



IN THE NAME OF ALLAH THE MOST GRACIOUS, THE MOST MERCIFUL

IMAN – SIGNS OF LOW IMAN AND WHAT WE SHOULD DO

Our iman always go up and down, and this is always part and parcel of life in this world. We are all humans who have many faults and weaknesses which may render our faith weak.

All of us know that when we do certain things, our iman somehow or other gets boosted and it encourages us to take the Hereafter more seriously:

1. When someone in our family dies
2. When we see a dead body in the mosque or when we visit the grave
3. When we pray with khushoo'
4. When we recite the Qur'an with understanding
5. When we attend Islamic gatherings
6. When we do Umrah/Hajj
7. During Ramadan

Knowing that these acts would increase our iman would surely encourage us to do more of these things inshaAllah.

Many of the sahabah and scholars commented about this fluctuations of iman:

1. 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, *may Allah be pleased with him*, used to say to his companions: "Come on, so that we may increase our *iman*."g
2. 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud, *may Allah be pleased with him*, used to say: "Sit with us, so that we may increase in *iman*." He used to say in his supplications: "O Allah increase me in *iman*, certainty and understanding."
3. Mu'adh ibn Jabal, *may Allah be pleased with him*, used to say: "Sit with us, so that we may have iman for an hour."
4. 'Abdullah ibn Rawahah, *may Allah be pleased with him*, used to take some of his companions by the hand and say: "Come on, so that we may have *iman* for an hour. Come on, let us remember Allah so that we increase in *iman* by obeying him; He may remember us by forgiving us."
5. Abu Darda', *may Allah be pleased with him*, used to say: "It is from the intelligence of the servant to know whether he is increasing or decreasing, and indeed, it is from the intelligence of the servant to know how, where and when the whispers of Shaytan appear to him."

6. Umayr ibn Habib al-Khatmi, *may Allah be pleased with him*, used to say: "*Iman* increases and decreases." Someone asked: "What increases it and what decreases it?" He replied: "If we remember Allah, praise Him, and declare His perfection; that is what increases it. If we are heedless, squander and forget; that is what decreases it."
7. Alqamah ibn Qays an-Nakba'i, *may Allah have mercy upon him*, who is one of the senior and revered of the *tabi'in*, used to say to his companions: "Come with us, so that we may increase in *iman*."
8. 'Abdur-Rahman ibn 'Amr al-Awza'i, *may Allah have mercy upon him*, was asked about *iman*: "Does it increase?" He replied, "Yes, until it becomes like mountains." He was then asked, "Does it decrease?" He answered, "Yes, up until there is nothing left of it."
9. The *Imam* of the *Ahlu-Sunnah* Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *may Allah have mercy upon him*, was asked as to whether *iman* increases and decreases. He replied: "It increases until it reaches the highest part of the seventh heaven, and it decreases until it reaches the lowest part of the seventh plane." He also used to say: "*Iman* is speech and action. It increases and decreases. If you perform good deeds, it increases, and if you do wrong, it decreases."

WHAT IS IMAN?

According to Ahl al-Sunnah wa'l-Jamaa'ah, eemaan (faith) is "belief in the heart, words on the tongue and actions of the body." This includes three things:

1. Belief in the heart
2. Words on the tongue
3. Actions of the body

As this is the case, then it will increase and decrease. That is because the degree of belief in the heart differs from one person to another. Believing in what someone tells you is not the same as believing something that you see with your own eyes. Believing in what one person tells you is not the same as believing what two people tell you, and so on. Hence Ibraaheem (peace be upon him) said:

" 'My Lord! Show me how You give life to the dead.' He (Allaah) said: 'Do you not believe?' He [Ibraaheem (Abraham)] said: 'Yes (I believe), but to be stronger in Faith'" [al-Baqarah 2:260]

Eemaan may increase with regard to belief, contentment and tranquillity in the heart. A person may experience that in himself when he attends gatherings of dhikr where he hears a lesson. Remembering Paradise and Hell increases eemaan to the point where it as if you can see them with your own eyes. But when a person is negligent and leaves those gatherings, this certain faith is reduced in his heart.

Eemaan in the sense of words may increase similarly. Whoever remembers Allaah a few times is not like one who remembers Him one hundred times. The latter is far better in eemaan.

And the one who does an act of worship in a perfect manner will have more faith than one who does it in an imperfect manner.

The same applies to righteous deeds. If a person does good deeds physically more than another, the one who does more will have more eemaan than the one who does less. This is stated in the Qur'aan and Sunnah – I mean the fact that eemaan may increase and decrease. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And We have fixed their number (19) only as a trial for the disbelievers, in order that the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians) may arrive at a certainty [that this Qur'aan is the truth as it agrees with their Books regarding the number (19) which is written in the Tawraat (Torah) and the Injeel (Gospel)] and that the believers may increase in Faith [al-Muddaththir 74:31]

“And whenever there comes down a Soorah, some of them (hypocrites) say: “Which of you has had his Faith increased by it?” As for those who believe, it has increased their Faith, and they rejoice.

But as for those in whose hearts is a disease (of doubt, disbelief and hypocrisy), it will add suspicion and doubt to their suspicion, disbelief and doubt; and they die while they are disbelievers [al-Tawbah 9:124-125]

According to a saheeh hadeeth, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “I have never seen any women lacking in reason and faith who have a more negative impact on the mind of a serious man than you.”

Thus eemaan increases and decreases.

SIGNS OF WEAK IMAN

- Committing sins and not feeling any guilt.
- Having a hard heart and no desire to read the Quran.
- Feeling too lazy to do good deeds, e.g. being late for salat
- Neglecting the Sunnah.
- Having mood swings, for instance being upset about petty things and bothered and irritated most of the time.
- Not feeling anything when hearing verses from the Quran, for example when Allah warns us of punishments and His promise of glad tidings.
- Finding difficulty in remembering Allah and making dhikr.
- Not feeling bad when things are done against the Shariah.
- Desiring status and wealth.
- Being mean and miserly, i.e. not wanting to part with wealth.
- Ordering others to do good deeds when not practising them ourselves.
- Feeling pleased when things are not progressing for others.

- Being concerned with whether something is haram or halal only; and not avoiding makroo (not recommended) things.
- Making fun of people who do simple good deeds, like cleaning the mosque.
- Not feeling concerned about the situation of Muslims.
- Not feeling the responsibility to do something to promote Islam.
- Liking to argue just for the sake of arguing without any proof.
- Becoming engrossed and very involved with dunya, worldly things, i.e. feeling bad only when losing something in terms of material wealth.
- Becoming engrossed and obsessive about ourselves.

SYMPTOMS OF WEAK OR LOW IMAN

The disease of an ailing Iman has many symptoms, which include:

1. Committing Sins

Some people insist on committing the same sins over and over again. As a result, repugnance of sins is slowly withdrawn from their heart to the point that they commit these sins openly as described in this Hadith:

"All of my followers will be forgiven except those who commit sins openly. Such is the case of a man commits a sin at night and **Allah** had his sin concealed till the morning comes. But, he says openly: 'O so and so, I did such and such yesterday.' Allah had covered his sin, but he uncovered the veil of Allah from it." (Related by Al-Bukhari).

2. Hardening of the Heart

The person reaches a stage where he feels that his heart has turned into a solid rock that is not affected by anything. Allah says: "And yet, after this, your hearts hardened and became like rocks, or even harder." (Al-Baqarah, 2:74). A hardened heart is not affected by anything - even seeing people die and attending funerals would not move it. The person with a hardened heart may even carry a corpse and bury it, yet, he walks in the graveyard as if he were strolling between pine trees!

3. Performing Acts of Worship Poorly

Such a person remains absent-minded during prayers and while reciting the Qur'an. He also does not contemplate upon the meaning of the supplications he is making. As a result, he recites them in a monotonous tone void of any reflections. He does not think for a moment about the value of these supplications. He forgets that: "Allah does not accept the supplication from an inattentive, heedless heart." (Related by Al-Tirmidhi).

His acts of worship are reduced to hollow movements with no spirit behind them. Allah describes the hypocrites: "And they do not remember Allah but little." (Al-Nisa', 4:142).

A hard hearted person remains indifferent when he does not perform some good deeds and misses those times of worship that have more reward in them. His lack of interest to earn rewards is obvious. Delaying Hajj when he is capable of performing it, missing congregational prayers in the Masjid, and even the Jumu'ah prayer are a few examples of this. The Prophet **sallallahu alayhe wa sallam [pbuh]** said: "People will continue to withdraw to rows behind the first one until Allah puts them in a back place in Hell." (Related by Abu Dawud).

Furthermore, he does not feel remorse if he misses obligatory duties and does not try to perform the different Sunnah prayers or invocations that he misses. He ignores them, convincing himself that they are only Sunnah!

4. Lack of Tranquillity

His breast gets tightened, his mood changes, he feels as if he is carrying a heavy load, and he becomes annoyed quickly because of minor things. He gets pestered by the behavior of the people around him and he does not forgive them easily. He harbors malice towards fellow Muslims over insignificant issues. The Prophet **sallallahu alayhe wa sallam** has described Iman to be forgiveness: "Iman is patience and forgiveness." (Related by Al-Tirmidhi). In another Hadith, the Prophet **sallallahu alayhe wa sallam** described the believer in the following manner: "He makes friends and is befriended and there is no goodness in (one who) does not make friends or is not befriended." (Related by Al-Tirmidhi).

5. Verses of the Qur'an Have No Effect Upon Him

The promises, warnings, commands, prohibitions, and descriptions of the Day of Judgment do not make his eyes flood with tears, or his heart quiver, or his soul shiver. Consequently, he gets bored and tired when he listens to the recital of the Qur'an!

6. He is Negligent in Remembering Allah

This simple act of devotion becomes heavy upon him to the point that when he raises his hands in supplication, he hastens to fold them up quickly to conclude it. He is not eager to repent to Allah, the Mighty and Glorious, and to make invocations to Him for his needs. Allah describes the hypocrites: "And when they stand up to pray, they stand with laziness and to be seen of men, and they do not remember Allah but little." (Al-Nisa', 4:142).

7. He Does Not Get Angry When the Commandments of Allah Are Violated

This is because the glowing light of honor in his heart has been extinguished and as a result, his limbs have become numb to repudiate evil. So he does not bother to enjoin good or forbid evil. This is due to a weak heart as indicated by the Prophet sallallahu alayhe wa sallam: "Temptations are presented to the heart, one by one. Any heart that accepts them will be left with a black stain, but any heart that rejects them will be left with a mark of purity, until the hearts become one of two types: a dark heart that has turned away and become like an overturned vessel, and a pure heart that will never be harmed by temptation for as long as the earth and the heavens exist." (Related by Muslim).

So the desire of enjoining good and forbidding evil disappears from a sick heart. Good and evil are the same to it.

Rather, the person may even be happy to hear about the corruption that is being committed on earth. His unfortunate soul forgets that the sin upon him is the same as the sin upon the person who witnessed the evil and approved of it, as the Prophet sallallahu alayhe wa sallam said: "When a sin is committed on earth, the one who witnessed it and hates it is like one who was absent from it, and the one who was absent from it but was pleased with it (after he found out about it), it is like he witnessed it. (Related by Abu Dawud)

Since being pleased with the sin is a deed of his heart, it makes the sin upon him equal to the sin of the one who witnessed it.

8. He loves to be in Gatherings and be Engrossed in Talking

He tries to impose his views on others and likes the discussion to center around him. Gatherings in which idle talk takes prominence are considered like slaughter houses from which the Prophet sallallahu alayhe wa sallam warned us when he said:

"Watch out for the slaughterhouses (meaning) gatherings." (Related by Al-Bayhaqi).

9. He is Arrogant

He likes people to stand up for him when he enters to meet them because feeling great gratifies his diseased soul. the Prophet sallallahu alayhe wa sallam said: "The one who is pleased that the slaves of Allah stand up for him, then let him be assured of his place in the Fire." (Related by Al-Bukhari in Al-Adab Al-Mufrad)

Mu'awiyah Ibn Abi Sufyan entered upon two companions of the Prophet, Ibn 'Amir stood up and Ibn Zubayr sat down. Seeing this, Mu'awiyah said to Ibn 'Amir: "Sit down, because I heard the Messenger of Allah say: 'The one who loves that another man stand up for him, then let him rest assured of his sitting place in the Fire.'" (Related by Abu Dawud).

A similar example is that he will get angry at a person who applies the Sunnah and starts shaking hands with people on his right hand side. Also, when he enters a

gathering, he is not satisfied unless someone else, already sitting, gets up so that he may sit in his place despite the fact that he is forbidden to do so by the Prophet sallallahu alayhe wa sallam:

"Let not a man make another one stand for him then sit in his place." (Related by Al-Bukhari).

10. Stinginess and Greed

Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala has praised those who spend their wealth for good causes and at the same time blamed those who are miserly. In the Qur'an Allah has praised the Ansar for the way they gave preference to the Muhajirun (Muslims who migrated from Makkah) over themselves: "But they (Ansar) give them preference over themselves even though they were in need of that (the booty). And whosoever is saved from his own covetousness, such are they who will be the successful." (Al-Hashr, 59:9).

Allah has clarified that the successful ones are those who protect themselves against stinginess. Without doubt, weakness of Iman is born from stinginess as the Prophet sallallahu alayhe wa sallam said: "Iman and covetousness can never come together in the heart of a slave." (Related by Al-Nasa'i).

Concerning the dangers of stinginess and its effects upon one's soul, the Prophet sallallahu alayhe wa sallam explained it to be: "Beware of covetousness, because the ones before you perished because of covetousness. It induces them to be miserly so they became misers and it induced them to break the ties (of kinship) so they broke it and induced them to commit sins so they committed sins." (Related by Abu Dawud).

A greedy person also has a weak Iman. He scarcely spends anything for the sake of Allah even if he is called to donate in charity when his Muslim brothers are hungry and afflicted by hardships. There is nothing clearer in this matter than the Book of Allah: "Behold! It is you who are called to spend freely in Allah's Cause: but even among you are such as turn out to be niggardly! And yet, he who acts niggardly in Allah's Cause is but niggardly towards himself: for Allah is Rich, and you are poor. And if you turn away from Him, He will cause other people to take your place, and they will not be the likes of you." (Muhammad, 47:38)

11. He Falls into Doubtful Matters

When he performs an action, he does not ask if it is an act of righteousness, but rather will it earn him any sin or not. This is exactly what the Prophet sallallahu alayhe wa sallam informed us of: "But he who falls into doubtful matters falls into that which is unlawful, like the shepherd who pastures around a sanctuary, all about grazing therein. Truly, every king has a sanctuary, and Allah's sanctuary is His prohibitions." (Related by Muslim).

When such people ask for a fatwah (Islamic ruling) about something, and find out that it is forbidden, they do not give up. They want to know how severe the prohibition is. How many sins does he earn if he commits it? He is not concerned to stay away from evil and sinful deeds, rather he is inclined to take the first step towards haram things by belittling the burning effects of sins which run him the risk of committing haram, and remove the screen between him and the sin. This is why the Prophet sallallahu alayhe wa sallam said: "Know that some people from my Ummah will come on the Day of Judgment with good deeds like the white mountains of Tihama, but Allah will make them scattered dust." Thawban said, 'O Messenger of Allah, describe them to us, so that we may not be one of them without knowing it!' He said, "They will be your brothers, and from your people, and they will take from the night as you do (meaning prayers, etc.), but they are a people who, when they were alone with the prohibitions of Allah, violated them." (Related by Ibn Majah).

So, you will find him engulfed in forbidden things without any protection or shielding, and this is more evil than the one who commits them but with some reluctance. These people commit sins with ease as a result of their ailing Iman and do not see their act to be an evil one. This is how Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud radhiallahu anhu described the way a believer and a hypocrite perceive sins: "A believer sees his sins as if he were sitting under a mountain, fearing it might fall upon him, while a sinner sees his sins as a fly passing over his nose, so he gets rid of it with his hand." (Related by Al-Bukhari).

12. Belittling Good Deeds

There is lack of concern on the part of the sick at heart to perform small deeds of righteousness contrary to what the Prophet sallallahu alayhe wa sallam has taught us when he said: "Do not belittle any small act of kindness even if it is to pour water from your bucket into the vessel of the one who asks for it or to talk to your brother with a cheerful face." Related by Ahmad.

So, acts that appear to be minor should not be underestimated. Hence, meeting a fellow Muslim with a smiling face and removing trash and dirt from the Masjid - even as little as a straw - entails great rewards. It may be that a small deed becomes a reason for the forgiveness of major sins. Allah thanks His slave for these small deeds and forgives him. The Prophet sallallahu alayhe wa sallam said: "Once, a man saw the branch of a tree in the middle of a road. So, he said, 'By Allah, I will remove this from the path of the Muslims so they may not be hurt.' For this action, he was put in Paradise." (Related by Muslim).

Mu'adh Ibn Jabal was once walking with someone. He removed a pebble from the way. The man asked Mu'adh why he did that. Mu'adh answered him: 'I heard the Messenger of Allah sallallahu alayhe wa sallam say: "One who removes a stone from the way has a good deed written for him, and one for whom a good deed is written shall enter Paradise."' (Related by Al-Tabarani).

13. Not Caring About the Affairs of Muslims

A person with a sick heart does not react to the needs of Muslims by making supplications, giving charity, or offering assistance. He does not care if his brothers are afflicted by a hardship in any part of the world such as being overwhelmed by the enemy, being persecuted, or being stricken by disasters. It is enough for him that his conditions are good! This is because of his ailing Iman; A believer is the opposite of that as described by the Prophet sallallahu alayhe wa sallam: "A believer feels pain for the believers, just as the body feels distress over what is troubling the head." (Related by Ahmad).

14. He is Deprived of the Friendship of Brothers

The Prophet sallallahu alayhe wa sallam said: "Two persons who became friends for the sake of Allah do not separate except because of a sin committed by one of them." (Related by Al-Bukhari in Al-Adab Al-Mufrad).

This is a proof of the evil effects of sins: it breaks the ties of brotherhood. This alienation that a person finds between himself and his brothers is sometimes the result of a decline in Iman which results from committing sins. So the love others have for him dwindles.

15. Showing Grief and Fear When Afflicted by a Hardship or When in Difficulty

Such a person is often found to be shaky in offering obligatory duties, unbalanced, absent minded, lost, and fidgety. He is not able to face reality with unwavering limbs and a firm heart. All of this is due to ailing Iman.

If the Iman were strong, he would have been firm and faced the greatest of hardships with strength and steadfastness.

16. Disputing and Arguing Unnecessarily

Much engagement in these habits hardens the heart as the Prophet said: "A people never went astray after being upon guidance except through disputes." (Related by Ahmad).

So, argumentation without proof and proper intention takes one away from the Straight Path. These days, most people argue falsely and without knowledge or guidance. It is enough for them to leave this bad habit after knowing what the Prophet sallallahu alayhe wa sallam said: "I guarantee a house in the outskirts of Paradise to the one who gives up arguing even if he were on the right side." (Related by Abu Dawud).

17. Attachment to Worldly Life

He is so materialistic that he feels anguish when something of this life, like wealth, honor, status, etc, is taken away from him. He feels as if he has been injured badly because he did not get what others did. His feeling of injury becomes stronger and he feels rejected on seeing his Muslim brother get something of this world which did not reach him. Envy takes root in his heart so he wishes that this bounty be taken away from his brother. This is what the Prophet sallallahu alayhe wa sallam warned us against: "Never can Iman and envy come together in the heart of a slave." (Related by Al- Nasa'i).

18. His Speech is Void of the Etiquette of the Qur'an and Sunnah

The signs of Iman are absent from him. You will barely find in this person's speech quotations from the Qur'an, or Sunnah, or the sayings of the early pious generations of Muslims.

These are some of the symptoms of a weak faith. By becoming aware of the symptoms, one has made the first step towards the remedy.

CAUSES OF A WEAK IMAN

Three broad categories include

1. Failing to seek knowledge on a constant basis.

Many of us have abandoned reading the Qur'an and Hadith on a daily basis and when we do we seldom reflect on its message or seek guidance. Our minds are not focused on the virtue of its message. We starve ourselves in the knowledge of deen by allowing our attention to be diverted by feasting on daily talk shows on TV, or other forms of destructive activities for the passing of time. We miss out on that breeze of Iman that softens hearts.

2. Living in an environment surrounded with sin is conducive to weakening the faith.

In this environment temptation exists, continuously at every point. We need to guard our prayers and our Iman. We are not as Allah conscious as we ought to be, we allow ourselves to be swayed and distracted by temptations. We have been devoid of a faith-filled environment for too long. We've become de-sensitised and lost sight of the world of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). We are oblivious to the good as taught by the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). -- Moral and spiritual values that elevate man are replaced by the worldly pleasures of today's society. We fail to protect our families and ourselves from acts of disobedience and often we accept them as the norm.

And seldom do we turn to Allah swt in repentance (taw bah). This is our ignorance, our weakness.

And last but not the least,

3. Preoccupation with our worldly life, while neglecting the hereafter.

Our day to day activities centre around our material world - our business, our work, our money, our bills, the sizes of our homes, our cars, and so on. These take preference both in our minds and speech. This preoccupation with the world enslaves our hearts.

We have allowed the diseases of the heart to flourish such as vanity, pride, fame, glory. We tend to get lost in these illusions, fooled by the worldly glamour and fail to illuminate our hearts with Allah's Noor.

We remain pre-occupied with our worldly life.

Allah says in

Surah Al Hijr 15:3

“Leave them to eat and enjoy, and let them be preoccupied with (false) hope. They will come to know!”

And Allah swt created us only for His Ubudiya, for His worship alone, as His slaves but today we have become slaves to this duniya, this world, slaves of our desires and ambitions, slaves to wealth.

The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “He is doomed, the slave of the dinar and the slave of the dirham” (Reported by al-Bukhari, no. 2730),

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) further said: “Every nation has its fitnah (trial or temptation), and the fitnah of my Ummah is wealth.” (Reported by al-Tirmidhi, 2336). So this eagerness to acquire wealth weakens Iman. This is what the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) meant when he said: “Two hungry wolves sent against the sheep do not do more damage than what a man's eagerness for wealth does to his religion.” (Reported by al-Tirmidhi, no. 2376). That is it leaves him injured or dead as far as his Iman is concerned.

HOW TO ELEVATE OUR IMAN?

1. Make du'a to Allah- especially seeking His Guidance
2. Do good righteous deeds
3. Continue to recite the Qur'an to obtain Guidance – with proper recitation and understanding.
4. Remembrance of Allah in mornings and evenings
5. Be with the right companions (43: 67)
6. Seek refuge in Allah from shaytan constantly
7. Attend circles of knowledge
8. Remind one another constantly – enjoin good and forbid evil (surah al Asr)
9. Remind ourselves that death may come at any time....and that there is no second chance – you can visit graves or the sick ones to remind ourselves to

be grateful to Allah when you are healthy and that you still have time to repent and do good deeds.

10. Be patient at all times - in performing good deeds, in preventing ourselves from disobeying Allah and when tested by Allah. Remember that the more iman we have the more Allah's Tests will come - in order to purify us.
11. Choose your friends and companions properly
12. Remind each other of Paradise - endure now when faced with trials but the reward will come later inshaAllah.

May Allah continue to Guide us and Maintain our iman till we meet Him in Jannatul Firdaus.