

Title: Fear Others Besides Allah

Original Title: فتح المجيد

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# Fearing Others

B E S I D E S A L L A H

Selections from *Fath al-Majīd* by:

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## T A B L E O F C O N T E N T S

<b>The First Verse:</b> ﴿That is only Satan who frightens (you) of his supporters...﴾ .....	2
The Types of Fearing Others Besides Allah .....	3
<b>The Second Verse:</b> ﴿The mosques of Allah are only to be maintained by those who believe in Allah and the Last Day...﴾ .....	7
<b>The Third Verse:</b> ﴿And of mankind are some who say, “We believe in Allah,” but if they are made to suffer for the sake of Allah...﴾ .....	10
<b>The Ḥadīth:</b> “Whoever seeks the pleasure of Allah by angering people, Allah will suffice him regarding people.” .....	13

## The First Verse

Allah ( تعالی ) says:

﴿ إِنَّمَا دَلِكُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ يُخَوِّفُ أَوْلِيَاءَهُ فَلَا تَخَافُوهُمْ وَخَافُوا مِنِّي إِن كُنتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴾

**That is only Satan who frightens (you) of his supporters. So do not fear them, but fear Me, if you are indeed believers.<sup>1</sup>**

Fear is one of the most dignified and important religious principles. Fear of Allah summarizes all forms of worship which must be made solely and sincerely for Allah.

Allah says (about His messengers):

﴿ وَهُمْ مِّنْ خَشْيَتِهِ مُشْفِقُونَ ﴾

**And they, from fearing Him, are frightened.<sup>2</sup>**

And He ( تعالی ) says (about the angels):

﴿ يَخَافُونَ رَبَّهُمْ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِمْ ﴾

**They fear their Lord above them.<sup>3</sup>**

And He ( تعالی ) says (about the believers):

﴿ وَلِمَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ جَنَّاتٍ ﴾

<sup>1</sup> The Quran, Sūrah Āli 'Imrān, 3:175

<sup>2</sup> Sūrah al-Anbiyā, 21:28

<sup>3</sup> Sūrah al-Naḥl, 16:50

**But whoever has feared standing before his Lord will have two gardens.<sup>4</sup>**

And:

﴿فَيَأْيَا فَارْهَبُونَ﴾

**So fear only Me.<sup>5</sup>**

And Allah says:

﴿فَلَا تَخْشَوُا النَّاسَ وَآخِشُونِ﴾

**So do not fear people, but fear Me.<sup>6</sup>**

There are many verses in the Quran similar to these.

Fear of other than Allah can be divided into three types.

1. The first type of fear is an inward, spiritual fear. This type is the religious fear one has of other than Allah such as fearing idols and false gods, being afraid that they may afflict him with something he dislikes. An example is the verse in which Allah narrated that the people of Prophet Hūd said to him:

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<sup>4</sup> Sūrah al-Rahmān, 55:46

<sup>5</sup> Sūrah al-Nahl, 16:51

<sup>6</sup> Sūrah al-Māidah, 5:44

﴿ إِن نَّقُولُ إِلَّا اعْتَرَاكَ بَعْضُ آلِهَتِنَا بِسُوءٍ ۗ قَالَ إِنِّي أُشْهِدُ اللَّهَ وَاشْهَدُوا أَنِّي  
بَرِيءٌ مِّمَّا تُشْرِكُونَ ﴾

**“We only say that some of our gods have possessed you with evil.” He said, “Indeed, I call Allah to witness, and you witness yourselves, that I am free from whatever you associate with Allah.”<sup>7</sup>**

Allah also says about this type of fear:

﴿ وَيَخَوْفُوكَ بِالَّذِينَ مِنْ دُونِهِ ﴾

**And they threaten you with those (they worship) other than Him.<sup>8</sup>**

This is exactly the same type of fear those who worship grave inhabitants have as well as idol worshippers; such people fear these false gods. They threaten the people who believe only in Allah with the punishment of such false deities when the believers criticize their misplaced worship, encouraging them to instead sincerely worship Allah alone. This type of fear completely invalidates *tawḥīd* – the worship of Allah alone.

**2.** The second type of fearing others besides Allah is when one chooses not to do what he is religiously obligated to do out of fear of other people. This type of fear is impermissible and it is a form of associating others with Allah which contradicts complete *tawḥīd*. And it is this type of fear for which the opening verse was revealed; Allah ( تعالی ) says:

<sup>7</sup> Sūrah Hūd, 11:54

<sup>8</sup> Sūrah al-Zumar, 39:36

﴿ الَّذِينَ قَالَ لَهُمُ النَّاسُ إِنَّ النَّاسَ قَدْ جَمَعُوا لَكُمْ فَاخْشَوْهُمْ فَزَادَهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَقَالُوا حَسْبُنَا اللَّهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيلُ ﴿ فَانْقَلَبُوا بِنِعْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَفَضْلٍ لَّمْ يَمَسَّهْمُ سُوءٌ وَاتَّبَعُوا رِضْوَانَ اللَّهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿ إِنَّمَا ذَلِكُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ يُخَوِّفُ أَوْلِيَائَهُ فَلَا تَخَافُوهُمْ وَخَافُوا مِنِّي إِن كُنتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴾

Those to whom hypocrites said, “The people have certainly gathered against you, so fear them.” But it (only) increased them in faith and they said, “Sufficient for us is Allah and (He is) the best disposer of affairs.” So they returned with favor from Allah and bounty, no harm having touched them. They pursued the pleasure of Allah, and Allah is the possessor of great bounty. That is only Satan who frightens (you) of his supporters. So do not fear them, but fear Me, if you are indeed believers.<sup>9</sup>

Similarly, in a ḥadīth

« إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى يَقُولُ لِلْعَبْدِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ : مَا مَنَعَكَ إِذَا رَأَيْتَ الْمُنْكَرَ أَنْ لَا تُغَيِّرَهُ ؟  
فَيَقُولُ : رَبُّ خَشْيَةِ النَّاسِ ، فَيَقُولُ : إِيَّايَ كُنْتَ أَحَقَّ أَنْ تَخْشَى »

Allah ( تعالى ) will ask a worshipper on the Day of Resurrection, “What prevented you, when you saw some wrongdoing, from changing it?” The person will answer, “My Lord, the fear of people.” He will say, “I was more deserving that you fear Me.”<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Sūrah Āli ‘Imrān, 3:173-175

<sup>10</sup> Recorded by Aḥmad (3/27, 29, 77), Ibn Ḥibbān (1845), Ibn Mājah (4017), and others. Shaykh ‘Abdul ‘Azīz Ibn Bāz said it is authentic in his checking of *Fath al-Majīd*. Shaykh Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī said the similar narration of Ibn Mājah is authentic in *Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan Ibn Mājah* (no. 3244).

3. The third type of fearing others besides Allah is the natural fear. It is the instinctive fear of an enemy, a wild animal, or similar things. There is nothing wrong with this type of fear as Allah ( تعالی ) said relaying the story of Prophet Mūsá ( عليه السلام ):

﴿ فَخَرَجَ مِنْهَا خَائِفًا يَتَرَقَّبُ ۗ قَالَ رَبِّ نَجِّنِي مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴾

So he escaped it (the city), fearful and anticipating (apprehension). He said,  
“My Lord, save me from the wrongdoing people.”<sup>11</sup>

As for the meaning of ﴿That is only Satan who frightens (you) of his supporters﴾ in the opening verse,<sup>12</sup> it means he tries to make you afraid of his allies. And as for ﴿So do not fear them, but fear Me﴾, this is a commandment from Allah ( تعالی ) to believers that they must not fear others besides Him. It is an order that they should limit their emotion of fear to Allah alone, fearing none other. This is the complete sincerity and devotion Allah requires from his worshippers and with which He is pleased. So when they ensure their fear is for none other than Allah, as well as all other aspects of worship, He will in return give them what they hope for and keep them safe and secure from the fears of this life and the hereafter as He ( تعالی ) says:

﴿ أَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِكَافٍ عَبْدَهُ ۗ وَيُخَوِّفُونَكَ بِالَّذِينَ مِنْ دُونِهِ ﴾

<sup>11</sup> Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ, 28:21

<sup>12</sup> The verse again (Sūrah Āli 'Imrān, 3:175):

﴿ إِنَّمَا ذَلِكُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ يُخَوِّفُ أَوْلِيَائَهُ فَلَا تَخَافُوهُمْ وَخَافُوا اللَّهَ إِن كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴾

That is only Satan who frightens (you) of his supporters. So do not fear them, but fear Me, if you are indeed believers.

## Is Allah not sufficient for His servant? And yet they threaten you with other than Him.<sup>13</sup>

The great scholar Ibn al-Qayyim ( رحمه الله تعالى ) said:

Part of the plot of the enemy of Allah is that he tries to frighten believers with his soldiers and supporters. He does so in order that the believers will be too scared to oppose and strive against them, too scared to encourage his supporters to do good or forbid them from doing evil. As such, Allah, the Most High, informs us that this is all part of the plot and deception of Satan and his intimidation and frightening (of believers). Yet He has forbidden us from fearing them by saying—and this is the interpretation of most interpreters—that Satan is only trying to make the believers scared of his supporters. Qatādah says, “He (Satan) makes them (his supporters) seem greater, more significant in the believer’s hearts.” So whenever a worshipper’s faith in Allah becomes stronger, the fear of Satan’s supporters becomes less, and when his faith weakens, his fear of them becomes greater. Therefore, this verse shows that sincerity in fear is one of the conditions of complete faith.

### The Second Verse

Allah ( تعالى ) says:

﴿ إِنَّمَا يَعْمُرُ مَسَاجِدَ اللَّهِ مَنِ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ  
وَلَمْ يَخْشَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ ۗ فَعَسَىٰ أُولَٰئِكَ أَن يَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُهْتَدِينَ ﴾

<sup>13</sup> Sūrah al-Zumar, 39:36

**The mosques of Allah are only to be maintained by those who believe in Allah and the Last Day and establish prayer and give charity and fear none other besides Allah. It is expected that those will be of the rightly guided.**<sup>14</sup>

Here, Allah tells us the mosques of Allah are to be maintained only by people of faith in Allah and the last day (the Day of Judgment). They are those who both believe with their hearts and worship with their limbs, and they make their fear sincerely and exclusively for Allah and no other. For these, He has confirmed the maintenance of places of worship after He forbade it for those who worship others besides Him. This is because the establishment and care of such places of worship is to be done with obedience (to Allah) and righteous actions. As for one who worships other than Allah, even if he were to perform a seemingly righteous action:

﴿ أَعْمَالُهُمْ كَسَرَابٍ بَقِيَعَةٍ يَحْسَبُهُ الظَّمَانُ مَاءً حَتَّى إِذَا جَاءَهُ لَمْ يَجِدْهُ شَيْئًا ﴾

**Their deeds are like a mirage in a desert which a thirsty one thinks is water until, when he comes to it, he finds it is nothing but finds Allah before him.**<sup>15</sup>

Or:

﴿ أَعْمَالُهُمْ كَرَمَادٍ اشْتَدَّتْ بِهِ الرِّيحُ فِي يَوْمٍ عَاصِفٍ ﴾

**Their deeds are like ashes which the wind blows forcefully on a stormy day.**<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Sūrah al-Tawbah, 9:18

<sup>15</sup> Sūrah al-Nūr, 24:39



Considering that, true goodness does not result from such action or person.

So places of worship, the mosques, should be maintained and populated with only true faith, the most dignified of which is tawḥīd and righteous deeds free of all forms of deficiency such as the worship of other than Allah and unfounded religious innovation. All of that is included in the meaning of the word “faith” (*īmān*) according to mainstream Muslims who follow the Sunnah.

About ﴿and (they) fear none other besides Allah﴾ in the verse, Ibn ‘Aṭṭiyah says, “It means the type of fear which is based on honor, worship, and obedience. And while it may be inevitable that people are afraid of worldly dangers, they must ultimately fear the decree and control of Allah alone regarding (the consequences) of such worldly dangers.”

Ibn al-Qayyim ( رحمه الله ) says, “Fear is worship of the heart, and it is not fitting to be given to others besides Allah, similar to repentance, love, reliance, hope, and other aspects of worship of the heart.”

As for ﴿It is expected that those will be of the rightly guided﴾, Ibn Abī Ṭalḥah reported that Ibn ‘Abbās ( رضي الله عنهما ) said, “He is saying, ‘They are the rightly guided.’ Any time the Arabic word عَسَى (*‘asá* – “perhaps,” “it is expected,” etc.) is used in the Quran, it means it is something destined to happen.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Sūrah al-Nūr, 24:39

<sup>17</sup> Shaykh ‘Abdul ‘Azīz Ibn Bāz noted in his checking of *Fath al-Majīd* that Ibn Kathīr mentioned that Ibn ‘Abbās also said, “It is similar to the verse in which Allah says to his prophet ( صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ): ﴿It is expected that your Lord will

## The Third Verse

Allah ( تعالی ) says:

﴿ وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَقُولُ آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ فَإِذَا أُوذِيَ فِي اللَّهِ جَعَلَ فِتْنَةَ النَّاسِ كَعَذَابِ اللَّهِ ﴾

**And of mankind are some who say, “We believe in Allah.” But if they are made to suffer for the sake of Allah, they consider the trial of mankind as (if it were equal to) the punishment of Allah.<sup>18</sup>**

Ibn Kathīr ( رحمه الله ) says:

Allah ( تعالی ) informs us about the characteristics of some people who dishonestly claim to believe, but their belief is only with their tongues and not firm in their hearts. For such people, when a trial or tribulation comes to them in this life, they believe it is from the resentment and wrath of Allah and then leave Islam. Ibn ‘Abbās ( رضي الله عنهما ) said, “It becomes a tribulation from which he leaves his religion when harmed for the sake of Allah.”

Ibn al-Qayyim ( رحمه الله ) says:

When people are sent a messenger, they become one of two types of individuals: those who respond, “I believe,” and those who do not. Those who refuse continue on with their sin and disbelief. As for he who says he believes, he is then tested by his Lord with trial

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**resurrect you to a praised station** ﴿ (Sūrah al-Isrā,17:79) and this refers to his intercession.” Muhammad Ibn Ishāq Ibn Yassār said, “عَسَى (‘asā) mentioned in the Quran is truth from Allah.”

<sup>18</sup> Sūrah al-‘Ankabūt, 29:10

and affliction; the affliction is only a test however. This is to distinguish the truthful from the untruthful. As for those who do not believe (in the messenger), he should not think that Allah is incapable (of testing him), or that he will escape from Him. As a consequence, whoever believes in the messengers and obeys them, the messengers' enemies will begin to show enmity toward him and afflict him with whatever will harm him (in this life). And those who neither believe in the messengers nor obey them, they will be recompensed in this life and in the hereafter and will still eventually experience what harms them. Yet their harm is greater and more lasting than that experienced in life by the messenger's followers.

So even though every soul will experience some type of harm, whether it believes or refuses belief, a believer is hurt in this life only as a trial for him then he will be rewarded for it both in this life and in the hereafter. But he who refuses to believe, he may experience his delight in this life, again only as a trial for him, then he experiences a permanent harm and everlasting pain (in the hereafter).

Everyone must live among others and people have their own ideas and plans. People want other individuals to agree and conform to them in their plans. If one does not agree with them, choosing instead to contradict them, they seek to harm and punish him. Even if he were to conform to them, he would still be harmed, sometimes by the very people he agrees with, sometimes by others. For example, if a person of religion who is conscientious of Allah is among sinful or oppressive people, he may feel he has no way of escaping their wickedness and oppression except by either agreeing and conforming to what they are upon or at least by remaining silent regarding their evil. Were he to support them or remain silent, he may save himself from their evil and tribulations. But

they will then have gained influence and power over him, humiliating him and perhaps harming him with affliction even greater than he had feared had he criticized them and differed from them. Even if he were safe from them, he may simply be humiliated and harmed by other than them.

The solution is to remember what the Mother of the Believers, 'Āishah ( رضي الله عنها ), said to Muā'wiyah ( رضي الله عنه ): “Whoever seeks the pleasure of Allah by angering people, Allah will suffice him regarding people. And whoever seeks the pleasure of people by angering Allah, Allah will entrust him to people.”<sup>19</sup>

So when Allah guides an individual, inspiring within him His guidance and saving him from the evil of his own soul, such a person would refuse to support and agree with others in sinful acts. He would patiently bear whatever enmity they show him for it. He will then have his reward in this life and the hereafter as did the messengers and their followers.

Allah ( تعالى ) then informs us about those who enter the faith without true insight. When he is harmed for the sake of Allah, he considers the tribulation of people—and it is the hurt he feels from them and their hatred which the messengers and their followers always experience from those who oppose them—he makes such tribulation of people, by his fleeing from it and avoiding whatever upsets them, equal to the punishment of Allah from which believers should more rightfully flee with true faith.

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<sup>19</sup> This ḥadīth is recorded by al-Tirmidhī and the explanation will come on pg.14 of this article.

True believers with complete insight, however, flee from the punishment of Allah toward belief in Him. They bear patiently with whatever temporary harm they may suffer (from people) for Him, harm from which they will soon escape. But the other individual (who refuses to differ from sinful people), from his weak insight and unclear understanding of faith, flees from the harm of those who oppose the messengers toward agreeing with them and following them. In doing so, he flees from the punishment of people and into the punishment of Allah. He equates the harm of people, by his action of fleeing from it in what angers Allah, with the punishment of Allah. How unbecoming it is that he seeks safety and refuge (from people's harm) in the scorching fire, running away from the pain of an hour to the pain of eternity.

Also in this verse is a refutation of the *Murjiah Karrāmiyah* sect (who claim that merely expressing faith with the tongue is sufficient to be saved). This is because such peoples' statement, "We believe in Allah," as mentioned in the verse, did not benefit them when they refused to patiently bear the harm of those who would hurt them for the sake of Allah. So proclaiming faith alone is of no benefit without actions. True religious faith of any person is only correct when it combines three aspects: belief in the heart and its actions (emotions in accordance with faith), statements with the tongue, and actions with the limbs. That is the position of all mainstream Muslims who follow the Sunnah, past and present, and Allah ( سبحانه وتعالى ) knows best.

Such action (conforming to sinfulness, refusing to differ from it) is a form of flattering the creation despite the truth, and the only one saved from such action is one whom Allah saves.

## The Ḥadīth

'Āishah ( رضي الله عنها ) reported that Allah's messenger ( صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ) said:

« مَنْ التَّمَسَ رِضَا اللَّهِ بِسَخَطِ النَّاسِ كَفَاهُ اللَّهُ مُؤْتَةَ النَّاسِ ، وَمَنْ التَّمَسَ رِضَا النَّاسِ بِسَخَطِ اللَّهِ وَكَلَّهُ اللَّهُ إِلَى النَّاسِ »

“Whoever seeks the pleasure of Allah by angering people, Allah will suffice him regarding people. And whoever seeks the pleasure of people by angering Allah, Allah will entrust him to people.”<sup>20</sup>

Ibn Ḥibbān recorded this ḥadīth with that wording and al-Tirmidhī recorded it by way of a man from Medina who said that Mu'āwiyah ( رضي الله عنه ) wrote to 'Āishah ( رضي الله عنها ): “Write and advise me but be concise.” She replied, greeting him with “Peace be on you,” then wrote that she heard the messenger of Allah ( صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ) say, “Whoever seeks the pleasure of Allah by angering people, Allah will suffice him regarding people. And whoever seeks the pleasure of people by angering Allah, Allah will entrust him to people.”

The scholar of Islam (Ibn Taymiyyah) says:

'Āishah wrote this ḥadīth to Mu'āwiyah and it has been reported from her in a *marfū'* form<sup>21</sup> that she said, “Whoever seeks the pleasure of Allah by angering people, Allah will

<sup>20</sup> Recorded by Ibn Ḥibbān (1542 - موارد) and al-Tirmidhī (2414) and al-Albānī said it is authentic in *Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan al-Tirmidhī* (1967).

<sup>21</sup> Muḥammad Ibn Ṣaliḥ al-'Uthaymīn explains in his booklet *Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadīth* that a *marfū'* narration is one in which is either explicitly attributed to the prophet ( صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ) or considered to be attributed to him based on other ruling factors.

suffice him regarding people. And whoever seeks the pleasure of people by angering Allah, they will not protect him from Allah in any way.” That is the marfū’ form.

It has also been reported in a *mawqūf* form<sup>22</sup> that she said, “Whoever pleases Allah at the expense of angering people, Allah will be pleased with him and cause people to be pleased with him too. But whoever pleases people at the expense of angering Allah, He will make those who praise him revert back to criticizing him.”

This is the greatest understanding of religion. Whoever seeks to please Allah, even if it means angering people, he has rightfully feared Allah and has become His righteous worshipper. Allah in return assumes the responsibility of protecting the righteous and He is sufficient for his worshipper.

﴿ وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا \* وَيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ ﴾

**And whoever fears Allah, He will make a way for him to get out (from every difficulty), and He will provide him from (sources) he could never imagine.<sup>23</sup>**

Allah will certainly suffice him from having to rely on people. As for trying to please all people, that is impossible anyway.

As for, “seeking the pleasure of people by angering Allah,” in doing this, the person gives preference to people’s acceptance and happiness over that of Allah. This happens when the honor and respect for Allah and His greatness has not settled in his

<sup>22</sup> Ibn al-‘Uthaymīn explains also in *Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadīth* that a *mawqūf* narration is one that is attributed only to the narrating companion and not raised to the status of being attributed to the prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم).

<sup>23</sup> Sūrah al-Ṭalāq, 65:2,3

heart. If it had, it would have prevented him from seeking to gain the pleasure of the creation by gaining the anger of his creator, his Lord, and owner – the very One who controls all hearts, removes all difficulties, and forgives all sins. Based on this, such a choice (preferring to please people by angering Allah) is a form of associating others in worship with Allah because he considers pleasing the creation a higher priority than pleasing Allah. He seeks to get closer to creation by way of displeasing Allah. And no one is saved from this except one whom Allah saves and for whom He gives the success of truly knowing Him. This is attained by knowing what befits Allah by believing in His characteristics and rejecting any false notions which reduce His perfection and knowing tawḥīd of His lordship and sole right to worship. With Allah alone is success.

Ibn Rajab ( رحمه الله ) said:

If one realizes that anyone of creation on earth—and the earth is merely dirt—is himself (created) from dirt, then why would someone give preference to obeying someone from dirt over obeying the Lord of lords? How can he please dirt by angering the Owner, the Bestower? That is certainly an amazing thing.

In this ḥadīth, there is a severe reprimand for whoever fears people, preferring their acceptance and pleasure over Allah. And perhaps his punishment for doing so may even be a test or affliction in his religion—we seek refuge with Allah from that—as He says:

﴿ فَأَعْقَبَهُمْ نِفَاقًا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ إِلَى يَوْمِ يَلْقَوْنَهُ بِمَا أَخْلَفُوا اللَّهَ مَا وَعَدُوهُ وَبِمَا كَانُوا يَكْذِبُونَ ﴾



Title: Fear Others Besides Allah

Original Title: فتح المجيد

Original Author: 'Abdur-Rahmān Ibn Ḥasan Āli-Shaykh

**So He punished them with hypocrisy in their hearts until the day they will meet Him because they failed Allah in what they promised Him and because they used to lie.<sup>24</sup>**

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<sup>24</sup> Sūrah al-Ṭawbah, 9:77