Why does Allah torment His slaves when they do not believe in Him?

We must differentiate between faith and submission to the Lord of the worlds.

The right that the Lord of the worlds is entitled to and that none can neglect is submitting to His Oneness and worshiping Him alone without associating partners with Him, and submitting to the fact that He alone is the Creator to Whom sovereignty and all affairs belong, whether we accept this or not. This is the origin of belief, which should be fulfilled by words and deeds, and we have no other option. In the light of this, man will be reckoned and punished.

The opposite of submission is delinquency.

{Should We then treat Muslims like the criminals?} [318] Surat al-Qalam: 35.

As for wrongdoing, it is associating partners or rivals with the Lord of the worlds.

{...So do not set up rivals to Allah while you know.} [319] Surat al-Baqarah: 22.

{Those who believe and do not mix their faith with falsehood are the ones who will be secure, and it is they who are rightly guided.} [320] Surat al-Anʿām: 82.

Faith is an issue related to the unseen that requires belief in Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers, and the Last Day as well as acceptance and being content with Allah's decree and predestination.

{The Bedouins say, “We have believed.” Say, “You have not believed, but say, ‘We have submitted,’ for faith has not yet entered your hearts. But if you obey Allah and His Messenger, He will not detract anything from the reward of your deeds. Indeed, Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”} [321] Surat al-Hujurāt: 14.

The previous noble verse indicates that faith is a higher and loftier degree, which refers to acceptance and contentment. Faith has degrees and levels and it increases and decreases. Man's ability and his heart's readiness to comprehend unseen matters vary from one person to another. People differ in the extent of their perception of the attributes of beauty and majesty and their knowledge of

their Lord.

Thus, man will not be punished for his low perception of unseen matters or for his narrow-mindedness; however, Allah will hold him accountable for the minimum accepted level that could save him from eternity in Hellfire. It is a must to submit to Allah's Oneness and to admit the fact that the creation and all affairs belong to Him and to worship Him alone. By fulfilling such submission, Allah forgives all other sins for whomever He wills. No other choice is available for man; it is either faith and triumph or disbelief and loss; he must either be something or nothing at all.

{Allah does not forgive associating partners with Him, but forgives anything less than that for whom He wills. Whoever associates partners with Allah has indeed committed a grave sin.} [322]

Faith is an issue related to the unseen and it ceases once the unseen is revealed or the signs of the Hour appear. Surat an-Nisā': 48.

{...On the Day when some of your Lord's signs come, belief will be of no benefit to those who did not believe before, or those who did not do some good through their faith...} [323] Surat al-An'ām: 158.

If man wants to benefit from his faith by performing righteous deeds and increasing his rewards, he must do this before the advent of the Hour and appearance of the unseen.

As for the one who has no record of good deeds, if he wishes to be saved from eternity in Hellfire, then, he must leave this world while submitting to Allah and admitting His Oneness and the fact that He alone is worthy of worship. Some sinners may remain temporarily in Hellfire, depending on the will of Allah as He may forgive them if He wishes or admit them to Hellfire if He so wills.

{O you who believe, fear Allah as He should be feared, and do not die except as Muslims.} [324] Surat Āl 'Imrān: 102.

In Islam, faith is fulfilled by both words and deeds. It is not belief alone as in Christian teachings today, or deeds alone as in atheism. Man's deeds during the stage of his belief in the unseen along with his patience are not equal to those of

the one who examined and witnessed the unseen in the Hereafter. Furthermore, the deeds of the one who worked for the sake of Allah during hardships and the stage of weakness and uncertainty about the future of Islam are not equal to the deeds of the one who worked for the sake of Allah during a period when Islam was victorious, strong, and powerful.

{...Those of you who spent and fought before the conquest [of Mecca and those who did not] are not equal. They are much greater in rank than those who spent and fought afterwards. Yet Allah has promised each a fine reward, and Allah is All-Aware of what you do.} [325] Surat ak-Hadīd: 10.

The Lord of the worlds does not inflict punishment for no reason. He reckons and punishes either for peoples' violating the rights of others or the right of the Lord of the worlds.

The right that none can neglect to ensure safety from eternity in Hellfire is submitting to the Oneness of the Lord of the worlds and worshiping Him alone without associating partners with Him by saying: "Ash-hadu alla ilāha illallāh wahdahu la sharīka lahu, wa ash-hadu anna Muhammadan ‘abduhu wa rasūluh, wa ash-hadu anna rusulullāhi haqq wa ash-hadu anna al-jannata haqq wa an-nāra haqq (I testify that there is no god but Allah alone without a partner, and I testify that Muhammad is His slave and messenger, and I testify that the messengers of Allah are true, and I testify that Paradise is true and that Hellfire is true)", and fulfilling its due requirements.

Refraining from turning people away from the path of Allah and from advocating or supporting any act intended to obstruct Da‘wah (calling to Islam) or prevent the spread of Allah's religion.

Refraining from treating people unjustly, violating their rights, or oppressing them.

Sparing people one's harm even if that requires keeping oneself far or isolated from people.

One might not have a record full of good deeds; however, if he did not harm anyone and did not get engaged in any act that would bring evil either to himself or to others, and testified to the Oneness of Allah, it is hoped that he

might be saved from the torment of Hellfire.

{Why would Allah punish you, if you are grateful and faithful? Allah is ever Appreciative, All-Knowing.} [326] Surat an-Nisā': 147.

People are classified into ranks and levels starting from their deeds in the worldly life and until the Day of Judgment when the world of the unseen is disclosed and the Reckoning begins. Among people, there are those whom Allah will afflict in the Hereafter as mentioned in the noble Hadīth.

The Lord of the worlds punishes people according to their acts and evil deeds. He either hastens their punishment in the worldly life or delays it and inflicts it on them in the Hereafter. This depends on the extent of the enormity of the evil deed and whether it is forgivable or not. It also depends on the extent of its effect and harm on crops and livestock and all other creatures, as Allah does not like corruption.

The previous nations of Nūh (Noah), Hūd (Heber), Sālih, and Lūt (Lot) as the Pharaoh and others who rejected their messengers, Allah hastened their punishment in this life because of their evil deeds and tyranny as they did not keep themselves away from evil or spare people their evil; rather, they exceeded their limits. As for the people of Heber, they were haughty and arrogant. The people of Sālih killed the she-camel, and the people of Lot insisted on immorality. The people of Shu'ayb (Jethro) insisted on corruption and on violating people's rights in measure and weight. The people of Pharaoh pursued the people of Moses out of transgression and tyranny, and before them the people of Noah insisted on associating partners with Allah in worship.

{Whoever does a righteous deed, it is to his own benefit; and whoever does an evil deed, it is to his own loss. Your Lord is not unjust to His slaves.} [327] Surat Fussilat: 46.

{Each of them We seized for their sin: against some of them We sent a storm of stones; some were seized by a blast; some We caused the earth to swallow; and some We drowned. It was not Allah Who wronged them, but it was they who wronged themselves.} [328] Surat al-'Ankabūt: 40.

Questions and Answers about Islam

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