

11749 - Not taking appropriate means on the grounds of putting one's trust in Allah

the question

Some Sufis say that we should not take appropriate means, on the grounds of putting our trust in Allah and submitting to His will and decree. Is this correct? What is the correct view?

Detailed answer

This is one of the matters which have caused widespread problems, both on the individual level and on an ummah-wide scale.

The Muslim ummah has gone through many crises and difficult times, and it has emerged from them through enlightened thinking, penetrating insight and sound concepts, searching for the right means and weighing up the consequences and causes, and only then taking the appropriate means and approaching matters from the right direction. Thus – by the will of Allah – they overcame those crises and emerged from those calamities, regaining their honour and past glory. This is how the ummah was during its golden ages.

But in these later times in which the ummah has been swamped by ignorance and overwhelmed by ideas of heresy and westernization, and bid'ah (reprehensible innovations) and misguidance have become widespread, many Muslims have become confused about this matter. They have made belief in al-qadaa' wa'l-qadar (the will and decree of Allah) an excuse for laziness, and a justification for not being determined and resolved or thinking about higher matters such as how to achieve glory and success. They have preferred the easy, cheap route to the proper but difficult road.

Their solution was for a man to rely on al-qadar (Divine decree), and on the fact that Allah is the One Who does whatever He wants; whatever He wills happens and whatever He does not will does not happen – so let His will be done and let His decree come to pass. We have no means of changing anything and we have no involvement in any of that.

In this manner, many Muslims very easily submitted to the decrees without resisting them by taking the prescribed or permissible means.

So they did not enjoin what is good, forbid what is evil, wage jihaad against the enemies of Allah, strive to spread knowledge and do away with ignorance, combat destructive thought and misleading ideas... all on the grounds that Allah willed that!

The truth is that this major disaster and immense misguidance led the ummah into a deep pit of backwardness and decline, and enabled its enemies to overwhelm it, and brought upon it calamity after calamity.

But taking the appropriate means does not affect belief in al-qadar; in fact it is part of perfecting that belief. Allah decrees things for us, and He wants things from us. What He decrees for us is hidden from us, but what He wants from us, He commands us to do. He wants us to convey the call to the kuffaar even if He knows that they will not believe. He wants us to fight them even if He knows that we will be defeated by them. He wants us to be one ummah even if He knows that there will be divisions and differences among us. He wants us to be severe against the disbelievers and merciful amongst ourselves, even if He knows that we will be too severe with one another, and so on...

It is this confusion about what Allah wants for us and what He wants from us that has led to the confusion about this matter and caused us to fall into haraam things.

It is true that Allah is the One Who does whatever He wants, He is the Creator of all things, the One in Whose hand is the sovereignty of all things, the One to Whom belong the keys of the heavens and the earth, but He has created laws according to which this universe operates, although He is Able to go beyond these laws but He does not do this for everyone.

Believing that Allah is Able to help the believers against the disbelievers does not mean that He will help the believers when they are not doing anything to take the appropriate means, because victory without taking the means is impossible and Allah's power does not

have to do with the impossible, and because it is contrary to Allah's wisdom, and His power is connected to His wisdom.

The fact that Allah is Able to do something does not mean that an individual, a group or the ummah is able to do the same thing. Allah's power is an attribute that is unique to Him, and people's abilities are unique to them - confusing Allah's power and belief in it with a person's ability and doing what Allah has commanded him to do is what makes people sit down and do nothing; this is what paralyzes peoples and nations.

This is what was noted and pointed out by one of the German orientalist, who said, when recording the history of the Muslims in later periods: "The nature of the Muslim is submission to the will of Allah and acceptance of His decree, and submission with all that he possesses to the One, the Subduer."

This obedience has two effects. In the early period of Islam, it played a major role in wars and led to ongoing victory, because it instilled in soldiers the spirit of sacrifice.

But in later times it was a cause of stagnation which overwhelmed the Muslim world and threw it downhill, keeping it isolated from world events. (al-'Almaaniyyah by Shaykh Safar al-Hawaali, quoting from Paul Schamtaz in his book Islam the world power of tomorrow, p. 87)