and not paying any attention to it. This is in addition to the fact that Allah and His Messenger have taught us to seek refuge with Allah from the Shaytan, etc.

4 – The difficulties and distress that the believer may suffer as a result of this waswas may be included in the hadeeth of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), "No Muslim

suffers tiredness, exhaustion, worry, grief, annoyance or distress, not even a thorn that pricks him, but Allah will expiate some of his sins thereby." (al-Bukhari, Muslim).

5 – Shaykh al-Islam (Ibn Taymiyah – may Allah have mercy on him) said: "Like the mujahid to whom the enemy comes and he resists him until he defeats him, and this is the greatest form of jihad." The fact that he likens him to a mujahid and describes this as the greatest form of jihad may be understood to mean that he will be rewarded for that.

And Allah knows best. May Allah bless our Prophet Muhammad and all his family and Companions.