

XVIII. FEAR

Compiled from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, Abdu'l

Original English



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1. Fear of God and Sense of Shame Protect Man from Unseemly Conduct

"...Verily I say: The fear of God hath ever been a sure defence and a safe stronghold for all the peoples of the world. It is the chief cause of the protection of mankind, and the supreme instrument for its preservation. Indeed, there existeth in man a faculty which deterreth him from, and guardeth him against, whatever is unworthy and unseemly, and which is known as his sense of shame. This, however, is confined to but a few; all have not possessed and do not possess it."

(Bahá'u'lláh: Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, 1978 ed., p. 63)

1. Teach Children the Fear of God Through Concept of Oneness and the Laws

"That which is of paramount importance for the children, that which must precede all else, is to teach them the oneness of God and the Laws of God. For lacking this the fear of God cannot be inculcated, and lacking the fear of God an infinity of odious and abominable actions will spring up, and sentiments will be uttered that transgress all bounds...."

(Bahá'u'lláh: Bahá'í Education: A Compilation, p. 6, compiled by the Universal House of Justice)

1. The Knowledge which Will Largely Eliminate Fear

"In the treasures of the knowledge of God there lieth concealed a knowledge which, when applied, will largely, though not wholly, eliminate fear. This knowledge, however, should be taught from childhood, as it will greatly aid in its elimination. Whatever decreaseth fear increaseth courage...."

(Bahá'u'lláh: Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 32)

1. Lack of Faith in Immortality is a Cause of Fear, Weakened Will Power and Human Degradation

"The conception of annihilation is a factor in human degradation, fear and abjection. It has been conducive to the dispersion and weakening of human thought whereas the realization of existence and continuity has upraised man to sublimity of ideals, established the foundations of



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human progress and stimulated the development of heavenly virtues; therefore it behoves man to abandon thoughts of non-existence and death, which are absolutely imaginary and see himself ever living, everlasting in the divine purpose of his creation. He must turn away from ideas which degrade the human soul, so that day by day and hour by hour he may advance upward and higher to spiritual perception of the continuity of the human reality. If he dwells on the thought of non-existence he will become utterly incompetent; with weakened will-power his ambition for progress will be lessened and the acquisition of human virtues will cease."

(Abdu'l-Bahá: Bahá'í World Faith, 1971 ed., p. 265) [pg 238]

1. **Meaning of the Term "Fear of God"**

"You have asked the exact meaning of the term 'Fear of God' mentioned in Bahá'í Sacred Writings: It often means awe, but has also other connotations such as reverence, terror and fear."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 13, 1940)

"We have no way of knowing what science Bahá'u'lláh meant when He said it would largely eliminate fear; as no further mention of it was ever made in the teachings, the Guardian cannot identify anything with this statement. To do so would depart from his function as interpreter of the teachings; he cannot reveal anything apart from the given teachings."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, August 30, 1952)

1. **Explaining Fear of God to Children**

"In explaining the fear of God to children, there is no objection to teaching it as Abdu'l-Bahá so often taught everything, in the form of parables. Also the child should be made to understand that we don't fear God because He is cruel, but we fear Him because He is just, and, if we do wrong and deserve to be punished, then in His justice He may see fit to punish us. We must both love God and fear Him."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 15, 1957)

1. **Fear Does Not Solve Problems**

"He does not feel that fear — for ourselves or for others — solves any problem, or enables us to better meet it if it ever does arise. We do not know what the future holds exactly, or how soon we may all pass through another ordeal worse than the last one."

"But what we do know is that all we can do as Bahá'ís is to teach and to exemplify the Faith. We cannot bear the burden of suffering of others, and we should not try to. All men are in God's hands, and even if they do get killed we know there is another life beyond this than can hold great hope and happiness for the soul."

"No matter what happens, nothing is as important as our feeling of trust in God, our inner peacefulness and faith that all, in the end, in spite of the severity of the ordeals we may pass through, will come out as Bahá'u'lláh has promised."

"He urges you to put these dark thoughts from your mind, and remember that if God, the Creator of all men, can bear to see them suffer so, it is not for us to question His wisdom. He can compensate the innocent, in His own way, for the afflictions they bear."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, September 30, 1950)

1. Overcoming Fear

"He will certainly pray that you may entirely overcome your fear-complex. When you concentrate your thoughts on realizing that you now belong to Bahá'u'lláh, [pg 239] are His servant whom He loves and will always help, if you ask Him to, and that the great spiritual strength of the Cause of God is behind you for you to draw upon, you will soon see your fears melting away."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer: High Endeavors, Messages to Alaska, p. 70)

1. Forget Fears, Teach and Serve the Faith

"The Guardian urges you to forget all your fears, and with a tranquil heart and radiant spirit, to teach and serve the Faith all you can in Yonkers and its vicinity, while depending on God for your guidance and help. The teaching work is of the utmost importance in these days, and whoever engages in it will be reinforced by the Hosts on High."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 31, 1953)

1. Fear of God — Human Beings Need Element of Fear

"You ask him about the fear of God: perhaps the friends do not realize that the majority of human beings need the element of fear in order to discipline their conduct? Only a relatively very highly evolved soul would always be disciplined by love alone. Fear of punishment, fear of the anger of God if we do evil, are needed to keep people's feet on the right path. Of course we should love God — but we must fear Him in the sense of a child fearing the righteous anger and chastisement of a parent; not cringe before Him as before a tyrant, but know His mercy exceeds His Justice!"

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, July 26, 1946: Bahá'í Education, A Compilation, compiled by the Universal House of Justice) [pg 240]

