

12315 - Suffering From Waswas (Insinuating Whispers) of the Shaytan About the Essence of Allah

the question

A man is experiencing waswas (insinuating whispers) from the Shaytan (devil) having to do with Allah, and he is very afraid of that.

Detailed answer

The questioner has mentioned this problem and is afraid of its consequences. I say to him, rejoice, for its consequences cannot be anything but good. By means of this waswas, the Shaytan tries to gain control over the believers and shake the sound belief in their hearts, and make them suffer psychological and intellectual anxiety that will affect the purity of their faith and their life, if they are believers.

This is not the first or the last time that the believers have been exposed to this. It will continue so long as there is any believer in this world. The Sahabah/Companions of the Prophet (may Allah be pleased with them) also faced this problem. It was narrated that Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: "Some of the Companions of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) came to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and said to him, 'We find in ourselves thoughts that are too terrible to speak of.' He said, 'Are you really suffering from that?' They said, 'Yes.' He said, 'That is a clear sign of faith.'" (Muslim).

It was narrated in al-Saheehayn, also from Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him), that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, "The Shaytan comes to one of you and says, 'Who created such and such? Who created such and such?' Until he says, 'Who created your Lord?!' If that happens to any of you, let him seek refuge with Allah and put a stop to these thoughts."

It was narrated from Ibn ‘Abbas (may Allah be pleased with them both) that a man came to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and said, “I think thoughts to myself, which I would rather be burnt to a cinder than speak of them.” The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, “Praise be to Allah, Who has reduced all his [the Shaytan’s] plots to mere whispers.” (Abu Dawood).

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said in Kitab al-Eeman: “The believer may suffer from the whispers of the Shaytan insinuating thoughts of kufr (disbelief), which may make him feel distressed. The Sahabah (may Allah be pleased with them) said, ‘O Messenger of Allah, some of us think thoughts which we would rather fall from heaven to earth than speak of them.’ He said, ‘That is a clear sign of faith.’ According to one report, ‘... thoughts which are too terrible to speak of.’ He said, ‘Praise be to Allah, Who has reduced all his [the Shaytan’s] plots to mere whispers,’ meaning that the fact that these whispers come, but they are so greatly disliked, and they are pushed away from the heart, is a clear sign of faith. This is like the mujahid (warrior) to whom the enemy comes, but he resists him until he overwhelms him, and this is a mighty jihad (battle)... Hence the seekers of knowledge and devoted worshippers experience waswas and doubts which others do not face, because they (the others) are not following the way prescribed by Allah, rather they are following their own whims and desires and neglecting to remember their Lord. This is what the Shaytan wants, in contrast to those who are striving to draw closer to their Lord by seeking knowledge and worshipping Him. He is their enemy and seeks to prevent them from drawing closer to Allah.” (p.147 of the Indian edition)

I say to this questioner, if you are faced with this waswas from the Shaytan, then fight it and resist it. Know that it can never harm you when you fulfill the duty of fighting and resisting it, and you refuse to be controlled by it. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, “Allah will forgive my ummah (followers) for any insinuating whispers that may cross their minds, so long as they do not act upon it or speak of it.” (Agreed upon).

If it is said to you: Do you believe the insinuating whispers you experience? Do you think that they are true? Do you really think that Allah is like what this waswas says? You would say, “It is not right for us to speak of this. Glory be to You (O Allah)! This is a great lie” [24:16]. You would denounce that in your heart and with your tongue, and be the one who objects to it the most, for it is only whispers and thoughts that cross your mind. It is a trap set by the Shaytan, who flows through the son of Adam (peace be upon him) like blood flows, to make you doomed and to confuse you about your religion.

Hence you will find that the Shaytan does not cast doubts or suspicions into your heart about trivial matters. For example, you may hear of the existence of great cities filled with people and buildings in the east and the west, but it would never cross your mind someday to doubt that they exist or to criticize them and say that they are in ruins and unfit for habitation, or that they are uninhabited, and so on. The Shaytan has nothing to gain by making people doubt about these cities. But he does have a lot to gain by corrupting the believer’s faith, so he strives with his cavalry and his infantry to extinguish the light of knowledge and guidance in his heart and to make him fall into the darkness of doubt and confusion. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) has told us of the appropriate remedy for such problems, which is to seek refuge with Allah and put a stop to it. If a person puts a stop to it and continues to worship Allah, seeking and hoping for (the reward) which is with Allah, it will stop by Allah’s leave. So turn away from all the thoughts of this kind that cross your mind. You are worshipping Allah, calling upon Him and glorifying Him, and if you were to hear anyone ascribing to Allah the things that are whispered to you (waswas), you would probably kill him if you could. So the things that are whispered to you are neither real nor true, they are merely imagination and whispers which have no basis.

Our advice may be summed up as follows:

1. Seek refuge with Allah and give up these thoughts completely, as the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) commanded.
2. Remember Allah and control yourself and do not continue to think of these whispers.

3. Occupy yourself with worship and doing good deeds, in obedience to the command of Allah and seeking to please Him. When you devote yourself completely and seriously to worship, you will forget about these whispers, in sha Allah.

4. Frequently seek refuge with Allah and make du'a (supplicate) to free you from these whispers.

I ask Allah to keep you safe and sound, and protect you from all evils.