87534 - Why Do We Worship Allah?

the question

I worship Allah and do not commit acts of disobedience out of love for Him and shyness before Him, and in awe of His majesty, not out of hope for Paradise or fear of Hell. This is my question: am I right? If anyone asks me why I do not commit zina, I would answer that I feel too shy before my Lord, and I would not say that I fear Hell, because I believe that having awe and respect is more sincere than having fear. Please advise me as soon as possible via my private email.

Summary of answer

Allah explained that the reason why we should worship Him alone is that He is the only one worthy of worship and praise, because of His perfect Essence and sublime attributes. The main motive for worship should be what Allah has of majesty, greatness and perfection, and what is unique to Him of the attributes of divinity and Lordship. The second motive is the blessings that Allah bestows upon His slaves and His kindness towards them, for hearts are inclined to love the one who is kind to them.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

What Does It Mean to Worship Allah Alone?

Our Lord, may He be Blessed and Exalted, is Allah, besides Whom there is no other god; to Him belong the most beautiful names and sublime attributes; He is the only deity, the only one Who is deserving of worship and love because of His perfect essence and great attributes.

The hearts of the worshippers turn to Him because of His majesty and perfection, and everything other than Him worships Him because He is the one who deserves all the praiseworthy attributes

and is the only one worthy of worship. This is the meaning of divinity (Uluhiyyah) that He, may He be Glorified, taught to his Prophets and Messengers, and this is what must be understood by everyone who testifies that there is no god but He, may He be Glorified.

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

{And We sent not before you any messenger except that We revealed to him that, 'There is no deity except Me, so worship Me'.} [Al-Anbiya' 21:25]

{And I have chosen you, so listen to what is revealed [to you]. Indeed, I am Allah. There is no deity except Me, so worship Me and establish prayer for My remembrance.} [Ta-Ha 20:13-14]

Why Do We Worship Allah?

Allah explained that the reason why people should worship Him alone is that He is the only One Who deserves to be praised and worshipped, because of His perfect Essence and sublime attributes.

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

Allah, may He be Glorified, deserves, because of what He is, to be loved and worshipped, and that His Messenger should be loved for His sake. There is a natural inclination in people's hearts to love and worship Allah; there is also a natural inclination in their hearts to learn about Him and believe in Him. (End quote from Majmu` Al-Fatawa, 7/541)

And he (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The words "There is no deity except You; exalted are You" [Al-Anbiya' 21:87] are an affirmation that He alone is the divine (Ilah), and being divine means that He has perfect knowledge, power, mercy and wisdom. In that there is an affirmation of His kindness towards His slaves, for the Ilah (deity; divine) is the one to Whom everyone turns, and the one to Whom everyone turns is the one Who deserves to be worshipped. His deserving to be worshipped is because of what He has of attributes which dictate that He is the one Who should be loved with the utmost love, and to whom

people should submit with the utmost submission. Worship includes utmost love and utmost humility and submission. (End quote from Majmu` Al-Fatawa 10/249)

Thus we may understand that the main motive for worship should be what Allah, may He be Glorified, has of majesty, greatness and perfection, and what is unique to Him of the attributes of divinity and Lordship. The second motive is the blessings that Allah bestows upon His slaves and His kindness towards them, for hearts are inclined to love the one who is kind to them.

Types of Love of Allah

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

Love of Allah, may He be Glorified and Exalted, can only be attained by knowing Him; love of Him may be of two kinds:

- That which may be called the love of ordinary people, because of Allah's kindness to His slaves. No one denies this type of love, which is prompted by Allah's kindness, for people are inclined to love those who are kind to them and to dislike those who mistreat them. In reality, Allah alone, may He be Glorified, is the Bestower of blessings and the one Who is kind to His slave, for He is the one Who is most generous in bestowing all kinds of blessings, even if that is through measures that a person takes or through other people. That is because He is the one who makes measures effective and creates the means that lead to results. But in reality, if this type of love does not lead a person to love Allah Himself (for what He is), then in reality the person is only loving himself. Likewise, if a person loves someone because of his kindness and generosity to him, in reality he is only loving himself. This is not something bad; rather it is good, and the one whose love is only motivated by this does not know of any reason that should compel him to love Allah except His kindness to him.
- The second type of love is loving Allah for what He is. This is the love of one who knows of Allah (and His attributes) that which dictates that He deserves to be loved because of it. Each of the names and attributes of Allah, and each of the meanings and concepts that they refer to, dictate that He be loved with the utmost love; this also includes all His deeds, because

every blessing from Him is due to His generosity and every punishment is due to His justice. Therefore He deserves to be praised in all situations, and He deserves to be praised at times of ease and of hardship. This is a more sublime and more perfect type of love, and this is the love of the elite. They are the ones who seek the pleasure of gazing upon His noble Countenance, and find joy in remembering Him (Dhikr) and conversing with Him; that is more important for them than water to fish, to the extent that if they stopped doing that, they would feel unbearable pain; they are the foremost in faith.

Muslim narrated that Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was travelling on the road to Makkah, and he passed by a mountain called Jumdan. He said: “Proceed, this is Jumdan; the Mufarridun [those who have isolated themselves mentally and focused on constant Dhikr] have gone on ahead.” They said: What are the Mufarridun, O Messenger of Allah? He said: “The men and women who remember Allah a great deal.”

According to another report, they said: What are the Mufarridun, O Messenger of Allah? He said: Those who are completely absorbed in remembrance of Allah, for whom remembering Allah will relieve them of their burdens (of sin), and on the Day of Resurrection they will come light (having small burdens).” (Narrated by At-Tirmidhi). (End quote from Majmu` Al-Fatawa, 10/84)

Worship and the Ultimate Reward: Paradise

Whoever loves Allah because of His perfection and majesty, and because He is deserving of love, devotion and worship, undoubtedly hopes to be one of those who love to be close to Him, may He be Glorified, and long to gaze upon Him; he looks forward to meeting Him, he strives to attain His pleasure, and hopes to attain His love and honour, and to be one of those who are brought close to Him.

All of that can only be attained by admittance to Paradise, which is the abode of those with whom Allah is pleased, the place where its inhabitants will gaze upon the Countenance of Allah. Their hearts will be filled with love of their God for Whom their hearts yearned. In Paradise there will be

such joy and bliss as no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and it has not crossed the mind of any human.

This is the Paradise which Allah has encouraged us to take as our ultimate goal, and the Prophets, the righteous and the Awliya' (close friends of Allah) made it their ultimate aim and hope, so that they will be in the company of the Most Generous, may He be Glorified, where they will enjoy His good pleasure and nearness to Him, and that is the greatest joy of Paradise.

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

{Allah has promised the believing men and believing women gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they abide eternally, and pleasant dwellings in gardens of perpetual residence; but approval from Allah is greater. It is that which is the great attainment.} [At-Tawbah 9:72].

From this we know that there is no contradiction between worshipping Allah out of love and veneration, and asking for, seeking and longing for Paradise, and being keen to race towards it, or seeking refuge with Allah from the Fire and fearing it. If the person who loves Allah for what He is bears in mind that Paradise is the abode of those with whom Allah is pleased and those whom He will honour, and that in Paradise he will be very close to Allah, that will increase his love for Allah, his finding comfort in Him and his longing for Him. Therefore he will undoubtedly strive harder to enter Paradise and attain the highest levels in it, and he will think of his acts of obedience in this world as a means that will bring him closer to it, and will move him further away from the Fire which is the abode of disgrace, rejection, wrath and punishment.

Does longing for Paradise and fearing Hell contradict loving Allah out of veneration and awe?

If you reflect on what is mentioned above, you will realise that you were mistaken when you thought that longing for Paradise and fearing Hell is contrary to loving Allah out of veneration and awe, because loving Allah means longing for Him, wanting to be close to Him, and striving to attain His pleasure and avoid His wrath, for the lover longs for his beloved and feels pain when he

is far away from him, so how about if he is angry with him?

But because many people thought that the pleasure of Paradise is limited to food, drink, Hur Al-`In and other physical pleasures, they thought that there was a contradiction between loving and worshipping Allah, and asking for Paradise and seeking refuge from Hell.

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

Thus we realise that they are mistaken who say, “I never worshipped You out of hope for Your Paradise and fear of Your Hell; rather I worshipped You out of longing to see You.”

The one who says this, and those who follow him, think that there is nothing in Paradise except food, drink, clothing, intimacy and other physical pleasures. Hence one of the Shaykhs who were thus mistaken said, when he heard the verse (interpretation of the meaning), {Among you are some who desire this world and some that desire the Hereafter} [Al ‘Imran 3:152]: What about the one who desires or seeks Allah?! Another one said in response to the verse (interpretation of the meaning): {Indeed, Allah has purchased from the believers their lives and their properties [in exchange] for that they will have Paradise} [At-Tawbah 9:111]: if offering souls and properties (wealth) is in return for Paradise, then what is the price of gazing upon Him?!

All of this is because they thought that it is not part of the joys of Paradise to gaze upon Allah’s Countenance. But in reality, Paradise is the abode in which there will be all types of joy and pleasure, and the most sublime joy there will be gazing upon the Countenance of Allah. This is part of the bliss that they will attain in Paradise, as the texts tell us. Similarly, the people of Hell will be partitioned, away from their Lord, and will enter the fire. However, we may assume that the one who made this statement, if he knew what he was saying, meant: If You did not create Hell or You did not create Paradise, still You must be worshipped and we must seek to draw close to You and hope to gaze upon Your Countenance. (End quote from Majmu` Al-Fatawa, 10/62-63)

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

As a matter of fact, Paradise is not a word that refers only to trees, fruits, food, drink, hoor Al-`In,

rivers and palaces. Most people are mistaken when they think that Paradise is limited to that, for Paradise is a name for the abode of perfect and absolute bliss, and one of the greatest joys of Paradise will be the pleasure of gazing upon the noble Countenance of Allah and hearing His words, and the delight of being close to Him and attaining His pleasure. There can be no comparison between the physical pleasures in Paradise – such as food, drink, clothing and images – and that pleasure. Attaining the least divine pleasure is greater than Paradise and all that it contains, as Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): {But the good pleasure of Allah is greater still} [At-Tawbah 9:72]. In other words, no matter the extent to which Allah is pleased with His slave, even if it is small, it is still greater than Paradise.

In the authentic Hadith about seeing Allah, it says: "… and Allah will not give them anything that is dearer to them than gazing upon His Countenance." According to another hadith: "When He, may He be Glorified, manifests Himself to them and they see His Countenance with their own eyes, they will forget all the bliss that they had been enjoying, and will become oblivious to that joy and will pay no attention to it."

Undoubtedly, this is how it is, And the matter is much greater than one could think or imagine, especially when the lovers there find themselves with the one whom they love, for a person will be with the one whom he loves. What bliss, delight, joy or triumph could come close to the joy, pleasure and tranquillity of being with Allah? Is there anything superior to the pleasure and joy of being close to the Beloved, for there is nothing greater than Him, or more perfect, or more beautiful, and nothing could give greater comfort and happiness?

This – by Allah – is the type of knowledge that the lovers are striving hard to attain, and is the banner around which all those who have knowledge of Allah rally. It is the most important thing in Paradise, through which Paradise becomes a place of joy, and the life of Paradise is based on that.

So how can it be said that one should not worship Allah for the sake of attaining Paradise or for fear of Hell?

Similarly, Hell – may Allah protect us from it – is a place where its dwellers will suffer a great deal

when they are partitioned away from Allah and suffer disgrace, divine wrath and anger, and being far away from Him. That will be worse than the flames of fire in their bodies and souls. In fact, the flames of this fire in their hearts is what led to the flames burning their bodies, for those flames spread everywhere in their bodies from their hearts.

The aspiration of the Prophets and Messengers, the Siddiqs (the strong and true in faith), the martyrs and the righteous is Paradise, and what they seek to flee from is Hell.

And Allah is the source of strength, and in Him we put our trust. There is no power and no strength except with Allah; Allah is sufficient for us, and He is the best disposer of affairs. (End quote from Madarij As-Salikin, 2/80-81)

And Allah knows best.