

Question:

Assalaamu Alaikum

Salam all brothers -&- sisters

I recently heard from a fellow brother that ones Emaan doesn't change, meaning that it doesn't increase nor decrease...is this true? The brother also told me that it is ones taqwa that increases and decreases...is this true?

Please could anyone with knowledge in these fields respond to me.
And if possible, please could provide me with evidence.

Jazakallah Khair

Answer:

Assalamu Aleikum

Sheikh Omar answered this question before as follows:

'...Disagreement among the scholars of Islam has centred on whether action is part of Imaan or something based on Imaan. Some of the scholars of Islam have held the view that belief is simply an inward adherence ('aqd bi'l-qalb) and verbal confession (shahadah bi'l-lisan). Other scholars, such as Abu Talib al-Makki in Qut-al-Qulub , have maintained that action is a part of belief and Imaan is incomplete without works according to the pillars of Islam.

Imam al Ghazzali in "The Foundations of the Articles of Faith" says there is no disagreement at all that anyone who combines in himself all three, i.e., inward adherence, verbal confession and works according to the pillars of Islam, will have his final abode in Paradise. Disagreement has occurred as to whether inward adherence and verbal confession is sufficient to bring men forth from Hell and prevent them from remaining there forever, in accordance with the hadith: "Whoever hath in his heart the weight of an atom of belief will be brought forth from Hell-Fire." [al-Bukhari, al-Tirmidhi]

The Khawarij:

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Those that say action is a part of Imaan contend that the person who does not perform the action, like prayer, is a disbeliever.

For this reason the Khawarij sect considered a person who did not perform an obligatory duty (wajib) or who performed a forbidden action (haram) as a disbeliever. In arriving at this opinion they made ta'wil (allegorical type of interpretation) of the verse of Quran "He who kills a believer intentionally, his recompense is Hell, to abide therein forever" [al Nisa` 4:93] and the authentic tradition of the Prophet: "A fornicator is not a believer when he does it, a drinker is not a believer when he drinks." [Muslim]. These evidences appear to support the view that committing a sin makes one a disbeliever. This opinion has been rejected by the scholars of Ahlal Sunnah. The verse quoted was revealed, according to Imam al-Ghazzali, for the particular situation of a person killing a believer because of his belief. As for the tradition, Ibn al Qayim al-Jawziya quotes Imam Ahmad as saying the subject of the tradition is that the person in committing the sinful act is no longer a believer, but he is still a Muslim. It does not

mean a disbelief that takes a person out of the community of muslims. It is not like believing in part of the revelation and disbelieving in another part of it; this is real disbelief, about which there is no doubt in anyone's mind.

The Mutazilah:

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The Mutazilah school of thought said that the person who commits a major sin (kaba'ir), but performs some works according to the pillars of Islam, departs from true belief but does not become an unbeliever. He becomes a fasiq (reprobate), neither a believer nor an unbeliever, and will reside in Hell forever. The Mutazilahs opinion has been rejected by the scholars of Ahlul Sunnah on the grounds that they failed to understand the real meaning of the verses of God, such as "Surely I am indeed forgiving to him who repents, believes and does righteous good deeds, and then remains constant in doing them." [Ta-Ha 20:82]; and "And for such as will rebel against God and His Messenger for him is the fire of Hell, he shall dwell therein forever." [al-Jinn 72:23] These verses, and others wherein God couples good works with belief, are general statements, which also include specification, as proven by the verse: "Verily! God forgives not setting up partners in worship with Him, but He forgives whom he pleases other sins than that." [an-Nisa 4:116]. Thus freedom to forgive men sins, other than shirk (setting up partners with God), must be left to God. This is proven by the tradition: "Whoever hath in his heart the weight of an atom of belief will be brought forth from Hell fire.", and the verse : "As to those who believe and do righteous deeds, verily!

We shall not suffer to be lost the reward of anyone who do a righteous deed." [al-Kahf 18:30] In the context of this verse how would God suffer the reward, not only of good deeds, but the belief itself because of one sin?

The Murjiah:

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The Murjiah considered the sinner to be full of Imaan , making ta`wil (allegorical type of interpretation) of such verses as: "And whoever believeth in his Lord, need not fear either loss or wrong." [al-Jinn 72:13]; and "And they who believed in God and His Messenger are the men of truth, and the witnesses in the presence of the Lord; they shall have their reward and their Light; but as for the disbelievers and those who give the lie to Our signs, these shall be the inmates of Hell." [al-Hadid 57:19] they said that no believer would enter Hell fire, although he might commit every possible sin. Their fundamental doctrine consisted of the suspension (irja') of judgement against believers who committed sin. For the Murjiah the sinner was a sinner because of his major sin, and the believer a believer because of his Imaan . The opinion of the Murjiah has been completely rejected by the scholars of Ahlul Sunnah. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "Whoever hath in his heart the weight of an atom of belief will be brought from Hell fire." How could anyone be brought forth from Hell fire if he had not first entered therein?

The People of Sunnah (Ahlul Sunnah):

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The people of the sunnah and the majority of the muslims consider that action is a fruit of the belief and the person who commits a sin is not a disbeliever unless the sin is in the creed itself, i.e., it contradicts the faith such as the worship of idols, ridiculing the Quran, denying prayer or fasting, or permits adultery or usury etc. The person who does not pray is a sinner, the person who denies the duty of prayer is a disbeliever. In other words, there is a distinction between conviction and action. Imam al Nawawi says in his introduction to Sahih Muslim, "The school of thought of the true believers is that no one from the people of the Qibla becomes a disbeliever through a sin or innovation (bida) or through following a desire. Only if he denies what is known by Islam of necessity does he at that time become an apostate and disbeliever, unless that is he is new to Islam."

Sheikh Ali al-Tantawi in his book "The Faith" says: "Scholars of Ahlul Sunnah are unanimous in their opinion that a person who commits a forbidden act without denouncing its prohibition or a person who neglects to do a duty but does not deny that it is a duty and expresses no contempt for it will no doubt be punished in the other world. But he will not be accused of blasphemy nor will he be condemned to the eternal fire of hell."

The Fruit of Belief :

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Those that say that action is neither a pillar of Imaan nor a part of it, but rather a fruit of Imaan, they also acknowledge that sometimes action is a part of Imaan; Imam Qurtubi in his explanation of : "Surely the (true) faith with God is Islam." [al Imran 3:19] quotes, for example, the Prophet having said, "Faith consists of seventy-odd aspects, the lowest of which is removing an obstacle (off the road), and the highest the profession that 'There is no God but Allah.' and modesty is an aspect of faith." [Bukhari, Muslim] In this regard Qurtubi also quotes the hadith concerning the Abd al Qays delegation. This delegation came to the Prophet from the Island of Bahrain during the conquest of Makkah. They represented the tribe of Rabi'ah. The Prophet enjoined that they have faith in God alone. He then asked them, 'Do you know what faith is?' They answered, 'God and His Messenger knows best.' He said, 'It is the witness that there is no God but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of God, observing the regular worship, giving the obligatory alms, and observing the fast of Ramadan. It is also that you give in alms the fifth of the booty.'

Imam al-Ghazzali says: "It is not unlikely that good works be considered a part of belief, because they perfect and complete it, just as it is said that the head and hands are part of man. it is evident that a person will cease to be human if his head no longer exists; but he will not cease to be a human being if one of his hands is lost through amputation. Similarly both the magnificent (takbir) and the praise (tasbih) [at the beginning of prayer] are considered a part of prayer, although it is not annulled with their omission. Therefore acceptance with the mind stands in relation to belief as does the head in relation to the existence of man [in this life], since the one depends for its existence upon the other and ceases to exist when the other no longer is. The remaining good works are like the limbs of the body, some are more important than the others. The Messenger said, 'A believer is no longer a believer when he commits fornication.' Furthermore the Companions held the same opinion as the Mutazilah concerning the fact that a person ceases to be a believer when he commits the sin of fornication. What this really means is that such a person is no longer a real believer possessing a complete and perfect belief, just as the deformed individual whose limbs have been amputated is described as being no longer a human being; in other words he lacks that perfection which is beyond actual humanity."

Does Belief Increase and Decrease?

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Accordingly, if we look deeply into the texts it is apparent that actions are the fruit of the belief, i.e. the result of Imaan. When we say actions are a part of Imaan we mean it in the figurative sense because, unlike the Khawarij, those scholars who have said that actions are a part of Imaan never called sinners disbelievers. As actions are the fruit of Imaan so too is obedience, thus the scholars have described Imaan as going up and down; meaning that if the obedience increases Imaan increases and if obedience decreases Imaan decreases. Imam Nawawi in his introduction to Sahih Muslim quotes al Bagwi al Shafii as saying " Imaan from the point of view of the language means the belief, and by this meaning it neither increases or decreases, but according to the sacred law (shar') Imaan is the belief with the heart and actions of the limbs; when it is explained this way Imaan increases and decreases and this is the opinion of the people of sunnah." Nawawi quotes Ibn Battal (an Imaan of the Maliki school) as saying " The school of thought of the people of sunnah, from the early and later generations, is that Imaan in speech and actions increases and decreases, the evidence for which is : "For Believers are those who, when God is mentioned, feel a tremor in their hearts, and when they hear His revelation rehearsed, find their faith increased and strengthened." [al Anfal 8:2] Also God said: "Whenever there comes down a surah (chapter of Quran), some of them say: 'Which of you has had his faith increased by it?' Yea, those who believe their faith is increased and they do rejoice." [at Tauba 9: 124] Imam Malik said: "If anyone has plenty of good deeds and strong obedience to God he is full of Imaan, and anyone who is short of obedience, who commits plenty of sins and is heedless in remembering God, his Imaan is diminished.". Even the Companions found this matter in themselves until they began to consider this hypocrisy. Ibn -abi-Mulaykah said, "I have known one hundred and thirty of the Companions of the Prophet, all of whom feared hypocrisy. "A certain person told Hudhayfah, "Verily I fear I am a hypocrite." To which Hudhayfah replied, "Fear not. If you were a hypocrite you would not have feared hypocrisy. Verily hypocrisy does not fear hypocrisy.". Imam Ahmed, Tirmizi and Ibn Hibban have reported Abu Huraira as saying "We said O Messenger

of God: Why is it when we are with you our heart is soft, our Imaan is increased, and we are from the people of the Hereafter. But as soon as we leave your company and see our wives and smell our children we deny ourselves? The Prophet said, "If you were to leave me and continued as if you were in my company the angels would visit you in your places and in your ways. If you did not commit sins God would bring other people to replace you with them, because they would sin and ask His forgiveness; and God would forgive them." Ibn Battal said: "When the good work of the muslim decreases his Imaan is little, but when it increases his Imaan is full. But the belief in God and His Prophet (saw) does not decrease nor increase. Imam Malik did not accept this on account that if the belief decreased it would become mere conjecture and doubt, and the man would cease to be muslim." Thus Imam Malik, and others of the scholars, have made it clear that Imaan increases with obedience, which is the fruit of belief. But the Imaan in Allah, His Books, His Prophets, and the Day of Judgement must be complete, definitive, and certain (i.e. with yaqeen) otherwise the Imaan would become doubtful and speculative. The Companions and the early generations of the Muslims, known as al-salaf al-salih agreed that belief is subject to increase and depreciation - increasing with obedience and good works, and decreasing with disobedience and sin. The meaning of this, according to Al-Ghazzali, is "It proves that good works are not an integral part of belief nor a basic thing for its existence. Rather they are a superaddition (mazid) which augments belief. Both the surplus and the deficit exist, but nothing increases in itself....belief as such does exist, and that once it exists, it may vary, subject to increase and depreciation.". Actions performed with sincerity of the heart are the fruits of belief...'

I trust that this helps.

You can phone the Sheikh on 0956 92 0006 for more details.

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