

Understanding the Texts of Threats¹

Question: One of the Sudanese brothers living in the kingdom (of Saudi Arabia) in the city of Bāḥah asks: The people of the Sunnah and the mainstream community of Muslims state that the final destination of those who worship Allah with *Tawḥīd* – the Muslim monotheists – will eventually be Paradise. Yet there have come examples in some *ḥadīth* (prophetic narrations) that:

لا يَدْخُلُ الْجَنَّةَ قَاطِعُ رَحْمٍ

“Someone who breaks ties of kinship will not enter Paradise.”

And:

لا يَدْخُلُ الْجَنَّةَ نَمَّامٌ

“A slanderer will not enter Paradise.”

So, will the Muslim monotheists who happen to fall into these two groups never enter Paradise as is apparent from these texts, or how do we understand them?

¹ This Fatwá of Ibn al-‘Uthaymīn can be found in Arabic at: http://www.ibnothaimen.com/all/noor/article_7242.shtml.

Answer: These texts pertaining to threats and others similar to them, whether from ḥadīth or verses of the Quran, are what led the Khawārij and Mu'tazilah sects to state that anyone who commits a major sin will remain forever in the fire (of Hell). This is because they take these general texts and forget other general ones that conflict (and must be taken along) with these. And there are many proofs that state that Muslim monotheists or those with faith in their hearts even equal to a seed's worth will not remain in the fire forever.

Likewise, the generality of the texts pertaining to hopes and promises that mention that believers will enter Paradise led the Murjiah sect to disregard the texts of threats. They said that any believer, even if he were a wicked sinner, would never enter the fire. So, these people take only these general texts and those others sects take only the general texts of threats.

However, Allah has guided the people of the Sunnah and the main community of Muslims to the middle, moderate belief that combines the understanding of both evidences in conjunction. This belief is that someone who commits a major sin does not thereby completely leave his faith. He may be deserving of punishment but Allah could simply forgive him and not put him into the fire, or perhaps someone else could pray for him and as a result Allah may not punish him. His punishment could also be expiated by other means. However, if no means are present whereby he can avoid punishment, then he may be punished in the fire according to the extent of his action, and after that he would be in Paradise. This is the methodology and understanding of the people of Sunnah and the community of mainstream Muslims.

Based on this understanding, the general ḥadīth of threats like those the questioner mentioned: “Someone who breaks ties of kinship will not enter Paradise,” and “A slanderer will not enter Paradise,” are understood to mean that such people will not enter Paradise by a perfect, absolute entrance without punishment. Rather, punishment may precede that (his entrance to Paradise) if nothing wipes out that sin like Allah’s forgiveness or something else. So the meaning is he will not enter Paradise absolutely and perfectly without some sort of punishment preceding that; by this meaning all the evidences are understood together (with no contradiction).